



Revealing the reef: ex-HMS *Scylla* from stem to stern.

A collection of images taken over the past 20 years

Underwater images and presentation: Keith Hiscock

Scylla plans: The SHIPS Project (<https://shipsproject.org/>)



In Greek mythology, Scylla was a beautiful nymph who was claimed by Poseidon, but the jealous Amphitrite turned her into a terrible monster. Scylla haunted the rocks of a narrow strait opposite the whirlpool of Charybdis. Ships that sailed too close to her rocks would lose six men to her ravenous, darting [dogs] heads [and similar stories]. Image: <https://www.theoi.com/Pontios/Skylla.html>

The presentation:

- A bit of history
- Views for a back-and-forth, up-and-down, in-and-out dive
- Marine life

Thanks to the National Marine Aquarium with the Canadian Artificial Reefs Consortium for putting *Scylla* on the seabed (right-way-up) and to the many dive buddies, scientific collaborators and photographers who contributed to observations.

For the academically inclined interested in colonisation of the vessel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0025315409991457>.

19th November 2003.
Devonport dockyard.

Scylla was brought from Portsmouth to Devonport where she arrived on 18 November 2003. The next morning, the water had drained from the dry dock and the vessel was ready to be prepared for sinking.

The work of obtaining the licence to place her on the seabed, preparing the vessel and overseeing the project was undertaken by the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth after many years of work to secure a vessel and sink it by the Artificial Reef Consortium.



Image: Keith Hiscock

Oysters, sponges, barnacles etc. on one of the propellers

A tantalizing view of one of the two propellers – removed as part of the preparation for sinking. The attached fauna included, surprisingly, several native oysters as well as sponges, barnacles and many dahlia anemones.



The vessel was towed to a predetermined and licensed site in Whitsand Bay and explosives were detonated to sink the vessel. The vessel had to sink quickly (within 3 minutes) to avoid oscillations and tipping. There were anxious moments as she lent over a little to starboard and great relief when she landed right way-up with only a slight list to starboard – where she has remained ever since.



27th March 2004

Images: National Marine Aquarium



By the end of the summer of 2013, the plants and animals inhabiting *Scylla* were **mostly** those that had settled by the end of 2007 and the species count for the reef stood at 278.

There have been some subsequent changes in wildlife but visually dominant species (except for Plumose Anemones) remain the same.

Starboard side, near the bridge.
12th October 2013

The bow and mooring chain in late summer.

Visually dominated by Dead Mans' Fingers, Rosy Feather Stars and, sometimes, Mussel spat.



