

DIVING AROUND HOLY ISLAND

This guide was produced for BSAC Advanced Instructor Courses/Exams on Holy Island. It is believed accurate, but no liability can be accepted for errors. You are advised to consult tide tables and Admiralty Charts (1970 & 1413).

AI events usually allow 4 hours for 3 boat dives, so this guide concentrates on accessible sites, especially those requiring position fixing or which offer diving during the strength of the tide. This guide is not comprehensive and members should feel free to choose other sites.

WHICH SIDE OF THE ISLAND DO WE DIVE ON?

The "vis" around Anglesey is very variable; it can be 10 metres, but is usually between 2 and 5 metres from May to September (less after gales). North of Holy Island the sea bed is rather muddy, while to the West it is sandy, so there is usually better "vis" to the West than to the North. In May the inshore area clears first; Rhoscolyn Head can have 5 metres while Maen Piscar has 1 metre!

DIVING IN BETWEEN HIGH & LOW WATER (HOLYHEAD)

The 4 maps attached show places which are slack or slackish in between HW & LW. On the West side the Fangs and Dinas Head are slack some time after HW, while the 3 reefs off Rhoscolyn offer slack during the flood as well as the ebb. The wreck of the Hermine and Ravenspoint are usually divable almost throughout the tidal cycle. To the North, the wrecks of the Meath and Oria are half-tide dives anyway, and the coast from the breakwater to North Stack offers some shelter (but beware getting sucked out into the North Stack Race!).

LAUNCHING SITES (marked on map)

Trearddur Bay - concrete slip leading to hard sand, allowing vehicles onto the beach and easy launching at all states of the tide; a beach warden is employed here in summer.

Rhoscolyn is nearly as easy for launching, but is approached along a windy single-track road.

Porth Dafarch slip ends in pebbles negotiable only by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

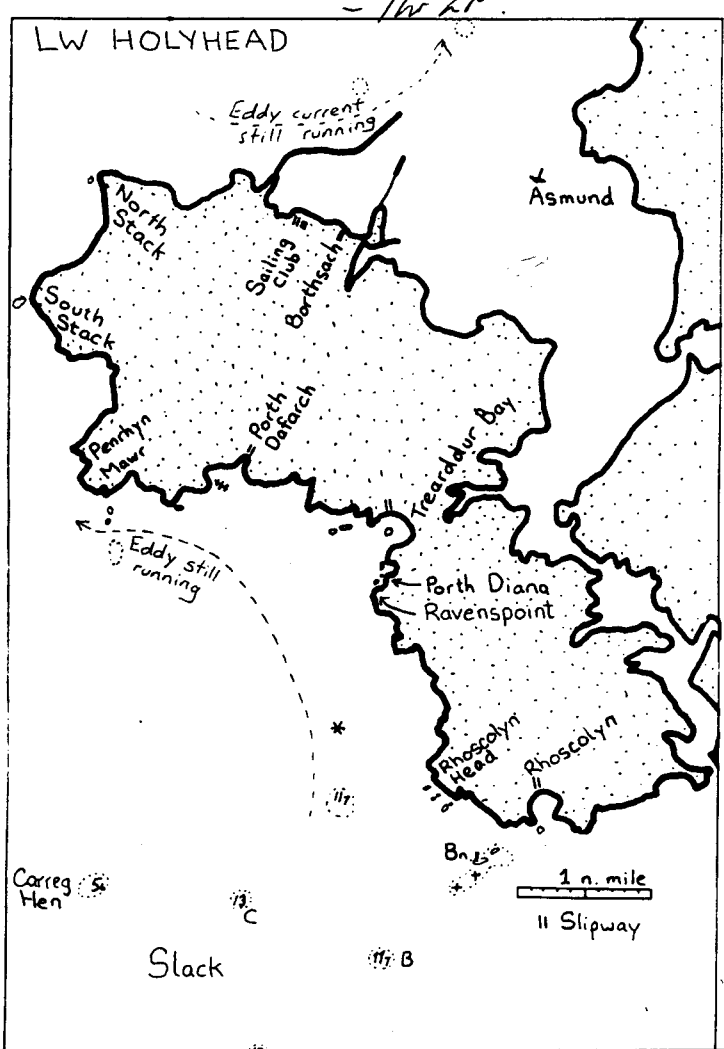
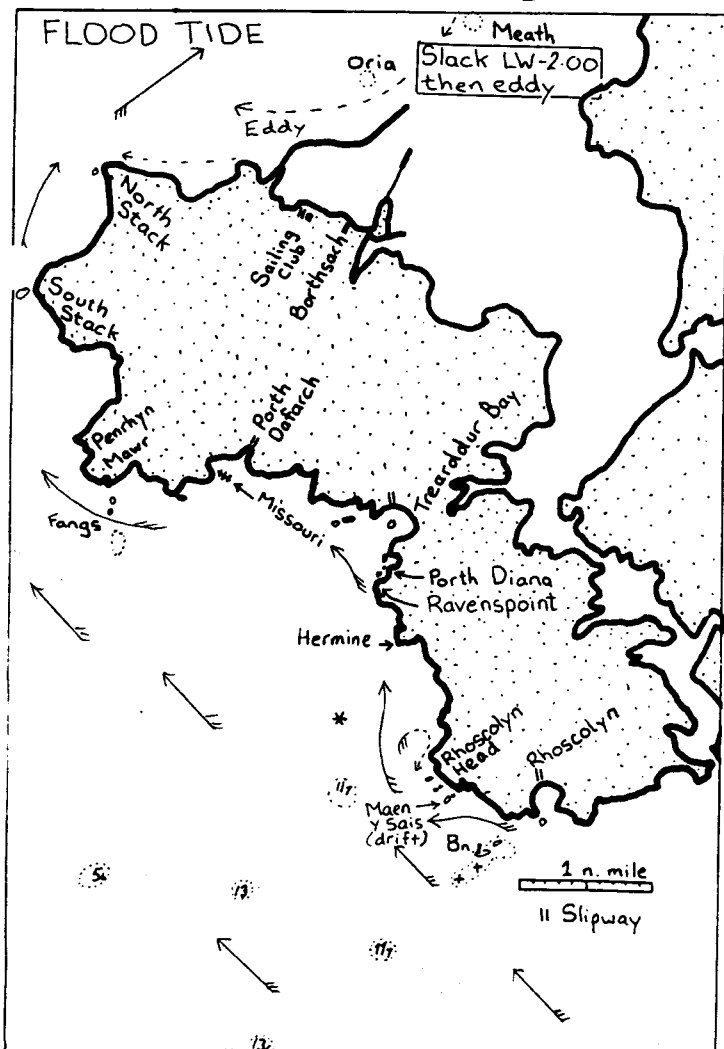
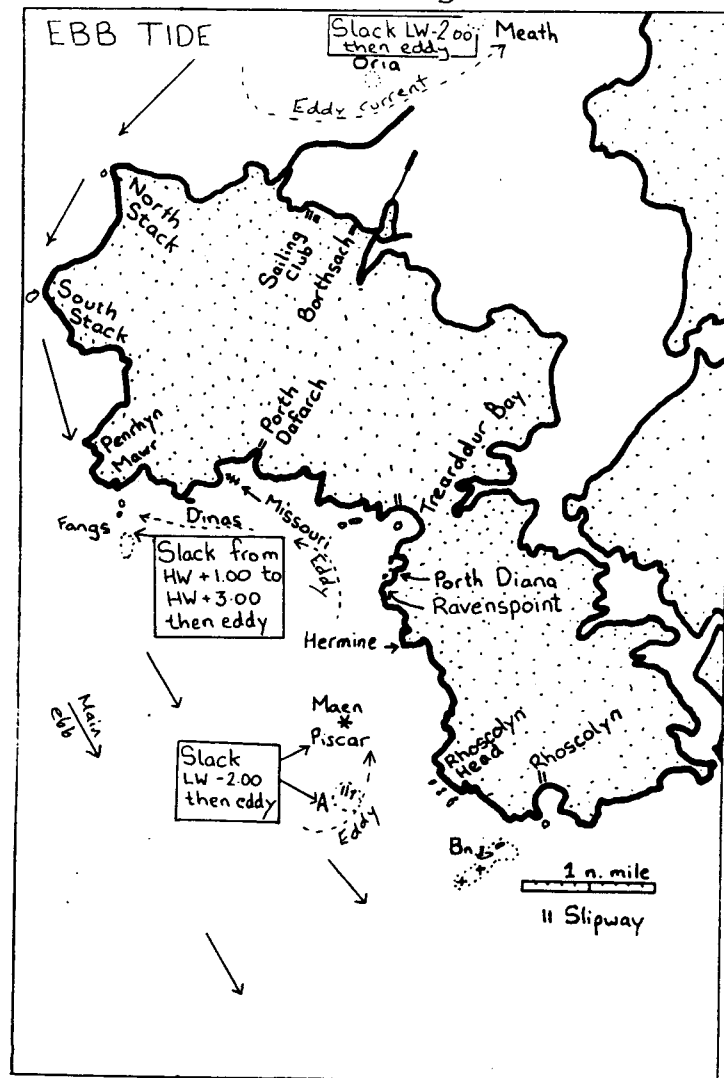
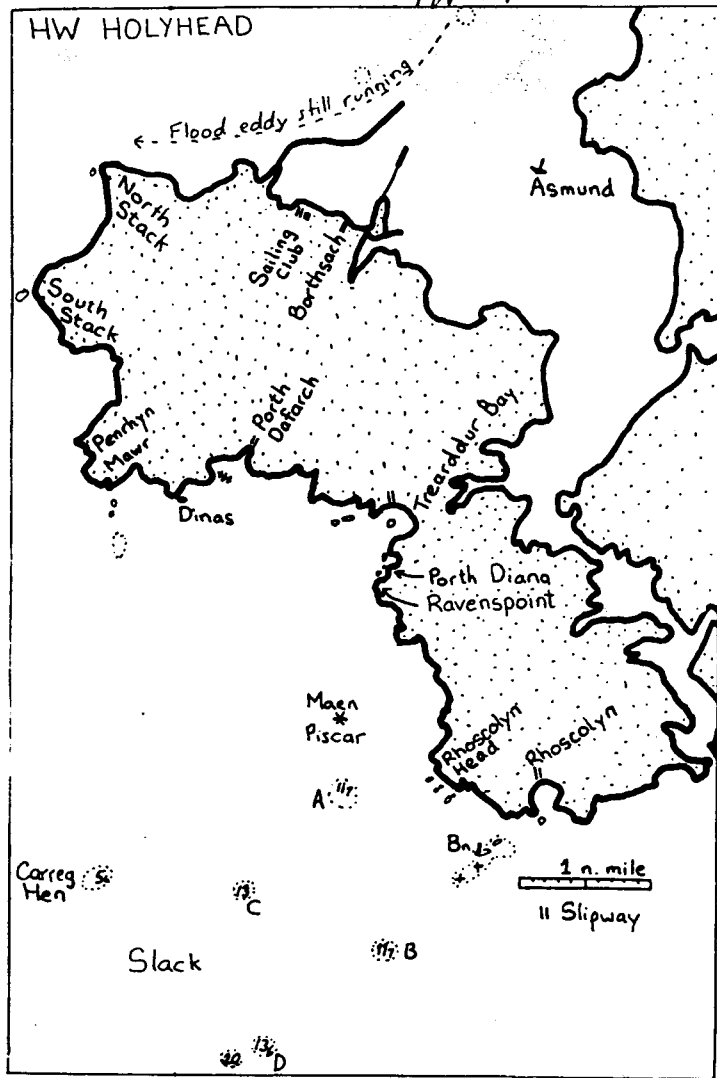
The Holyhead Sailing Club slip requires permission to be sought (ask for "Bill the boatman!"); if this is not available try the Borthsach slip - narrow and dog-legged!

