

Petrified moss (tufa) rediscovered in the Helford

Recently tufa, or petrified moss as it was called in earlier times, was found on the east side of Bosahan Cove, covered with a growth of fresh moss and the great scented liverwort, *Conocephalum conicum*, in a narrow cleft paralleling the south side of the Helford.

Tufa is a variety of limestone, formed by the precipitation of calcium carbonate from coastal fresh water seeps in Cornwall. Elsewhere in Britain it is common in inland streams and valley sides in areas underlain by limestones and is formed by solution of these limestones and redeposition as tufa.

Further investigation of the Helford occurrence has revealed that:

- A specimen of this petrified moss at Bosahan was presented to the Royal Institution of Cornwall in 1842, almost exactly 170 years ago, by the then Vicar of Manaccan, the Reverend Edward Budge. His neighbour, the Rector of Mawnan from across the Helford, had told him about it.
- Tufa is by no means confined to Bosahan Cove but occurs west of Padgagarrack Cove and further east in the cliffs above the Gew, in association with moss and a trailing species of bent grass, *Agrostis* sp.
- *Conocephalum conicum* is not restricted to the tufa site at Bosahan Cove but can be found in seeps on the inland footpath from here to Helford and beyond, where there is no tufa.

The tufa occurrences in the Helford present an enigma, recognised by the Rev. Budge long ago. There are no



*Great scented liverwort on tufa at Bosahan Cove.
Peter Ealey*

obvious limestones in the area. This part of the Helford is dominated by slates and sandstones of the Devonian Portscatho Formation. However Budge had heard Charles Peach, who was a mounted coast guard or riding officer with a passion for fossil collecting at the time, give a paper at the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall in Penzance a year earlier describing fossils and tufa at Gorran Haven where limestones are embedded in slates. Budge therefore suggested that there were limestones, yet to be discovered, in the hills behind the south side of the Helford. The work of subsequent geologists has in fact indicated that the rocks in Gorran Haven studied by Peach, now known as the Roseland Breccia Formation do re-appear on the south side of the Helford as shown in the HVMCA Geology of the Helford leaflet. The limestone beds still remain to be found!

Peter Ealey, Cornwall Geoconservation Group



Tufa coated cave at the Gew with trailing grass curtain. Peter Ealey

The Final Countdown of Your Shore

Although it is a cliché, I simply cannot believe how time flies by. It seems only yesterday that I was writing my first article for the HMCG newsletter back in Spring 2010. And now, in Spring 2012, we have only one year left of this 36 month, Heritage Lottery Funded project – Your Shore.

To recap, the Your Shore project is centred on the Voluntary Marine Conservation Areas (VMCAs) of St Agnes and Polzeath on the north coast, and Looe, Fowey and, of course, Helford on the south. Within these areas, we are working on the ground and encouraging people to learn about our diverse coast and sea and, more importantly, encouraging them to do their bit to protect it. Over the past two years I have been working with a diverse range of people, from tourists to local businesses to volunteers. In fact, over 10,000 people have been involved in the Your Shore project and the Cornish VMCAs since this project started, quite a number! The most fun audience to engage, however, has to be the local school groups!

Within the Helford VMCA I have worked with several schools over the past two years including Constantine, Coverack, St Keverne, Boskenwyn and Mawnan Smith. The local school children are one of the most important groups that I work with. They are the next generation of the river. It is essential that they are aware of the environment around them and how the health of it is important in their lives and lifestyles. One fantastic way of engaging the students is taking them out of the classroom and on a Seashore Safari. During these sessions we cover lots of different topics such as classification, adaptation, lifecycles and food webs by carrying out various activities such as rockpooling or scavenger hunting. Seeing the enthusiasm and wonder of the children when learning about the marine environment always make these days one of the best jobs in the world! If you want to see more of how we run these rockpool rambles, check

out our Cornwall Wildlife Trust 'You Tube' page and search 'Fowey Seashore Safari'. It will be sure to make you smile!

Running the school Seashore Safaris are enjoyable, but one major aim of the Your Shore project is to ensure that the VMCAs and the work we do within them is sustainable. Therefore, rather than continue with schools relying on Cornwall Wildlife Trust for outdoor education sessions, we are offering free training sessions for the teachers of the local VMCA schools so that they can run these sessions themselves in the future, past the end of the project. So if you know of any teachers who may be interested in this, please do put them in contact with me.

Aside from the work with schools, another way of making the VMCA groups sustainable is by empowering the local volunteers to take on more responsibility – run events or lead in local promotion. The ultimate success would be to see local groups, like the HMCG, set up within the other areas of Polzeath, St Agnes and Looe. To help this process along I organized a conference which took place on Saturday 25th February for the volunteers to enable the VMCAs to share ideas and inspire each other to continue growing and developing (see photo p11). With only 12 months left to go, there is a lot still to be done but I am positive about the future of these important places.