3rd September 2023

Foredeck: visually dominated by Rosy Feather Stars,
with Dead Mans' Fingers



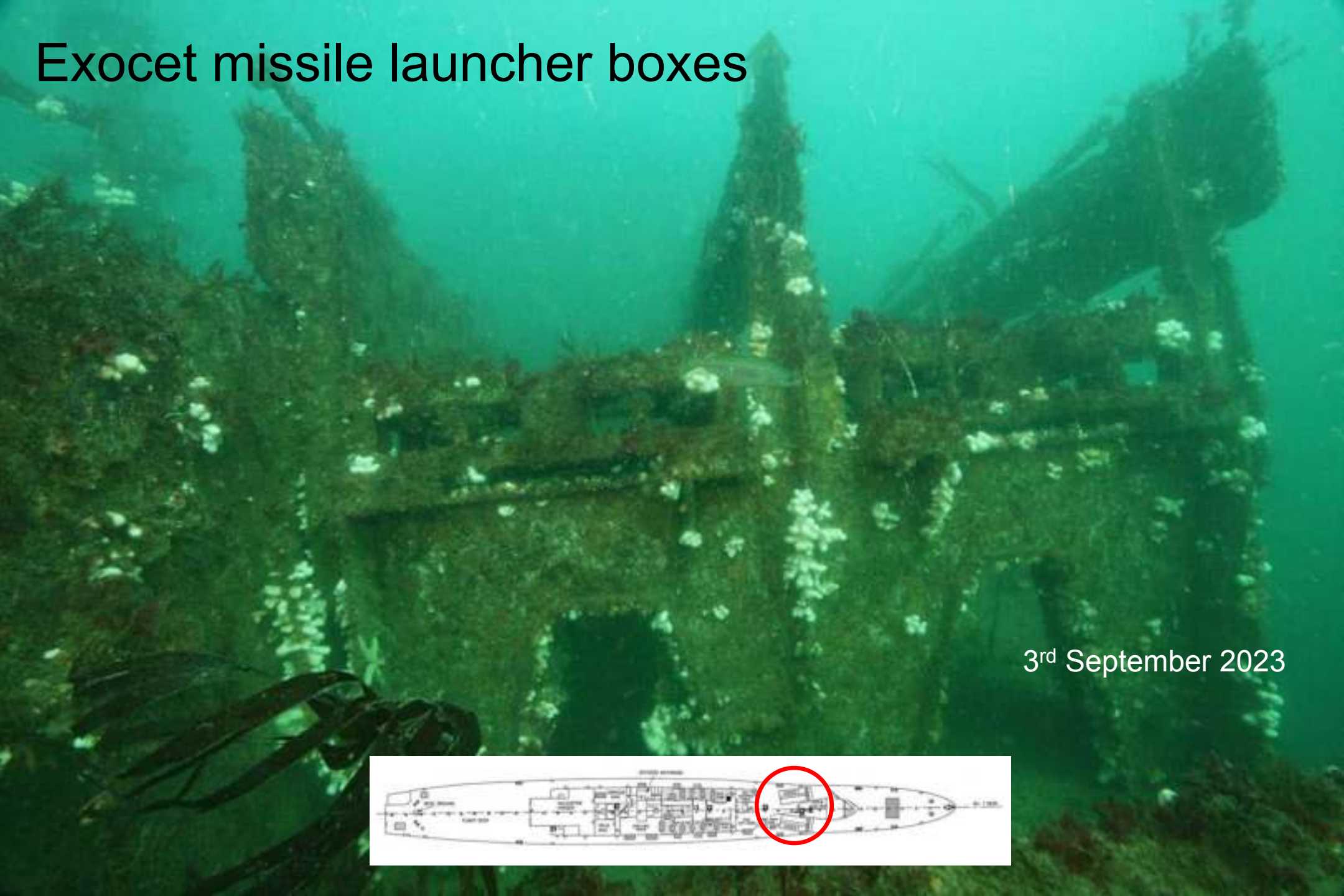
9th June 2020

Change happens: here, occasional (often 'mass') settlements of Common Mussels – rapidly followed by Common Starfish consuming them.