SHORE-DIVE SITES FOR OPEN-WATER LESSONS

All the sites are much better at HW than LW. Porth Diana, near Trearddur Bay, offers clean sand in a sheltered cove at HW, with access to a deeper but less-sheltered lagoon - but beware traffic wardens! 500 metres East of the Holyhead Sailing Club slip is the "Zodiac Wine Bar" which offers clean shingle at HW (giving way to kelp and stinking mud further out). Nearby McKenzie Pier offers easy access to deeper water, but beware boat traffic.

DECCA

Decca sets appear to believe they are a little NE of their true position; this writer is currently entering corrections of -0.07 minutes to latitude and +0.12 minutes to longitude.

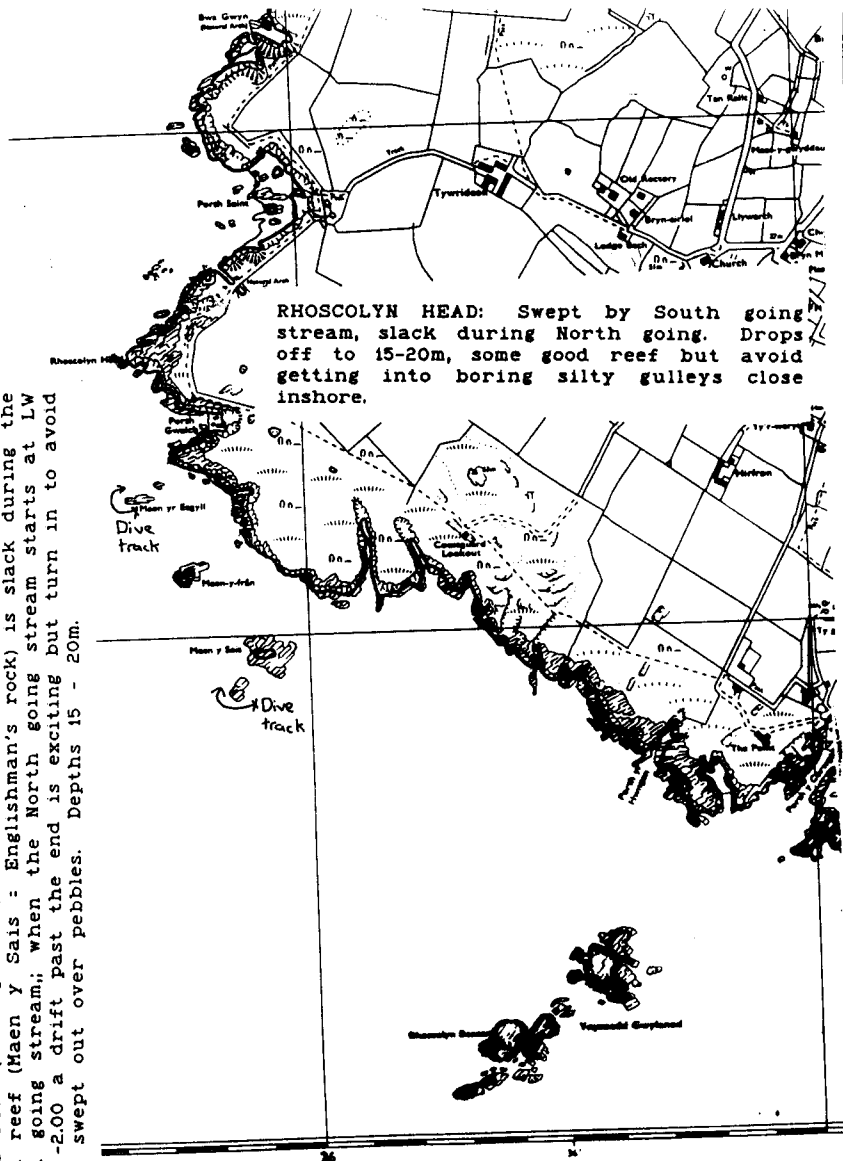


RHOSCOLYN HEAD REEFS: Three reefs which between them offer guaranteed slack water during the tide.