For any information about the Your Shore project, the school or volunteer work within the Helford VMCA, or about any of the other VMCAs in the county please contact me on abby.crosby@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk or check our website www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/yourshore

Abby Crosby, Your Shore project officer, Cornwall Wildlife Trust



*School group learning about marine protected areas and supporting the Wildlife Trust Petition Fish campaign.
Abby Crosby.*

HMCG Members Committee, Chairman's report Spring 2012

Our new year kicked off well with about 100 people attending the talk by Andy Wyke on 'Coastal Ketches and Inside Barges'. Andy based some of his talk on a book, The Helford River Historic Audit. Some people asked about how to get it. The book is available from Cornwall Council (Historic Environment Dept, Old County Hall, Truro, TR1 3AY or tel. 01872323603) at a very reasonable £8. They have about 40 copies in total. We have 8 copies as well and can sell these at the same price.

The new events leaflet is in circulation and contains another excellent programme. See the back page for upcoming events. The talk this March had to be postponed last year and we are delighted to be able to reschedule. The AGM usually takes about half an hour prior to the talk. Then we move to our outside activities for the summer.

May I also draw your attention to the Photographic Competition (details are in the events leaflet). Although this closes in November, pictures can of course be taken at any time and one category is the seasons of the year around the Helford. If you keep your camera handy whenever you go out you may get that unexpected, special shot. Apart from anything else, it would be great to keep adding to our picture gallery on the website.

You might think about booking your place on The Conservation Cruise (1st July) sooner rather than later. It has always been fully booked and it is first come, first served.

The new year also means membership renewals and many thanks to the many who have already paid. May I use this to jog any memories if need be as it is time consuming and costly to send reminders.

Member numbers have held up well over the last year with a good level of new people joining. However please feel free to introduce us to people who have not yet joined. We would very much like to welcome new members.

It is also good to report that our corporate members and sponsors have renewed. Their contributions help in our ability to produce events and information that is vital to our activities.

Our finances remain in a healthy position I am pleased to say at this time.

Having said that there are several things we anticipate in the future that will require additional funding e.g. website and public display boards.

The Committee is doing a fantastic job and after many years of superb work, we are sorry to say that Paul Garrard has decided to step aside. We would like to hear from anyone interested in participating in the Committee and to have an initial chat about it. Feel free to call me on 01326340686 or email on coordinator@helfordvmca.co.uk

Vacancy for maternity cover: congratulations to Charli (Charlotte) Marshall, our co-ordinator, who is expecting a baby in mid June. She plans to take 6 months maternity leave from June which means that we need to cover this period with a new co-ordinator. This is one 'day', paid (flexible hours) per week and would be highly suitable to anyone wanting to get involved and having some hours available each week. Contact Charli on 07740090777 or email coordinator@helfordvmca.co.uk for more details.

Volunteers: It's a pleasure to report again that teams of volunteers are doing a great job with regular beach cleans, bird surveys, eels grass work, bass surveys and the resumption of shore surveys. We are truly grateful to all who take part and would encourage more to do so. The activity is very largely due to Abby's hard work and huge enthusiasm not just for the Helford VMCA but also for the other VMCA's around Cornwall.

Abby organised a conference on 25 February for all VMCA's to get together and exchange knowledge and experience. The day was a huge success with about 150 people involved. We will report later in more detail on this as we explore what ideas we shall implement as a result. A big thank you to Abby for making this happen.

We always need volunteers and if you would like to get involved in our volunteer activity in any way then also contact Abby on 07917 765 581 or email abby.crosby@cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk. Come along to one of our volunteer meetings and see what interests you.

Marine conservation legislation: I am sure you are aware that the process is underway to create some kind of protection for our marine environment and that a massive amount of work has taken place to get to a point where recommendations for Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) have been put forward to government. This has been widely reported and a lot of comment has appeared in our regional press, much of which has been misleading, regarding the Fal SAC (Special Area of Conservation) which includes The Helford.

Protection for our seas is long overdue in this country. We lag behind many countries in marine protection and dramatically lag behind the levels of protection we give to our land. This legislation is a small step in the right direction but is by no means certain to be approved as put forward.

Once studied by government, the proposals will be put out for final public consultation. This will be everyone's opportunity to make their thoughts known. No matter what your thoughts they are better put forward than left out. Opposition to any form of protection will always be well organised so it needs the input of all to provide balanced views. We shall aim to update you on timescales as they become clear. The Helford VMCA tries to take the views of commerce, leisure and environment in all it does with the overriding concern to conserve this unique area for all.