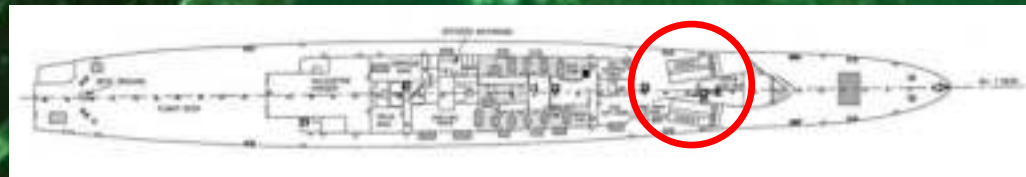


14th October 2020

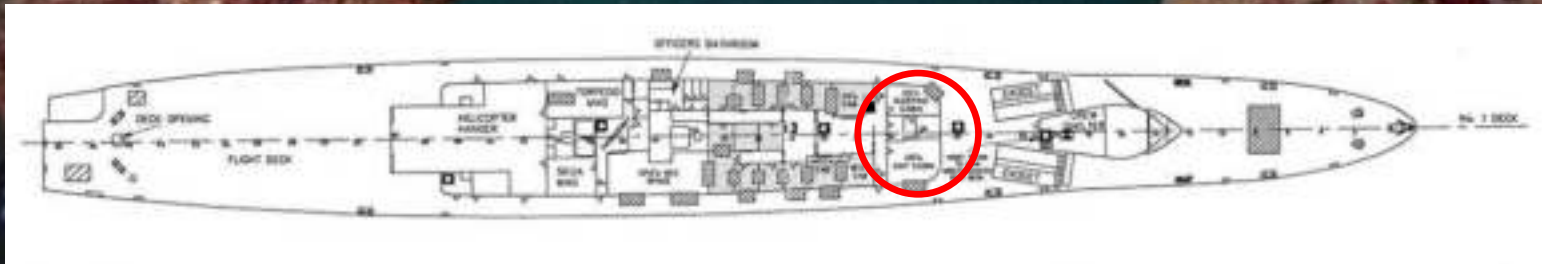
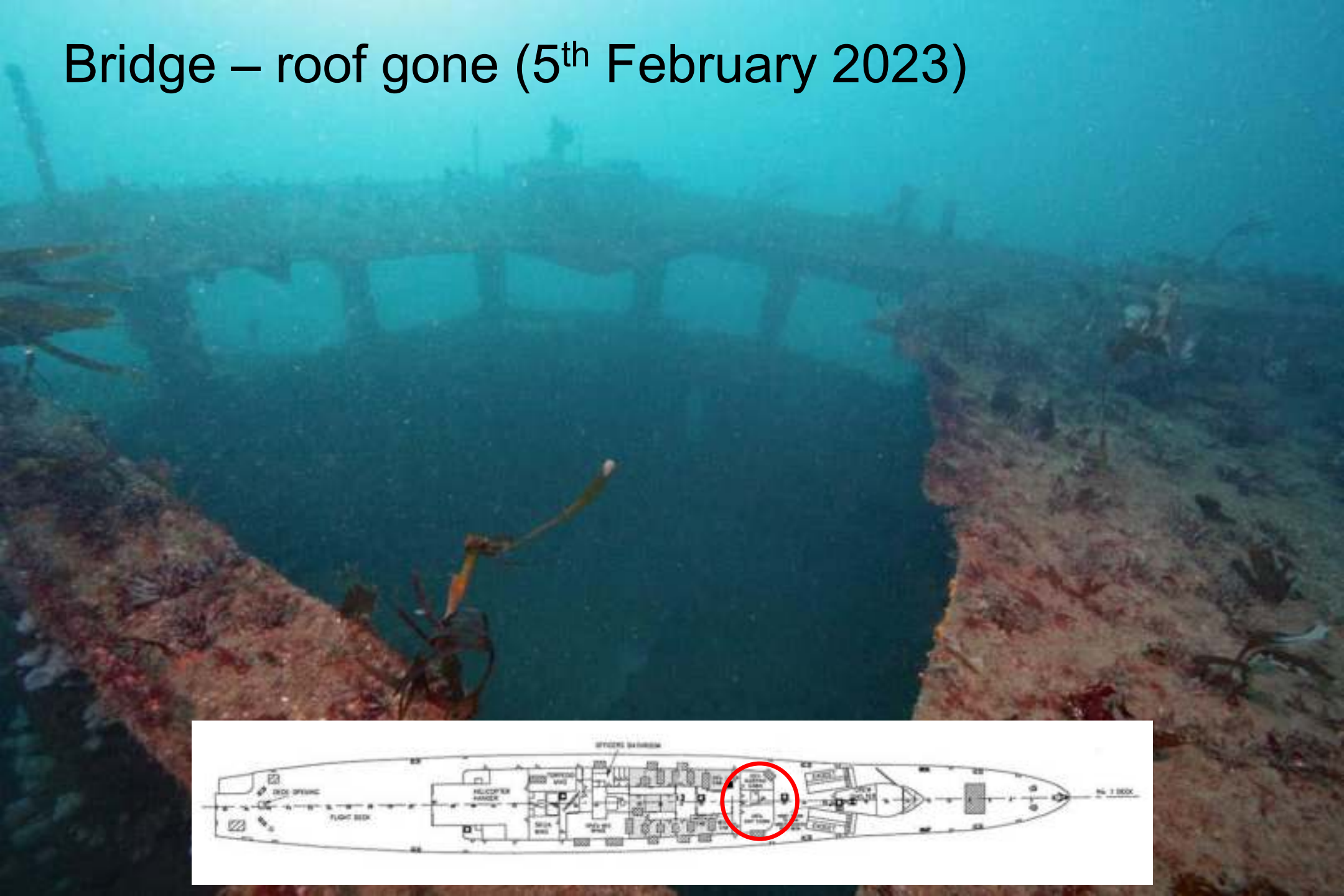
Exocet missile launcher boxes