Northernmost reef (Maen yr Esgyll) is slack during North-going stream; best dived from the South side; heading out around end of reef takes you down to 20-22m.

Middle reef (Maen y Fran) drops quickly down to pebbles. South reef (Maen y Sais - Englishman's rock) is slack during the South going stream; when the North going stream starts at LW H'hd -2.00 a drift past the end is exciting but turn in to avoid being swept out over pebbles. Depths 15 - 20m.

RHOSCOLYN BEACON ROCKS: Outer end offers tide-swept environment, possible at slack or drift during gentler stages of tide. Depths 15-25m. More rock, less sand on South side.

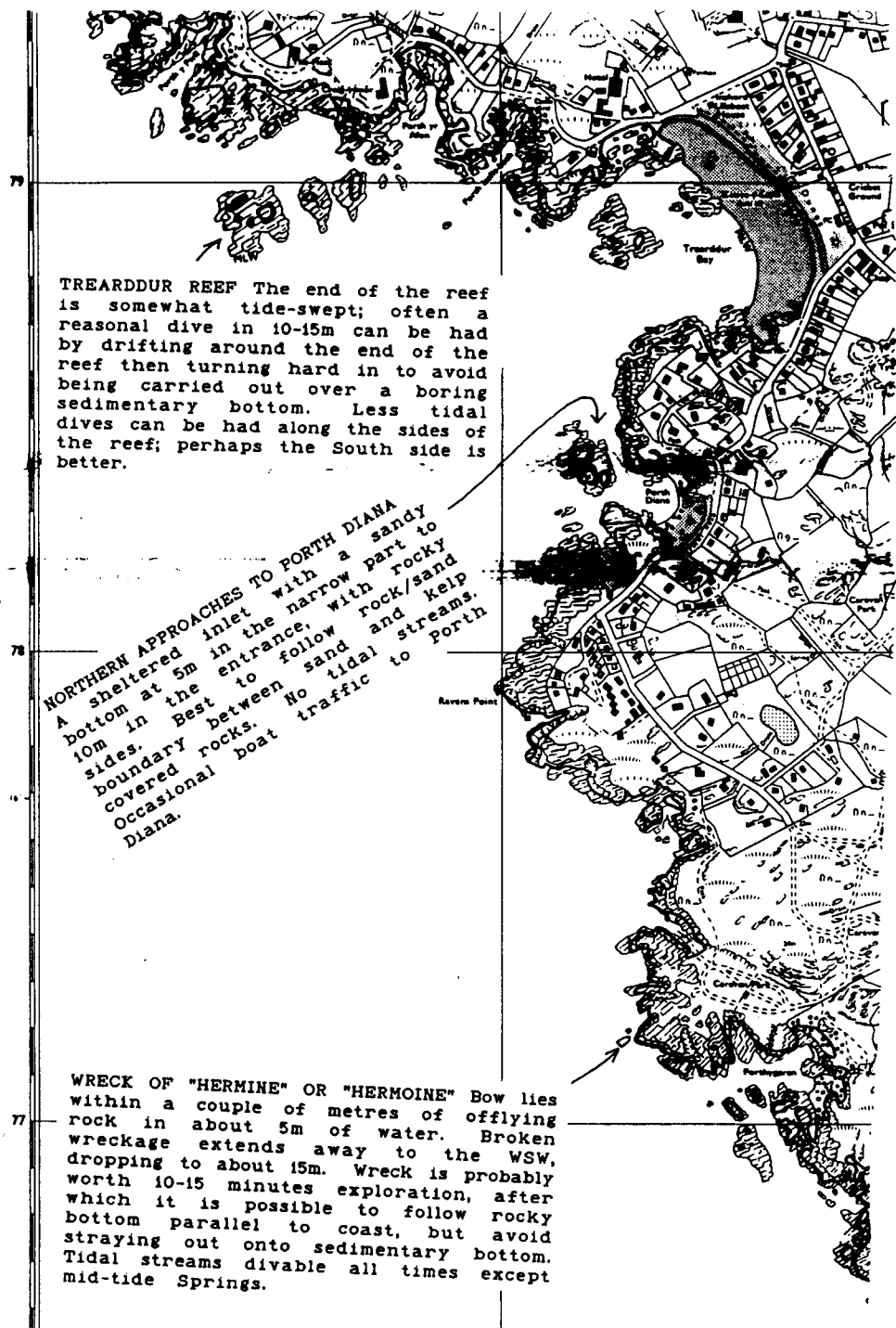


RHOSCOLYN HEAD: Swept by South going stream, slack during North going. Drops off to 15-20m, some good reef but avoid getting into boring silty gulleys close inshore.

TREARDDUR REEF The end of the reef is somewhat tide-swept; often a reasonable dive in 10-15m can be had by drifting around the end of the reef then turning hard in to avoid being carried out over a boring sedimentary bottom. Less tidal dives can be had along the sides of the reef; perhaps the South side is better.

NORTHERN APPROACHES TO PORTH DIANA A sheltered inlet with a sandy bottom at 5m in the narrow part to 10m in the entrance, with rocky sides. Best to follow rock/sand boundary between sand and kelp covered rocks. No tidal streams. Occasional boat traffic to Porth Diana.

WRECK OF "HERMINE" OR "HERMOINE" Bow lies within a couple of metres of offlying rock in about 5m of water. Broken wreckage extends away to the WSW, dropping to about 15m. Wreck is probably worth 10-15 minutes exploration, after which it is possible to follow rocky bottom parallel to coast, but avoid straying out onto sedimentary bottom. Tidal streams dividable all times except mid-tide Springs.

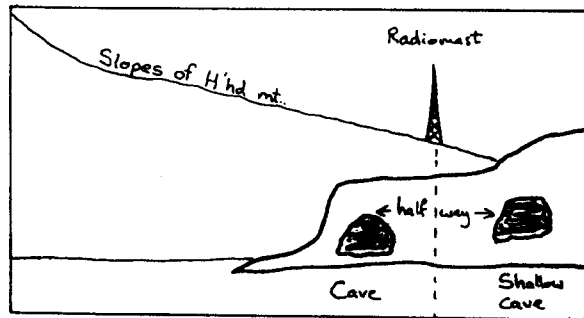
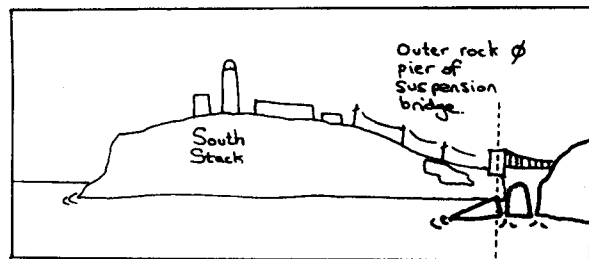
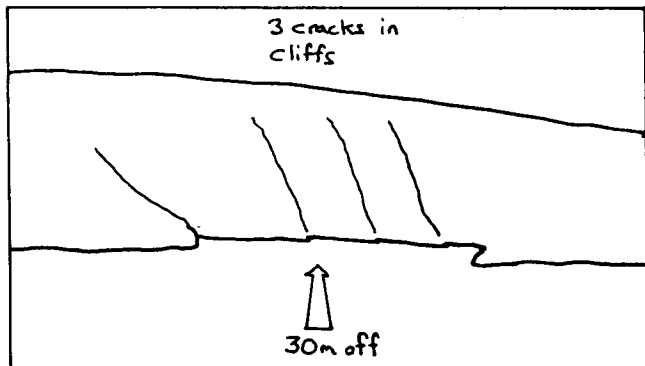


5/9/82 THE "PRIMROSE HILL"

Description - mixed wreckage, including bricks and copper sheathing, lying in a rocky gully in about 12 metres of water at HWS.

Tidal currents - diving at 0.00 L'pl on a 9.2 metre tide, the divers found a strong eddy current building up in Abraham's Bosom, setting anti-clockwise around the bay. As time went by, diving became less & less pleasant in the current - although still possible.