Finally on this subject: as part of the MCZ proposals there have been some places recommended to be created as 'Reference Areas'. These are locations considered to have important natural habitats that are to be reserves for special protection. The purpose is to be able to see what happens to a location that is free from human interference and to see how nature takes it on.

Our local Reference Area is recommended to be in a small area in the Carrick Roads, known as St Mawes bank. This proposal has generated a large reaction against it with some ridiculous headlines about its effect on the local economy. Rational response has not been given the same prominence. My belief is that the antagonism is largely down to misunderstanding. Can I ask you to look at the facts rather than the headlines. Please imagine what opportunity we have right now and how good it would be to have an area of coast that is pristine, however small, and to see what it becomes. Such knowledge could help the sustainable marine economy hugely in the future.

For full information about this important and I believe vital legislation please contact Rhiannon Pipkin (0300 060 2552) who in her work with Natural England has been fully involved with all aspects of this. Rhiannon will be pleased to answer any questions. As you know, Rhiannon sits on our committee and will keep us up to date.

There is a lot going on. May I thank everyone involved, the committee, volunteers, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, sponsors and all our members for your support.

Looking forward to seeing you at the events.

**David Thomson, Chairman Members Section
HMCG**

Eelgrass update

The good news is that the eelgrass PowerPoint presentation is finished and awaiting enthusiastic audiences. Unfortunately the local sailing clubs are no longer as keen – possibly because of the recent controversy in the Fal surrounding the reference area.

However by the time this newsletter reaches you the presentation should have had its premier at St Mawes which should be an interesting test.

Mike Langshaw, HMCG member and volunteer



Eelgrass in the Helford. Andy Pearson www.oceansedgephotography.co.uk

HMCG Advisory Group, annual report 2012

Advisory Section and Networking It has been another year of change in the Advisory Section with Abby Crosby leaving to develop the Your Shore project in June 2011 and Charlotte Marshall replacing her as coordinator. We are very fortunate that Abby is still as involved in the HMCG as she always was and continues to do great work for the Helford.

Quarterly Advisory Group meetings continue, with presentations from a wide range of individuals and organisations, including a viewing of some remotely operated vehicle (ROV) footage of the Helford eelgrass beds from Cornwall Inshore Fisheries Authority (CIFCA), a rundown of the monthly bird survey results from Dr Ilya Maclean (University of Exeter), and a report on coastal pollution response planning from Martin Rawling (Emergency Planning, Cornwall Council).

We continue to respond to the concerns of local residents and businesses, discussing issues such as illegal fishing, fisheries legislation, planning matters and developing conservation legislation at our meetings, which have been attended by an average of 13 Advisory Group members this year, representing everyone from landowners and local residents to statutory agencies and charities. Meetings of our minutes are sent to an advisory group of more than 60 individuals and organisations, allowing us to maintain working links with a diverse stakeholder group.

Projects It has been a year and a half since the Your Shore volunteer team met for the first time to discuss what work they would like to concentrate on in regards to environmental monitoring and coastal protection and their work continues in earnest, with a huge amount of volunteer driven projects currently ongoing in the Helford.

Regular litter picks continue, and the volunteers are now armed with HMCG high visibility vests. Mike Langshaw's ongoing surveys of the eelgrass beds and awareness raising this year has included the production and distribution of eelgrass posters to shops, boat clubs and chandleries in the area. Mike has also produced a Powerpoint presentation which he is keen to take to sailing clubs in the area. Compliance with the voluntary no anchoring zone seems to be high and the third buoy is no doubt valuable in this respect.

The monthly British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) started just over one year ago, the results of which feed into an international project. Dr Maclean has been working with the volunteers regularly on this and the surveys cover various sites around the Helford.

Co-ordinated by Rob Seebold, another Your Shore

and HMCG volunteer, a repeat of the Helford River Survey was completed in 2011 involving other HMCG members in addition to staff from the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and the Marine Biological Association.

If anyone is interested in becoming a HMCG volunteer, please contact Abby Crosby at Cornwall Wildlife Trust who coordinates a timetable of varied activities for volunteers and who would be delighted to hear from you.

Derek Goodwin has continued the bass surveys this year in all sorts of weather. Derek maintains close links with the CIFCA who regularly lend invaluable support and manpower to this project, along with regular volunteers. The results from these surveys are requested by several organisations including the Centre for Environmental, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas).