3rd September 2023



Bridge – roof gone (5th February 2023)



10th July 2013

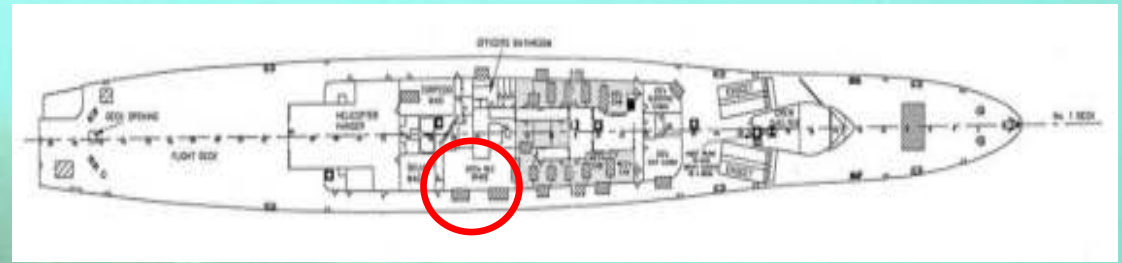


Change happens
(bridge windows)

Changes continue to occur in marine life, but few as stark as the enormous reduction in abundance of Plumose Anemones (in common with inshore areas all around the south-west mainland).



3rd September 2023



The first settlement of Pink Seafans was in year four of Scylla being on the seabed (June/July 2007) – and they grew fairly rapidly. Seafan sea slugs were first observed on them on 7th May 2012.



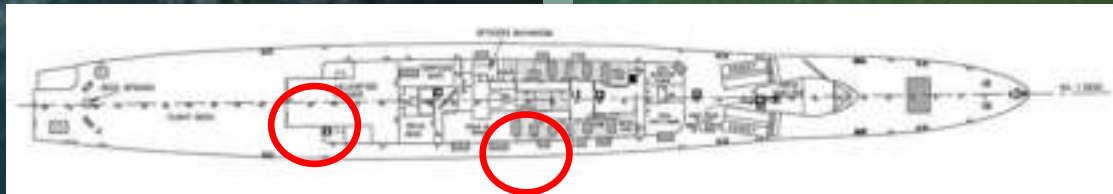
17th August 2007



7th May 2012

Midships on 30th August 2018

Along the walkways and to the helicopter hanger – corrosion and door apertures.