Re-location - see diagrams below:-

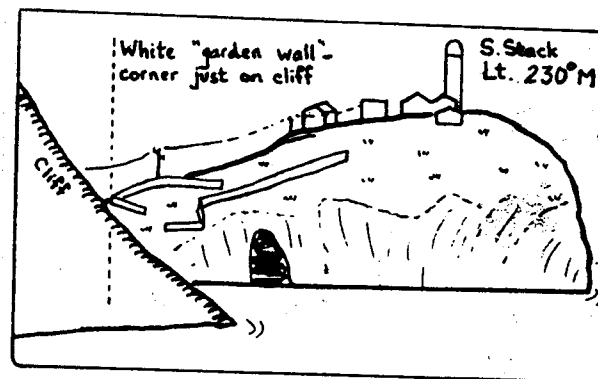
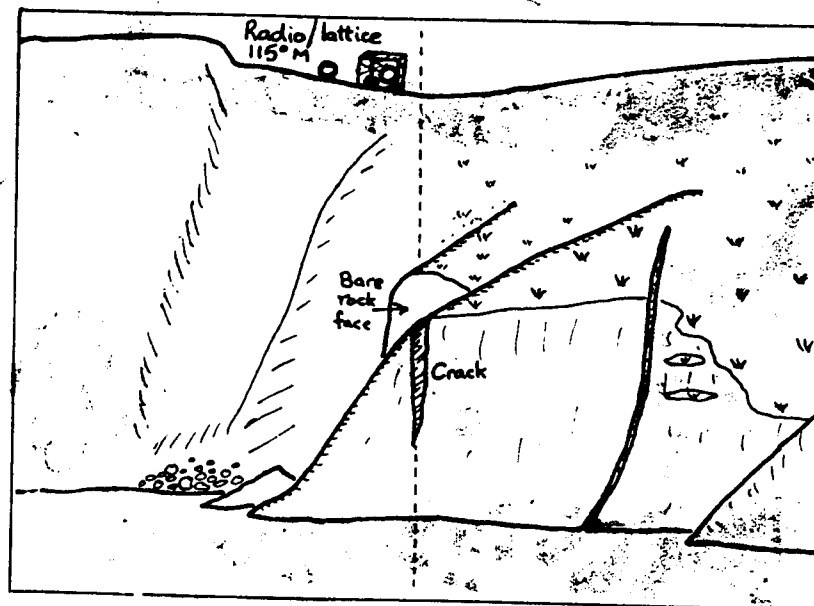


AUGUST 1984: THE "OLD", GOGARTH BAY.

The wreckage of the Harold lies in approx. 12 metres of water on a shingle bottom. A propellor and shaft, boilers, bollards and part of the stern section are recognisable, but there is a great deal of scattered metal.

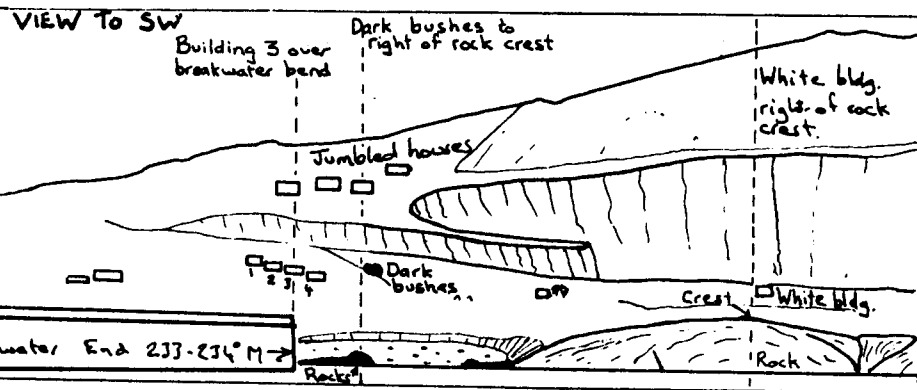
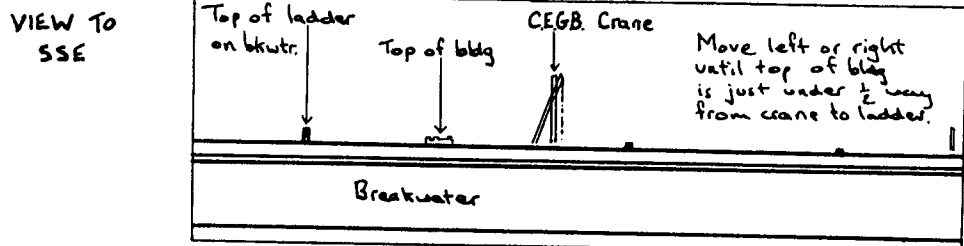
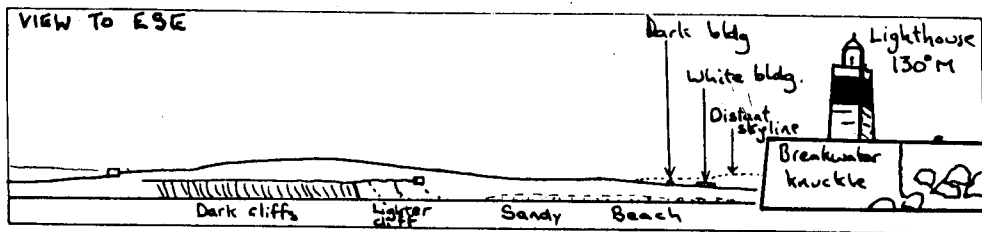
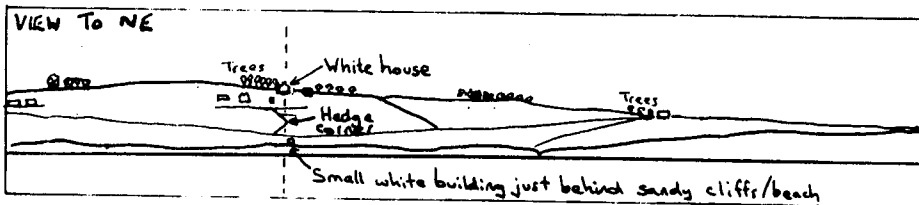
Tidal conditions: On a neap tide a divable but unpleasant current was found to be running towards North Stack between - 2.00 and - 0.45 before LW Holyhead (due either to a "young flood" or (more likely) a counter-current set up by the dying ebb tide.) Slack water (LW) off South Stack was later observed to occur at about the time of LW Holyhead (Local Pilot gives slack - 0.08).

Position: See diagrams below. Additionally, N. Stack bears 075°M. N.B. All bearings & transits taken from buoy subject to tidal stream towards North Stack.



JSC
Action/adjustments
to RLS Suite
of Church B&C

WRECK OF THE "LADY MATH" OFF HOLYHEAD



Somewhat broken up wreck in 22 metres of water. Slack 2 hours before HW & LW Holyhead.