All of these activities have been reported on both in the Advisory Group meetings and in the newsletters. We are extremely grateful to all of the volunteers for their dedication and enthusiasm for their work on the Helford and we look forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

The annual Good Friday triggling attracted about 140 people to Bar Beach in 2011, although not all of them were collecting. A quick survey revealed that the vast majority of people were aware of the minimum size. Triggling also occurred at Treath and St Anthony. Pickers said that numbers were down on last year. There was also concern at the lack of small cockles. On the other hand there appeared to be increasing numbers of mussels along the foreshore and there did not appear to be any sign of triploid oysters which people have been concerned about.

The advisory group continues to develop links with the new Environment and Sustainability Institute at the University of Exeter, having attended two of their workshops (on marine conservation in Cornwall, and managing the environment for ecosystem services) in addition to developing two ideas for Masters student projects. Unfortunately there were no takers for either of the Masters projects this year but these can be recycled next year and we will also think of some new projects. Do get in touch if you have any ideas for a Masters student project.

Next month sees us working with Plymouth University, Angie Gall of Cornwall Wildlife Trust, and several HMCG members to survey the maerl and eelgrass habitats of the Helford with an ROV. This will be followed up by a Seasearch led dive survey later in the year in order to try and map these important habitats in the Helford.

Public Awareness The HMCG members section continue to run an excellent annual events programme and the 2012 season got off to a great start. We are grateful to Trebah who kindly donated some money towards the cost of the events leaflets production. If you're interested in sponsoring next year's leaflet please get in contact. This year's events leaflets have been distributed far and wide thanks to volunteers from the National Trust and our own volunteers. Our twice yearly newsletter continues, informing our members informed of activities in and around the Helford River. Suggestions for articles are always gratefully received.

The website (www.helfordmarineconservation.co.uk) has been updated with new reports, new fisheries legislation and our new events calendar by Jayne Herbert, webmaster and HMCG member. We are also in the process of developing a new website which will have a dynamic events calendar and activities / wildlife blog. This is being led by Jeff Meadows, another of our members.

Thanks

We would once again like to thank the National Seal Sanctuary, Gweek, which has continued to offer space for our volunteer meetings and is still looking to develop a local wildlife interpretation room in which it is happy to display material advertising the HMCG.

Thanks to the National Trust for their continued support of the group, including volunteer support. Also, thank you to the Helford Passage Car Park Trust, and Simon Walker as our representative, for their donation to the HMCG.

Grateful thanks to the refreshment team led by Margaret Burford.

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation continues to support the HMCG through funding the co-ordinator post, without which much of our work would not be possible and we are therefore extremely grateful.

Finally thanks must also be extended to all of our volunteers and sponsors, including our new corporate sponsors, and supporters of the HMCG whose passion for the Helford continues to make it a special place.

The Future

With the underwater survey coming up and a wealth of events and activities occurring throughout the year, 2012 will no doubt be another exciting time for the HMCG. As we strengthen working links with organisations such as the Marine Biological Association and University of Exeter we can diversify and extend survey work in the Helford. Combine with our fabulous volunteer team we anticipate another great year of activity on the river.

We will shortly be putting together a funding bid with the aim of extending the coordinator post because the funding is currently due to end in summer 2013. If possible, we will also try to get additional days funded (the coordinator is presently only funded for a day each week). Additional days will be targeted towards events, educational activities and more survey work around the river and if you have any other ideas get in touch. The coordinator has recently been asked to do several talks to local groups, including women's groups and a school, which will hopefully inspire further interest in the group and the members of the HMCG of the future.

David Muirhead (Advisory Section Chairman) and Charlotte Marshall (Co-ordinator)

Kay Hocking

Members will be saddened to learn that Dr Kaspar Hocking passed away on Monday 20th February. He had recently returned home from a cruise where he had celebrated his 99th birthday.

'K' as he was known, was a founder member of HMCG from 1987 and since then had continued to play an active part in the quarterly Advisory Group meetings and public events where his presence will be greatly missed. Sincere condolences are offered to his family."

Kaspar Hocking, was born in January 1913 in London, where his father worked in the Admiralty, after leaving Falmouth for work at the beginning of the twentieth century. Kaspar studied biology at Imperial

College in London and worked for 30 years as an entomologist in East Africa (Tanganyika, Uganda, and Kenya), retiring to Polwheveral in 1969.

From being one of the earliest members of the Cornwall Wildlife Trust Kaspar later served both as Chairman of the Council, then President.

He had taken in interest in the Cornish language since 1989, when his daughter, Vanessa Beeman, persuaded him to attend classes with her to learn the language and both were made Bards of the Cornish Gorseth in 1993. He was also Chairman of Agan Tavas (Society for the Promotion of the Cornish Language) from 1996 to 1998.