3rd September 2023

5th February 2023

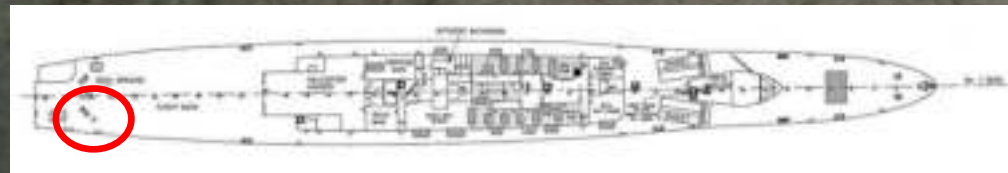
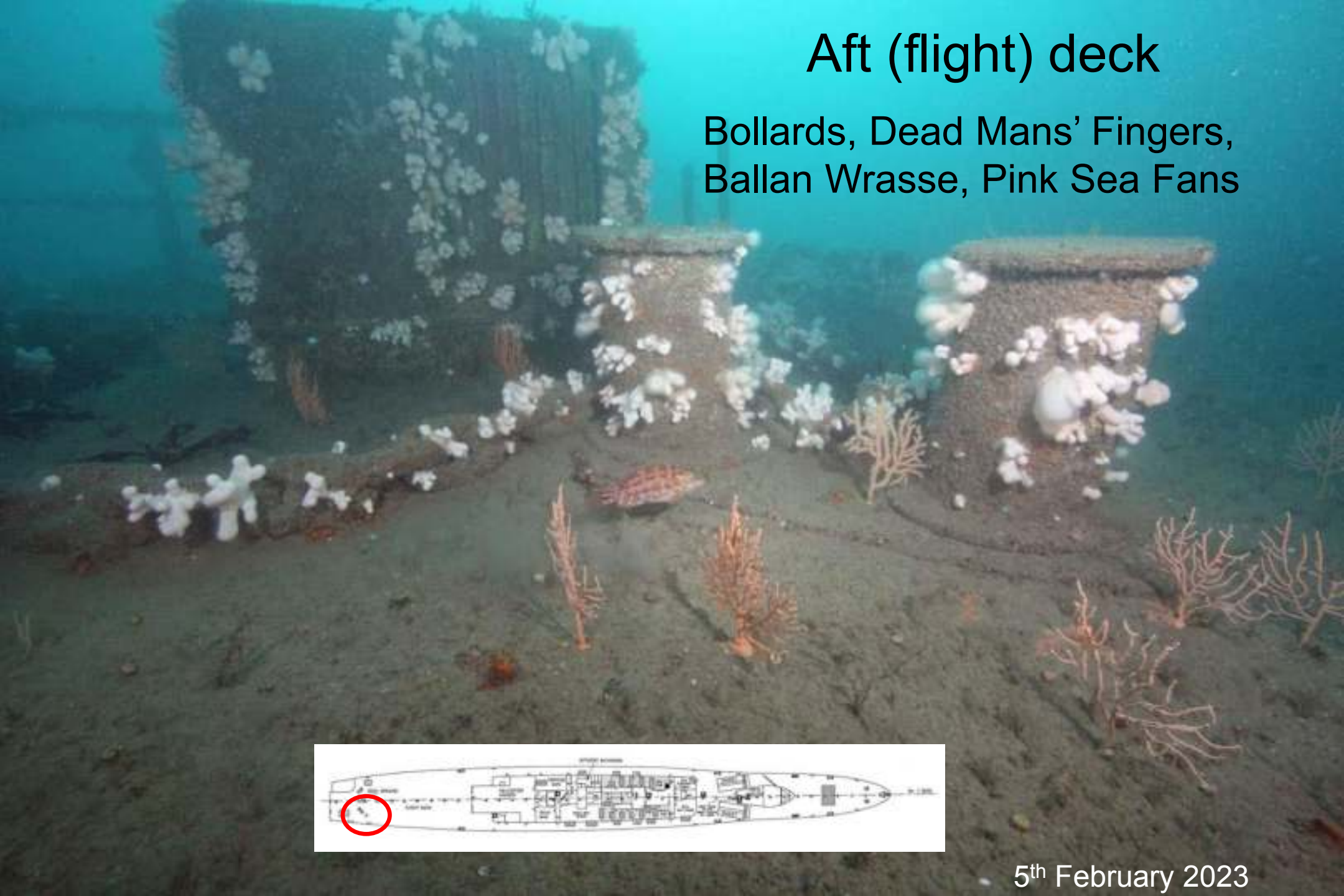
Seaweeds colonise the shallow parts of the reef – here Forest Kelp with foliose red algae on the aft deck