N.B. White paint mark on outside of Breakwater parapet lines up with AAM Chy 17.7.93 - Decca (uncorrected)

1st reading: 53 20.23' N 4° 37.52' W

2nd reading: 53 20.18' N 4° 37.54' W

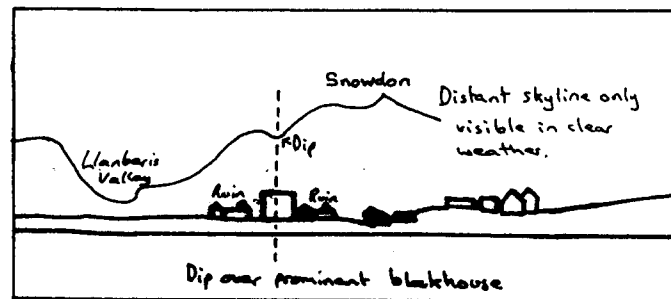
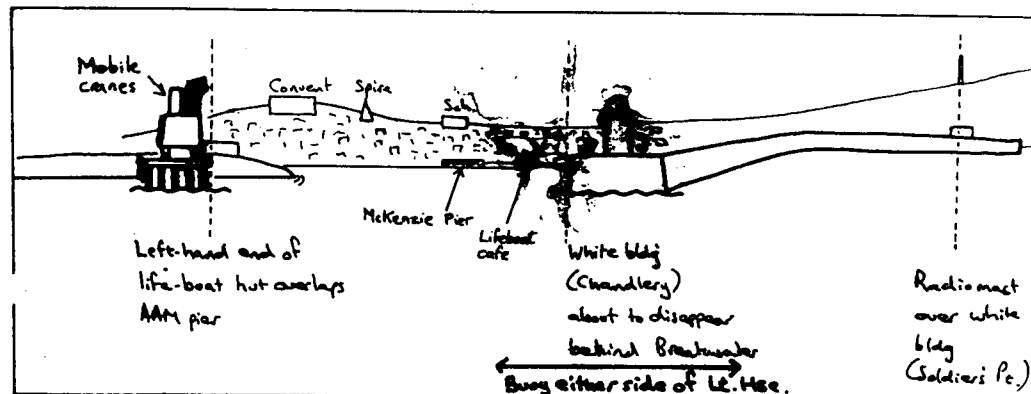
Boat was lying at anchor to the East of the wreck, with anchor in wreckage.

Description: Lying on a mud and stone bottom of around 16 metres (at LWN), the wreck rises up perhaps 6 metres proud of the bottom. The hull plating is in the process of collapsing to the bottom; the most impressive objects are probably the boilers, but there are several other structures which are of interest: (i) what might be an after bridge or deck house, consisting of a skylight flanked to port and starboard by two rectangular towers a couple of metres high and pierced by a circular hole in each case; (ii) the stern poop-deck, complete with winding gear and stern-rail (but no propeller) and (reported by other divers) (iii) the bow section with anchors. Although the u/w visibility on the dive in question was about 7 metres, a layer of fine silt covering everything suggested that the visibility is not always so good. Fish life prolific!

Tidal streams: It was absolutely slack -2.00 before LWN at Holyhead; at 11.00 the "young flood" had begun to flow but the wreck was still divable.

Re-location: Thick mist on the day in question prevented the observation of reliable transits or bearings, but the wreck lies quite close to the wreck buoy - perhaps 200 metres or so to the ENE. (The buoy's position has been changed since the days of the old fathoms chart.

MEATH



Description - 3 areas shown on map:- A, B & C (A dived on an ea or occasion)

A is a rocky area in which a 'tooth' of rock breaks surface at LWN. A little to the S.E. of this is the rocky slope of the Skerries, apparently leading down into the depths. On this slope lies an old slate wreck - large slates and odd pieces of timber were found - strewn down the slope between approx 9 - 14 metres.

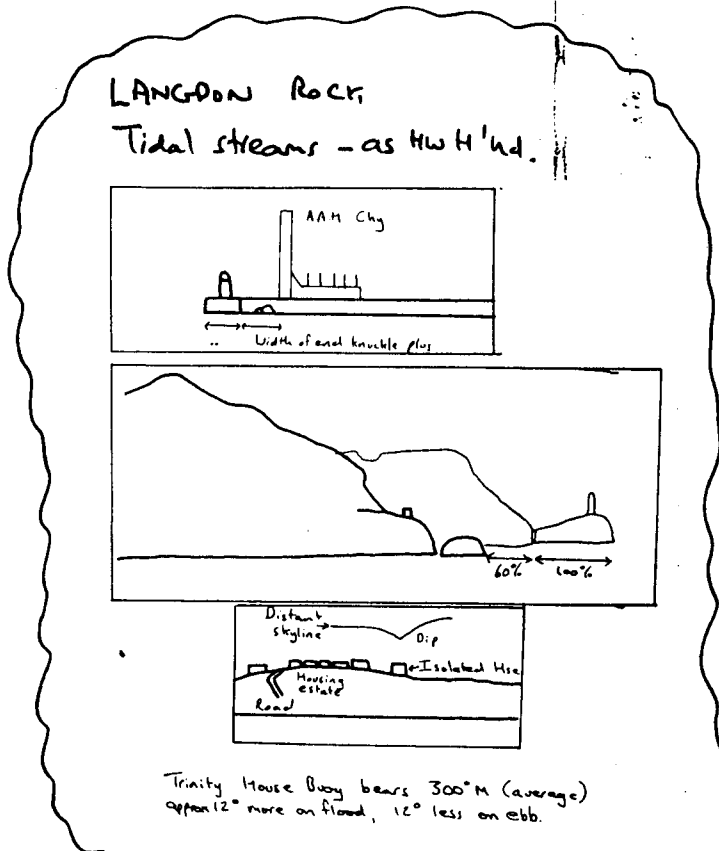
B is the area just SE of the lighthouse rocks. There is supposed to be a wreck here, but dives revealed a rocky bottom out of the tide during the last of the flood.

C is the wreck of the "Angliaman" or "Angloman", sunk in the late 19th Century while carrying cattle. She lies on the NW side of the submarine ridge connecting the West Platters with the Skerries, starting in about 8 metres and going down to about 16 m. As ever, the boilers remain, together with fairly large sections of plating making her a fairly interesting wreck despite the scattering effect of storms.

Warning: a strong flood develops, running through great tunnel-like masses of plating, and then carries the diver at accelerating speed over the ridge connecting the West Platters to the Skerries. The West Platters and off-lying rocks near the Skerries are a danger to small boats.

Tidal streams - the previously accepted constant of -2.00 L'pl appears to be incorrect; at LWN a constant of -1.00 seems to apply, but the tide is dividable for perhaps 30 mins either side of that. Area 'A' is dividable for some considerable time after LW, and area 'B' seems to be dividable perhaps one hour before LW.

Location - see map below:-



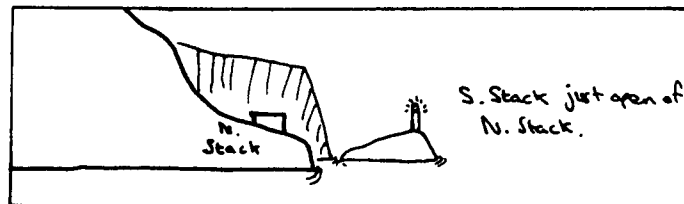
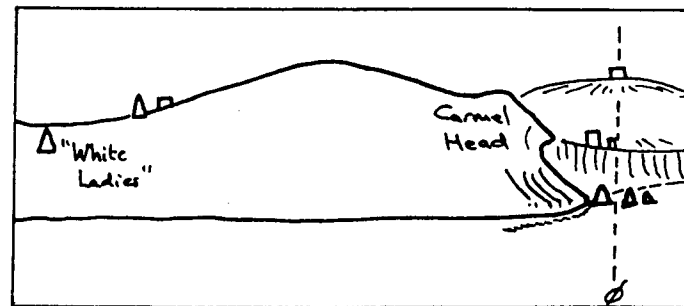
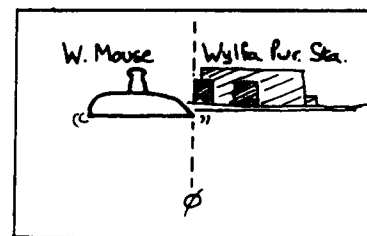
FROM OLD SKETCH

WRECK OF "CASTILLIA. ON EAST PLATTERS, NEAR THE SKERRIES

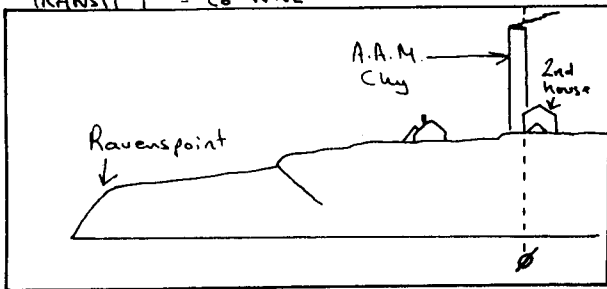
Description: The wreck lies upside-down on the side of the rock, between the rock's summit (which shows at LWS) and the Skerries. The bow section lies in about 12 metre while lower down the cargo of shells is exposed; the two boilers lie side by side above what appears to be a row of 3 furnaces. Further aft again, the hull is more intact and the stern forms an imposing sight rising upwards from just over 30 metres. The wreck was owned by Mr. Graham Roy of Gwynedd Branch who salvaged the propellor with the aid of 100 lbs of gelignite, allegedly upsetting the Skerries lighthouse keepers! There has been some talk of it being sold to the proprietor of the diving centre at Neuadd, Cemlyn. There is a rumour to the effect that the Government will not sell the cargo as it includes shells; as the ship was supposedly en route to Portugal (a neutral country) she shouldn't! The detonator caps of these shells will definitely still explode and are best left alone.