Event Profile - Predators and Parasites talk by Abby Crosby

“Not for the faint-hearted”, said the advertisement – and it didn’t take long for the first “Ugh!” to come from the audience, at the sight of a stranded dolphin infested with whale lice. These small parasites invade skin crevices, or produce lesions and attach themselves with sharp hooked claws. Rather similar is a shrimp-like parasite which creates a hollow in a jellyfish in which to live. In most cases, parasites use the host animal as a dwelling place in which to carry out their life and reproductive processes without unduly affecting the host. However, the parasitic barnacle *Sacculina* has more serious consequences. The female larva attaches to a young crab, generally a shore crab, and grows roots into its tissues. Eventually it produces a large reproductive mass beneath the crab’s abdomen, simulating the crab’s own egg mass, and this can be fertilised by the male larva. The crab, deceived, wafts its tail and spreads the parasite. However, the crab’s own life cycle has been halted, because an infected crab can no longer moult. Encrustations of tube worms and barnacles on the carapace are typically an indicator of infestation.

In symbiotic relationships, both creatures derive some benefit from the association. The so-called parasitic anemone can live independently but, when attached to the second-hand shell occupied by a hermit crab, it is transported to new feeding locations and gets scraps from the crab’s meals. Meanwhile its stinging cells help to protect the crab. In an even closer relationship, the cloak anemone wraps around a hermit crab’s mollusc shell and secretes a hard extension to its opening, such that the crab does not have to find another, larger, shell as it grows. The anemone’s tentacles hang below the crab and the cloak, on top, affords protection by releasing sticky threads if touched. Another symbiotic relationship is seen in the snakelocks anemone, which has numerous, non-retractable, long green sticky tentacles with purple tips. The green is due to populations of algae in the tissues, the algae gaining from a supply of carbon dioxide and nutrients while synthesising compounds of use to the anemone.

Predation is commonplace in both terrestrial and marine environments, although we often use the more euphemistic term ‘food chain’. Even small creatures can be predators, such as the violet sea snail which uses mucus to produce a bubble raft enabling it to float and attack the Portuguese Man o’ War. Starfish are voracious predators. They arch their body over a mussel or clam, attach their sucker-tipped tube feet to the shell and pull with great force. Eventually the animal inside tires, the shell valves open a fraction and the starfish extrudes its stomach through the crack, secretes digestive juices and sucks back the mussel or clam ‘stew’. The audience was feeling distinctly queasy! Less mobile than the starfish, dog whelks are also determined predators, forcing open the plates of barnacles or boring through the shells of mussels to gain access to the inside. The boring is a combination of chemical softening and mechanical rasping and can take hours. But the mussel and its neighbours can retaliate, using their attachment threads to bind and turn over the dog whelk so that it starves.

Other techniques must be used when the prey is mobile. The cuttlefish has an amazing ability to merge with its surroundings in seconds, by changing its colour and skin pattern. Thus hidden, it lies in wait and then shoots out

feeding tentacles to grab unsuspecting fish, crabs or prawns. Similarly, a stationary, bottom-dwelling monk fish is virtually undetectable because of its camouflaged skin. Also known as angler fish, the front spine of its dorsal fin forms a separate rod which it waves enticingly over its mouth to lure small fish. When its massive mouth opens, the rush of water sucks in the fish. For leatherback turtles the task is relatively easy because they can swim after jellyfish drifting in the current, but they suffer from ingesting plastic debris, mistaken for prey, which can neither be digested nor expelled and causes suffocation.

At higher levels in the food chain, predators use combinations of speed, agility, sensitive detection organs and pack tactics to capture their prey. Grey seals, as air breathers, close their nostrils under water and so cannot smell, but they are superb swimmers and have large eyes, complex ears for hearing and sensory whiskers to hunt for fish and sand eels. Bottlenose dolphins, a favourite animal for many, also have wondrous aquatic ability. However, Abby recounted the cautionary experience of a Looe fisherman who saw a pod of bottlenoses quartering the sea at speed around his boat. Looking down he saw a lone bottlenose pressed against the hull, hiding. The pod detected it and immediately attacked with such ferocity that the boat was in danger of sinking. In another incident, the autopsy on a common dolphin revealed internal bleeding, broken ribs and bones and tooth raking from a ramming attack by a pod of bottlenoses. Cormorants and shags are well adapted for swimming fast underwater to capture fish and have been observed at considerable depth. Black-backed gulls and skuas are predators in a different way, stealing other birds’ catches.

Sharks are the supreme marine predators; fast, flexible, powerful, with good hearing and the abilities to smell a trace of blood from great distance and to sense electric fields around their prey. Basking sharks can detect and swim to a mass of plankton which is about to bloom.