5th February 2023

Aft (flight) deck

Bollards, Dead Mans' Fingers, Ballan Wrasse, Pink Sea Fans



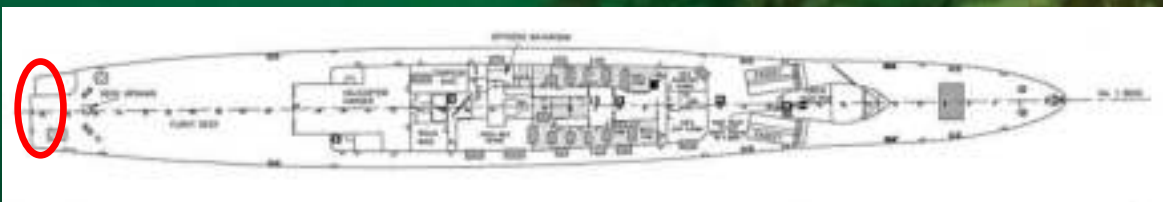
5th February 2023

Stern Railings with Elegant Anemones and spring growth of Flower
Head Hydroids



29th May 2021

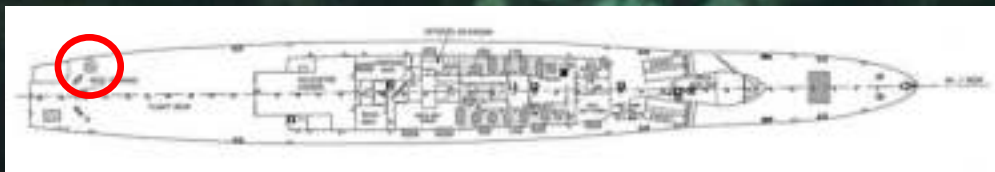
Over the stern

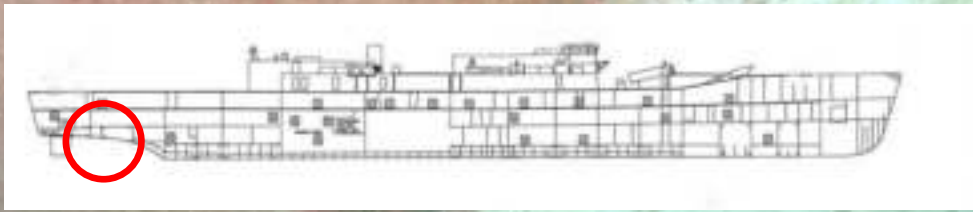


3rd August 2011



Deck hatch from the port side half-deck
on 10th July 2015





Under the stern (shoal of Bib)