Tidal streams: The wreck is very tidal and even on neap tides a two-shift dive inevitably means a struggle for one of the shifts. The constant of -2.00 before LWN Liverpool used to be used, but -1.30 is more accurate. HW gives little slack.

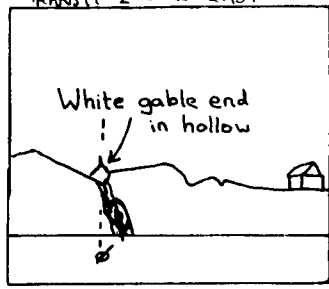
Re-location: Arriving well before slack allows one to locate the rock by means of the overfalls - often useful as the rock is still covered at LWN, although only just! Dive down the rock towards the Skerries. The transits below were drawn at anchor on the flood tide:



TRANSIT 1 - to NNE



TRANSIT 2 - to EAST



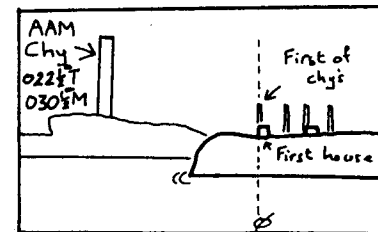
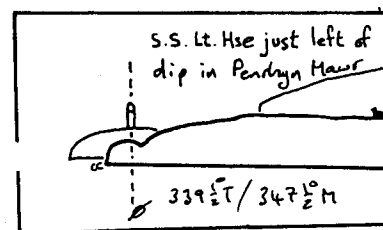
PINNACLE "C"

Description - a pinnacle rock situated a mile closer in to shore than Carreg Hen. Surrounding depths at HW went down to 34 metres, rising to 26 metres at the base then steeply upwards to a fairly flat summit with minimum depth about 16 metres. Relative poor visibility could not conceal the fact that the rock surface appeared to be more broken and full of interesting gullies than pinnacles "A" & "B". At 26 metres the surrounding seabed also seemed to consist of rocky ridges with sand or shingle between

Tidal streams - a HW slack of -1.00 before HW Liverpool was confirmed. It would be interesting to see if LW slack follows the pattern for the pinnacles closer inshore (i.e. -3.00 L'pool) or if it coincides with the time of LW in the area (about -1.30). On the date of the visit, the 8 metre tide (at L'pool) did nothing to help visib

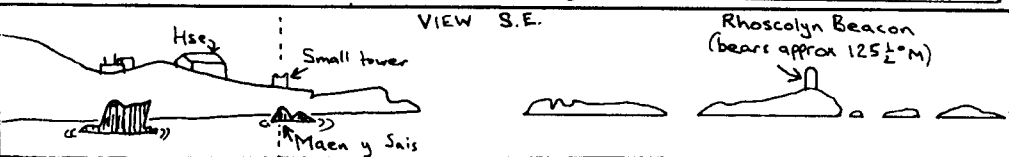
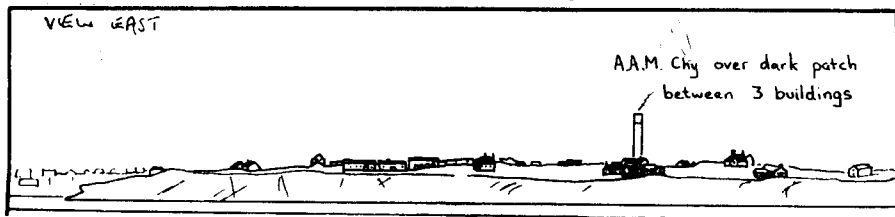
Re-location

Rhoscolyn Beacon bears 082T/090M. Also the transits & bearings below:-

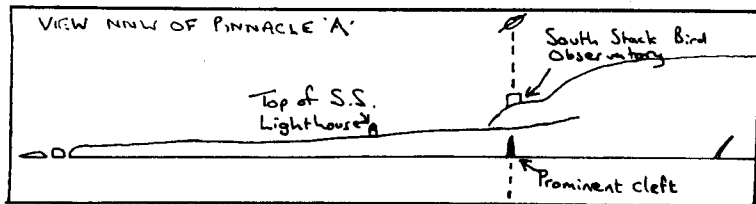


PINNACLE "A"

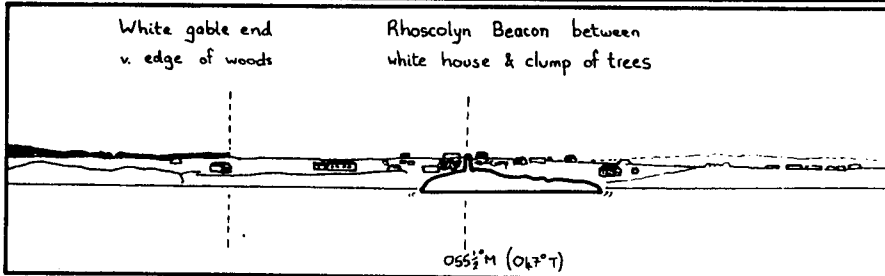
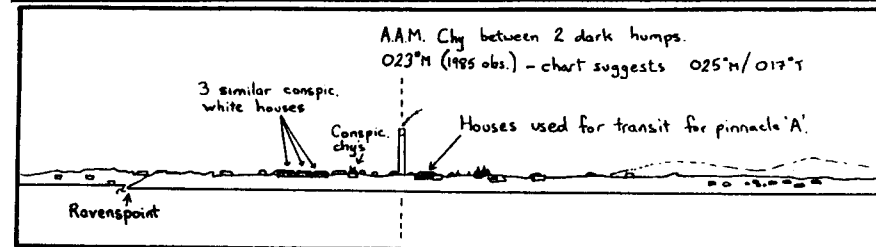
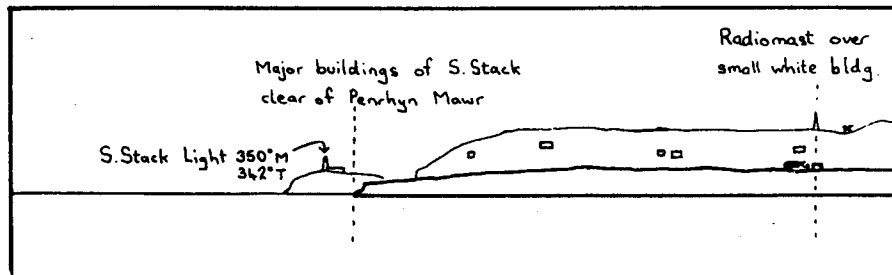
Description - a rock pinnacle rising from 20 - 24 metres to 9 metres. The top is covered in small anemones; deep clefts lead down the sides of the rock to the bottom which consists of some stones and shell sand, but also many rocky ridges. One pair of divers discovered another peak, rising to about 12 metres, some distance to the S.W. The life in the area was prolific; it was a very good dive.