The top predator of all – man – ends the tale on a sad note. Unlike other predators, which maintain ecological balance, man’s over-exploitation of the marine environment has driven some species to near extinction and damaged or destroyed important habitats.

The HMCG wishes to thank Abby very much for her extremely interesting and detailed talk (even though it has caused some people to think twice about swimming with dolphins!).

Paul Garrard, HMCG Events Coordinator

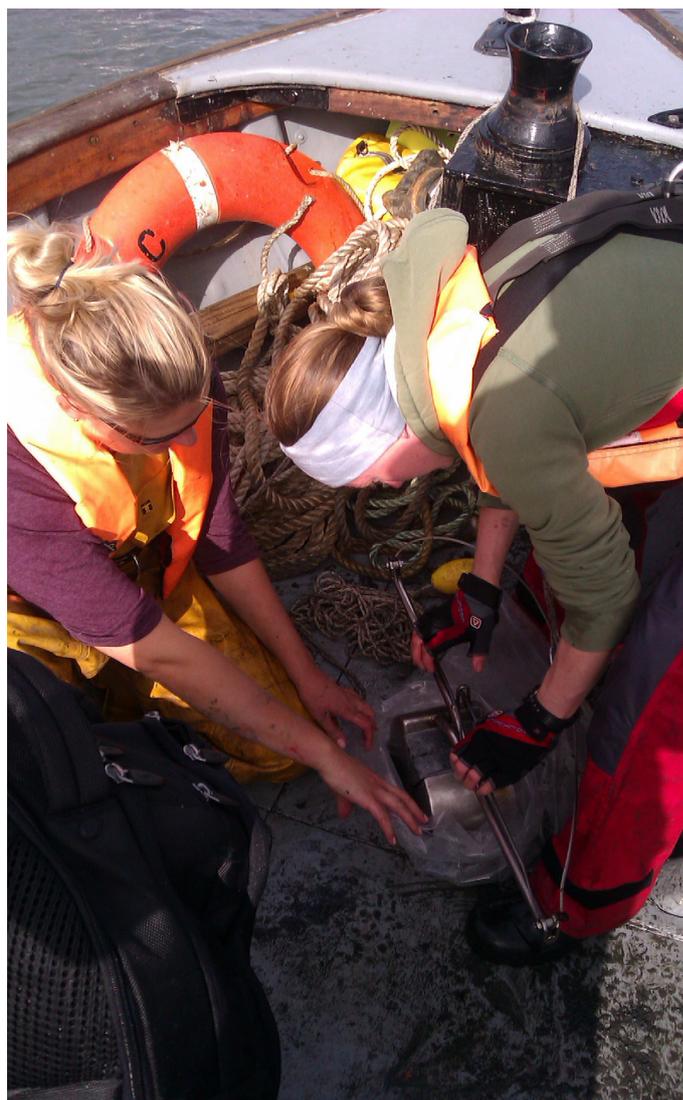


The snakelocks anemone Anemonia viridis with its bright green tentacles and purple tips.
Charlotte Marshall.

Fal and Helford Recreational Boating project update

The 'Recreational Boating Study' is a partnership funded project investigating the direct physical impacts (scour and abrasion) of moorings and marina anchorage systems. It aims to quantify potential changes in communities of organisms living on the seabed surface (epifauna) and organisms living within the seabed (infauna) in response to recreational boating infrastructure. The project itself forms part of a wider scheme of work auditing and assessing the impacts of recreational boating infrastructure within the Fal & Helford Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This work started in July 2011 and almost immediately a number of scoping surveys were completed across areas of prolific recreational boating infrastructure within the Fal and Helford estuaries. Based on the results of these surveys, study locations at Falmouth, Mylor, St. Mawes and Durgan were identified as suitable, comparable mooring areas for further work and 2 marinas, Falmouth Yacht Haven and Port Pendennis were selected. Epifaunal surveys were completed using a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) with the kind contribution of vessel resources from Falmouth Harbour Commissioners, Port of Truro Harbour Authority and the Cornwall Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA).

The infaunal samples were collected in September 2011, using a scientific dive team to collect in situ samples from around the moorings and a hand-operated mini-grab to collect samples within the marinas. Particle size and organic content samples were also collected. All these samples are currently



*Holly Latham (Recreational Boating Study Coordinator) and Harriet Knowles (Maritime Sustainability Development Officer) collecting grab samples.
Holly Latham.*



Remotely operated vehicle (ROV) used for recreational boating study epifaunal surveys. Holly Latham.

being processed, within the laboratories at Falmouth Marine School, a process expected to take 4-5 months! This study is due to conclude in July 2012, with the production of a project report, including an estimation of the ecological footprint of recreational boating infrastructure within the Fal and Helford SAC, and the development of a transferrable methodology for future studies. It is anticipated that this work will assist with the sustainable management of recreational boating within the area.

A short interim project report was produced in October 2011; this and further information about the project is available on request. Please contact Holly Latham at Falmouth Harbour Commissioners at rbsc@falmouthport.co.uk or (01326) 213539.

Holly Latham, Recreational Boating Study Coordinator

Helford River Survey 2011 finds the Helford in good health

It was 27th November 2011 and three intrepid shoreline surveyors trudged through the early morning autumn light. The day was an oasis of calm amidst the recent, late November winds – and a perfect day for completing the 2011 Helford River Survey.

The three surveyors on this occasion were (the now Dr.) Charlotte Marshall (HMCG), to whom we send our warmest congratulations, Angie Gall (Cornwall Wildlife Trust) and Rob Seebold (HMCG & CWT volunteer). The full project team included Abby Crosby (also CWT) and Dr. Pamela Tompsett, who oversaw the entire project, with further support provided on individual surveys by Fiona Crouch (Marine Biological Association) and Sue Hocking (CWT).

The 2011 wave of the project had begun in early August. However, being subject to the tidal cycle (surveys were conducted only on the lowest of low tides), availability of the all-volunteer team and at the mercy of the vagaries of the British Summer climate, had meant that this November weekend provided the last chance of completing the survey in 2011, before the onset of winter.

In total six sites had been surveyed across spring tide weekends from August to November. These were: Flushing Cove, Flushing Cove West, St Anthony, Dennis Head, Helford Passage and Treath Bar.

The 2011 survey was the 7th iteration of a project that began in 1986 under the direction of Dr. Norman Holme. It was designed as a relatively simple, inexpensive and repeatable baseline monitor to track any change in the flora and fauna of the shores of the Helford, as reported in the last newsletter.

The survey was all the more interesting this year as it was the first one after a hiatus of 12 years. What would it tell us about the state of the Helford? How much will have changed in the intervening years due to a range of factors from climate change to the varying impacts of human development?

The reassuring outcome was that the Helford we all know and love is in good health and overall the condition of the survey sites had not altered dramatically since 1999.

Perhaps the greatest changes noted were at Treath Bar where high on the shore an increase in mobile substrate (pebbles and cobbles) had reduced diversity of life and where lower down on the shore a sizeable mussel bed had become established.

Slipper limpets *Crepidula fornicata*, an invasive species of mollusc, were recorded for the first time at Treath Bar and at Helford Passage.

The highlights of the survey were records of the St. John's stalked jellyfish *Lucernariopsis cruxmelitensis* at Helford Passage and a European eel *Anguilla anguilla* at St. Anthony. Both are Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, so it is particularly thrilling to record them anywhere, but especially here in the Helford.

On the down-side, unfortunately, there was still no sign of regrowth of the pre-1986 eel grass *Zostera marina* beds at any of the survey sites. It would be fabulous to see these rich marine habitats strengthen their foothold in the estuary.

All in all, it was heartening to see the survey return after such a long absence and we can be reassured by the overall stability and health of the Helford. Looking ahead, it will be important to now re-establish more regular monitoring and we look forward to the next survey in two to three years time. For those interested, a summary report will be available on the HVMCA website a little later in the year. Lastly, I would like to send out a big thank you to all involved.

Rob Seebold, Cornwall Wildlife Trust and HVMCA volunteer



*The European eel Anguilla anguilla at Helford Passage.
Charlotte Marshall.*

The 1st Voluntary Marine Conservation Areas Conference.



Delegates of the 1st VMCA conference. Hotel Victoria, Newquay, 25 February 2012. Ross Bullimore.

Supporting Business Profile: Trelowarren

Close to the upper reaches of the Helford River, on the South bank, lies an ancient estate with very up to date facilities. The 1,000 acre Trelowarren estate has belonged to the Vyvyan family for 600 years. At one time it was owned by Earl Harold who was defeated at the Battle of Hastings. The current owner, Sir Ferrers Vyvyan, inherited the estate in 1995.

Trelowarren offers a wide range of leisure facilities, art galleries and a craft centre for local people and for visitors. There are 19 luxury holiday cottages, some new build and some renovated ancient estate buildings, all conforming to a very high environmental standard. The estate and 20m outdoor ozone swimming pool are all heated by a bio-mass boiler fuelled with coppiced wood from the estate.

The well known, award-winning New Yard Restaurant is open daily in the summer for breakfast through to

supper and Wednesday to Saturday in the winter. And there's The Walled Garden Spa offering a range of organic, locally produced treatments together with a gym, tennis court and swimming pool.