Slack at HW and LW -2.00

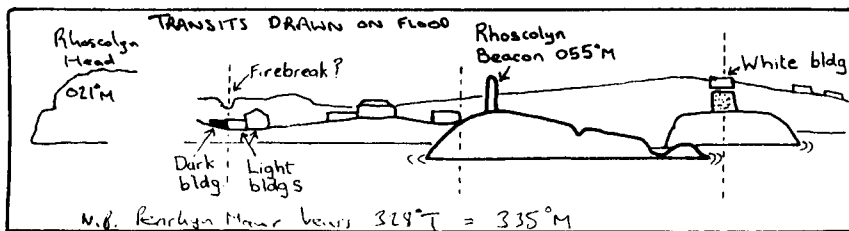


PINNACLE "D"



PINNACLE "B"

Description - possibly slightly smaller than pinnacle A, the depths and topography are remarkably similar.



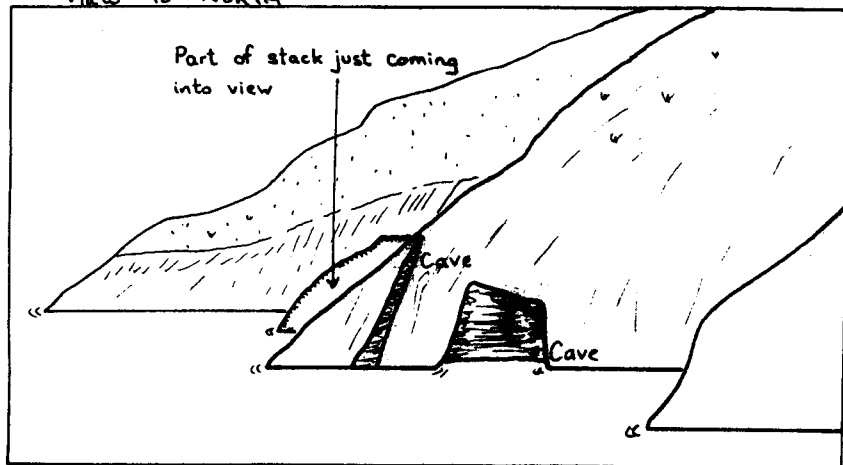
SLATE-WRECK OFF PEN Y CIL HEADLAND, ABERDARON (AUG. 1984)

Scattered slates surrounded a mound of closely packed slates in 26m, a little way off the main cliffs hereabouts which go down to 22m. Some of the slates were about a metre long, so are probably 19th Century.

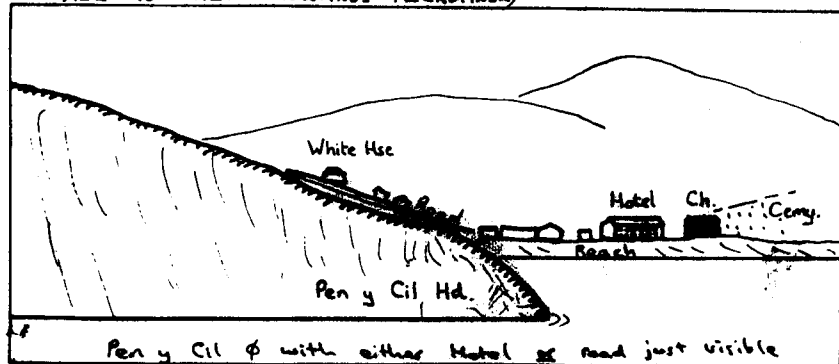
Tidal streams: Dives around HW revealed that a brief period of slack (+0.45 HW Holyhead) was followed by a strong current, but as this ebb current built up it set off the shore leaving a longer period of slack observed between +2.00 and +3.00 HW Holyhead - although some slight trace of the current was sometimes perceptible.

Position: See approximate transits below:-

VIEW TO NORTH



VIEW TO N.E. (TOWARDS ABERDARON)



Additional tidal data: On a subsequent visit, also at HWS, a fairly strong eddy current was observed pouring out of Aberdaron Bay past Pen y Cil and thence over the wreck at +2.00 HW Holyhead; by +3.00 HW Holyhead the tidal streams were milder, with a South-going stream over the wreck contrasting with a North-going stream against the cliffs just a few metres away. Divers at +2.00 found the going difficult; at +3.00 there was no problem.

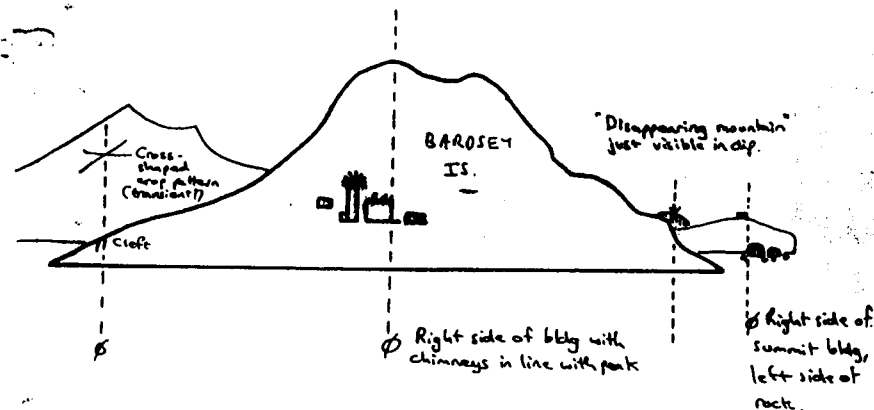
JTC.

CASWENAN ROCK (off Bardsey Island)

Descr on: A steep-sided pinnacle with a saucer shaped top at about 24 metres descending to about 45 to 50 metres, where the bottom is covered by huge boulders. The rock is extremely tideswept and is bare of the larger forms of life.

Tidal streams: LWN coincides approximately with the time at Liverpool. Divers searching for the overfalls should note that the turbulence extends a great distance down-tide. *HWS - don't bother - there is virtually no slack!*

Re-location: The following transits have been observed:



Decca Coordinates observed 28.08.99 in 22-24 m at LWN (uncorrected for Decca error)

Bench 52° 46' 24" N
Down: 4 49' 24" W
Dors 52 44 41 N
Decan 4 49 10 W

SOME TIDAL OBSERVATIONS AROUND HW AT BARDSEY & BARDSEY SOUND

The shelf to the West of the lighthouse on Bardsey: a slight current to the North was observed from -1/2 hour to +1 1/2 hours HW Holyhead on Springs.

The SW Tip: was observed to be slack at +1 1/2 hours Holyhead.

The area to the SE of the lighthouse: After HW locally, tidal streams ran gently to the NE at first, then an eddy built up and reversed the flow. The area was dived comfortably up to HW Holyhead +2 1/2 hours.

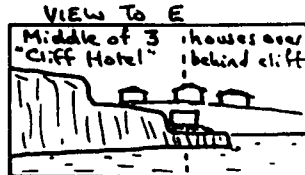
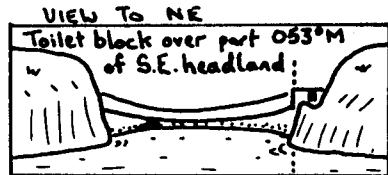
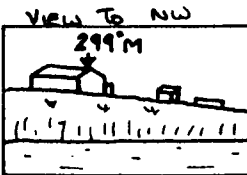
North side of Bardsey: Appeared to be slack +0.45 minutes after HW Holyhead (the H_w reached 4.9m); by +1.15 the ebb was running strongly (taking the divers down to 36m on the NE tip of Bardsey - and the bottom was still going down!).

Carreg Ddu: On Springs, divable from -0.3 to +0.30 HW Holyhead (and thereafter divable on "slack" shelf to South of Carreg Ddu in depths down to 18m.) Drift divi was possible past Carreg Ddu at about +3.00 HW Holyhead as the main current then set further out into the Sound.

INSHORE DIVE SITES - S.W. SIDE OF HOLY ISLE

WRECK OF MISSOURI

Sometimes nick-named the "Misery", she lies 500m out from Porthdafarch beach in about 10m depth. The stern lies off the rocky headland to the WSW of Porthdafarch, with the bows to the SE. The wreck is broken up with only the lower part of the hull, boilers and part of the bow recognisable. She is not tidal, so has little life, but makes an acceptable "First wreck dive". Best found by sounding or grapnelling along the transit TOILET BLOCK bisected by RIGHT HAND HEADLAND of Porthdafarch. Shifting sand sometimes makes location difficult.