The Trelowarren woodland walks include the highest point on the Lizard and an Iron Age fort. The walks are open to the public between 1st April and 30th September. One of the walks goes through National Trust woodland to the well known Tremayne Quay on the south side of the Helford River.

We are very pleased that Trelowarren is one of our Corporate Sponsors.

For further information tel. 01326 221224 or visit the website www.trelowarren.com

Charles Richardson, HMCG Members Committee

HVMCA Photography Competition

Many thanks to Rhiannon Pipkin for her excellent organisation of the 2011 HVMCA Photography Competition. I think it was a record entry of more than 60 photographs and everyone including our judge, Michael Jay, agreed that they were of a very high standard.

This year we had four “C” categories for the competition: Children’s, Commerce, Community and Conservation. There were some excellent entries in each category with the largest number of entries, not surprisingly perhaps, in the Conservation section. The winners, announced on 22nd October, were:

Children’s

- (1) Will Tuffnell – Dusk at Durgan

Commerce

- (1) Helen Oakes – Craning Out at Seacore, Gweek
- (2) Rhiannon Pipkin – St. Martin’s Stall
- (3) Joyce Froggatt – Spring Cabbage

Community

- (1) Corallie Hunt – Helford’s Fungal Community
- (2) Helen Oakes – Royal Wedding Celebrations in Gweek
- (3) Pamela Tompsett – Highway Patrol

Conservation

- (1) Jenna Oakes – Newly Emerged Dragonfly
- (2) Ben Protheroe – Egret in Flight
- (3) Shelagh Garrard – Polwheveral Reflections

The winning photographs were displayed during November at The Great Atlantic Gallery in Falmouth, courtesy of Michael Jay, who is himself a keen and accomplished photographer.

Congratulations once again to the winners and many thanks to everyone who entered the competition. We are running another photography competition this year, to be judged in late November. Please see our website for details.

Charles Richardson, HMCG Members Committee



Helford’s Fungal Community. Winning photo in the Community category. Corallie Hunt

Upcoming Events

Saturday 31st March 2012

Leatherback Turtles and their Jellyfish prey & AGM

Leatherback turtles have the widest distribution of any reptile, moving through tropical and temperate waters. During the past two decades much has been learned about their everyday lives. With ecologist Dr Matthew Witt we will dive into their lifestyles and look at the behaviour and favourite foods of these long-lived, but at-risk, creatures.

Cost: £2. Group members & children free.

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Venue: Gweek Village Hall, opposite the National Seal Sanctuary, TR12 6UG

OS Ref: SW 709 266

Contact: Paul 01326 341 030 or Charles 07795 845 696

Tuesday 10th April 2012

Seashore Safari

Join Cornwall Wildlife Trust's Marine Conservation Officer Ruth Williams in a sea search at the edge of the Helford river as the tide falls and find crabs, sea-anemones, seasquirts and other mysterious creatures. Wear non-slip rock-scrambling shoes that you are prepared to get wet! Bring small nets and plastic buckets if you wish.

Cost: Free

Time: 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.

Meet: In front of the Ferryboat Inn, Helford Passage, TR11 5LB

OS Ref: SW 764 269

Contact: Ruth 07967 251 278 or Charli 07740 090 777

Sunday 15th April 2012

Heron and Egret Survey

Following last year's successful event, accompany local bird watcher Martin Rule to survey the wonderful Heron and Egret populations of the Helford River. Binoculars, weatherproof clothing and robust footwear advised.

Booking required. Max 30.

Cost: Free

Time: 09.30 – 12.00 a.m.

Meet: Entrance to the road to Calamansack, between Port Navas and Constantine.

OS Ref: SW 746 281

Contact: Martin 01326 561 164 or 07854 123 877

Sunday 20th May

Botany, Wildlife and Conservation

The beautiful gardens at Budock Vean cover 32 acres, incorporating woodland, parkland, formal and informal beds and the valley gardens and ponds. Ecologically sound practice has ensured that the rich diversity of wild flora and fauna has increased. With botanist Keith Spurgin find out more about the flora and how the hotel manages its natural environment.

Cost: Free

Time: 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.

Meet: Budock Vean Hotel, Helford Passage, Mawnan Smith, TR11 5LG

OS Ref: SW 761 276

Contact: Abby 07917 765581 or Charles 07795 845696



Aim: To safeguard the marine life of the Helford River by any appropriate means within its status as a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area, to increase the diversity of its intertidal community and raise awareness of its marine interest and importance.

For further information relating to the Helford Voluntary Marine Conservation Area please contact
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Design: Sheila McCann-Downes, Cornwall Wildlife Trust **Illustration:** Sarah McCartney, Cornwall Wildlife Trust