DINAS STACK Offers a drift past the headland dropping in 15/25m.

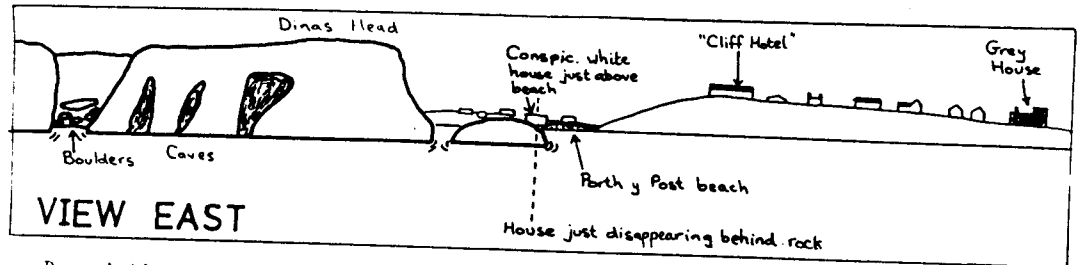
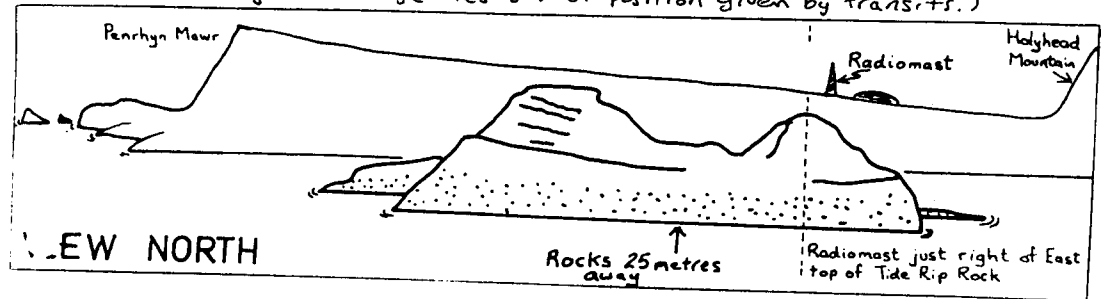
4.9.83 THE FALLS: WRECK OF THE "EDITOR": FURTHER INFORMATION

According to Fred Hughes' information from the Hydrographic Department, the wreckage close off Tide-rip Rock is the "Editor".

Tidal streams: Although there is a brief slack at HW Holyhead, this is followed by an early ebb across the Fangs to the Eastwards and around Penrhos Bay. As the ebb builds up the offset from Penrhyn Mawr and South Stack leaves the Fangs almost perfectly slack from HW + 1.00 to at least HW + 3.00 (after which a back eddy in Penrhos Bay is liable to cause a Westwards flow across the Fangs).

Location of "Editor": the following transits have been observed:-

(Main body of wreckage lies SW of position given by transits.)



Description - large area in about 12-15 metres, consisting of interesting rocky gullies strewn with wreckage, probably from several ships. Ten or twenty metres directly off Tide-Rip Rocks (outermost rock that still shows at HW) lies a boiler turned on its end, also large anchor, old winches and masses of plating. Further out, lead pipes have been found some years ago. Whole area is kept clear of silt by very strong flood tide.

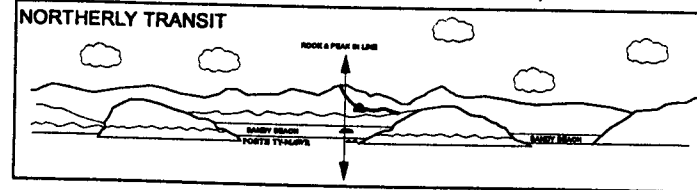
POSITIONS OF WRECKS, PINNACLS, ETC

positions given below were mostly obtained from Admiralty charts and are therefore approximate. Please notify me when you can supply a position measured by Decca.

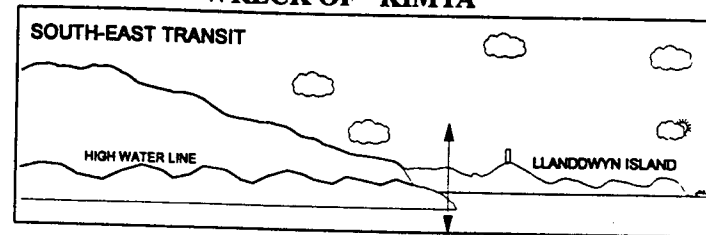
Note that for compatibility with Decca, positions are given in degrees, minutes, and 100's of a minute; not degrees, minutes, and seconds.

Point No	Location	Area	Position		Source
			Lat (N)	Long (W)	
		LEFT FREE FOR GENERAL USE			
		LEFT FREE FOR GENERAL USE			
		LEFT FREE FOR GENERAL USE			
	Pinnacle A	S.W. of Trearddur Bay	53° 14.68'	04° 37.80'	Chart 1970
	Pinnacle B	"	53° 13.46'	04° 37.36'	"
	Pinnacle C	"	53° 13.89'	04° 39.16'	"
	Pinnacle D	"	53° 12.72'	04° 38.87'	"
	Careg Hen	"	53° 14.00'	04° 40.97'	"
	Maen Pysgar	"	53° 15.20'	04° 37.91'	"
	Unknown Wreck 1	Caernarvon Bay	53° 04.05'	04° 40.00'	? " 15 Not known
	" 2	"	53° 05.95'	04° 33.20'	" 14.7
	" 3	"	53° 14.78'	04° 46.78'	" 28
	" 4	"	53° 14.38'	04° 49.09'	" 26
	" 5	"	53° 14.62'	04° 49.23'	" 28
	" 6	"	53° 15.81'	04° 49.70'	" 30
	Orla	N. of Holyhead B'water	53° 20.00'	04° 37.68'	Chart 1413 ✓
	Meath	NE. of Holyhead B'water	53° 20.47'	04° 36.29'	" ✓
	Maarten Cornelis	N.W. of South Stack	53° 18.98'	04° 43.32'	" ✓
	Unknown Wreck	W. of The Fangs	53° 16.20'	04° 42.46'	" ✓
	"	W. of North Stack	53° 19.30'	04° 41.84'	" ✓
	"	N.W. of North Stack	53° 20.02'	04° 43.52'	" ✓

Waypoint Number	Location	Area	Position		Source
			Lat (N)	Long (W)	
	Holyhead Pinnacle	N. of Holyhead B'water	53° 20.32'	04° 37.20'	Chart 1413
	Langdon Rock	N. of Holyhead B'water	53° 22.76'	04° 38.52'	"
	East Platters	SE. of The Skerries	53° 24.95'	04° 35.75'	"
	Ethel Rock	N. of Carmel Head	53° 26.40'	04° 33.52'	"
	Coal Rock	"	53° 26.13'	04° 32.58'	"
	Victoria Bank	NE. of Carmel Head	53° 25.43'	04° 31.42'	"
	Archdeacon Rock	N. of Cemlyn	53° 26.52'	04° 31.57'	"
	Unknown Wreck	N. of Victoria Bank	53° 27.58'	04° 31.50'	"
	Holyhead B'water light	-	53° 19.84'	04° 37.09'	"
	Trearddur Bay	(1/2 mile offshore)	53° 16.46'	04° 37.67'	"
	Castilian	East Platters	53° 24.95'	04° 35.78'	Wreck Register
	Carwenan	S.W. of Bardsey	52° 43.96'	04° 49.05'	Chart 1970
	Aberdaron Beach	-	52° 48.10'	04° 42.60'	"
	Unknown Wreck	Tremadoc Bay	52° 52.10'	04° 17.19'	"
	"	"	52° 51.52'	04° 10.50'	"
	"	"	52° 51.18'	04° 22.50'	"



WRECK OF "KIMYA"



R. Baker