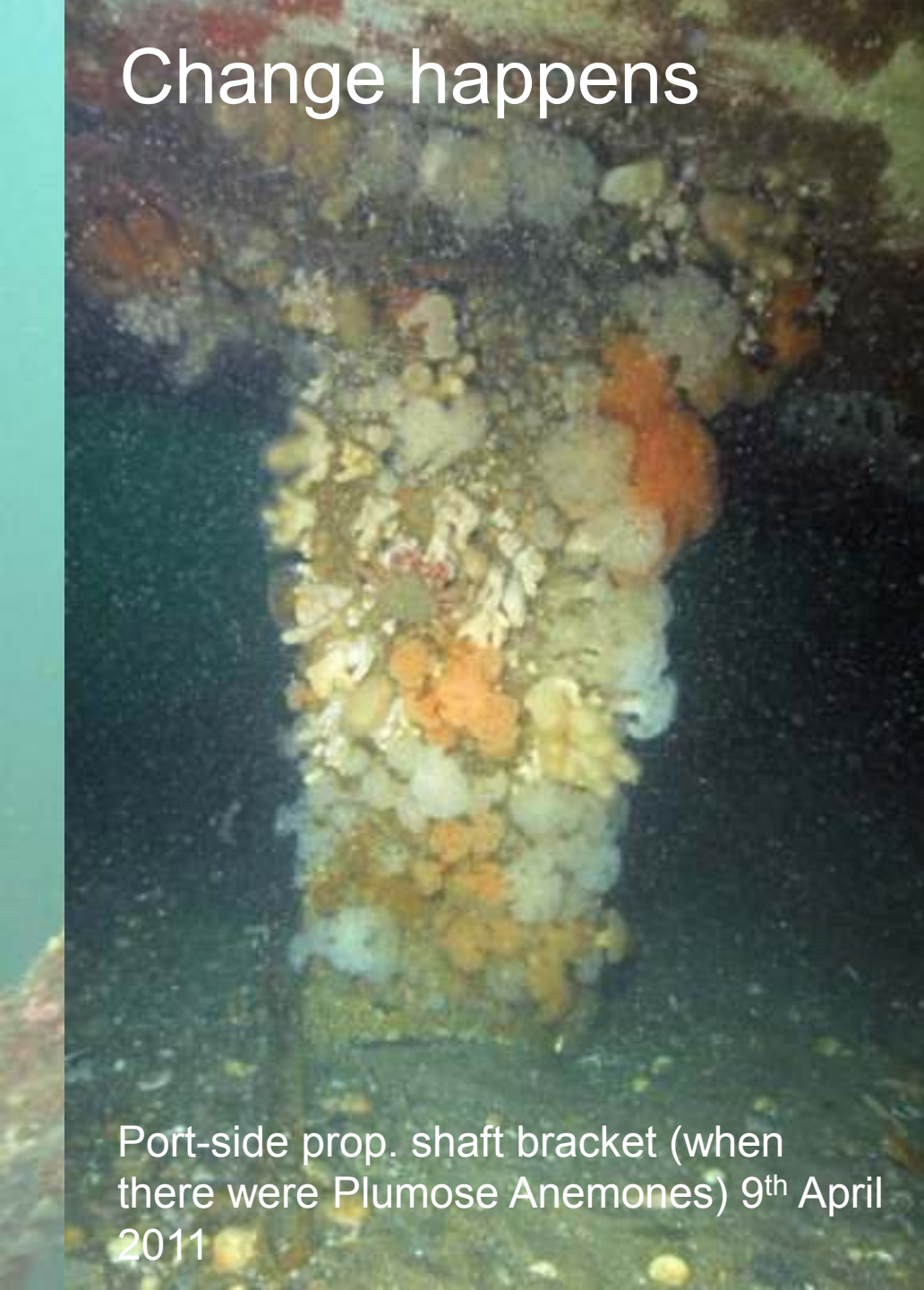
25th August 2017

9th September 2020




Under the stern: Dead Mans Fingers, Jewel Anemones and (clear areas) still effective TBT anti-fouling paint.

Change happens



Port-side prop. shaft bracket (when there were Plumose Anemones) 9th April 2011



Port-side prop. shaft bracket (where have all the anemones gone?) 14th October 2020

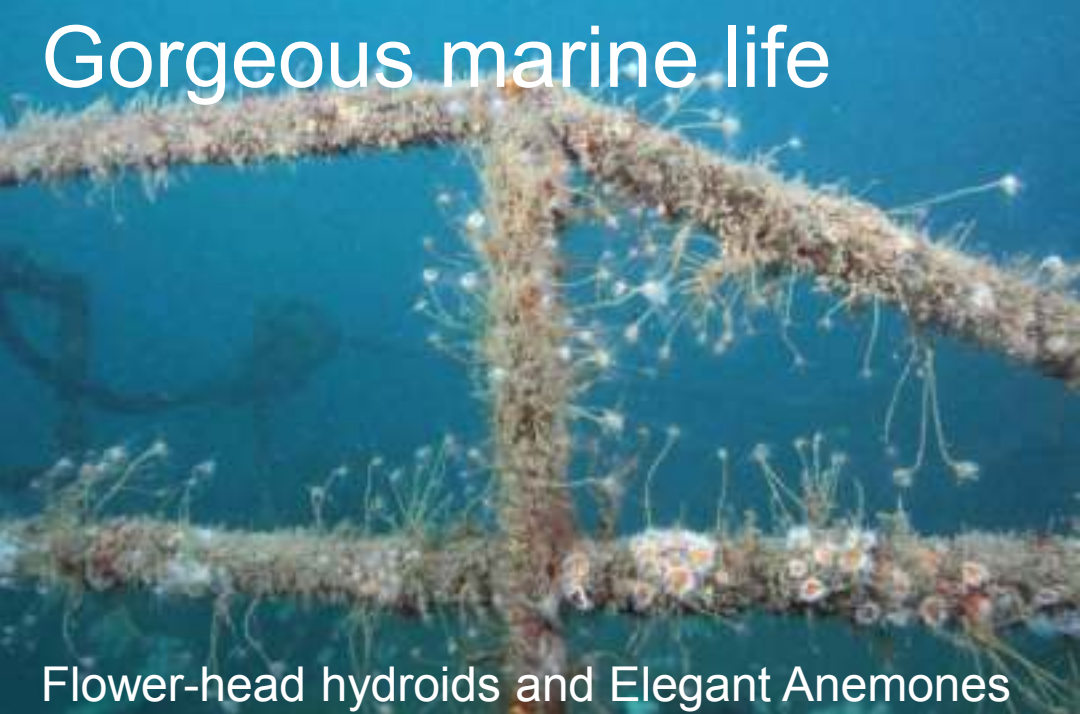
Along the sides. Cut-throughs for diver-access (and a long-since disappeared appropriate warning)

Inside a cut-through



18th September 2009

Gorgeous marine life



Flower-head hydroids and Elegant Anemones



Corkwing Wrasse near its nest



Red Sea Fingers



Pink Sea Fans



Red Feather Stars



Sea urchins on a 'Diver's Line' – eating barnacles or avoiding the antifouling paint?



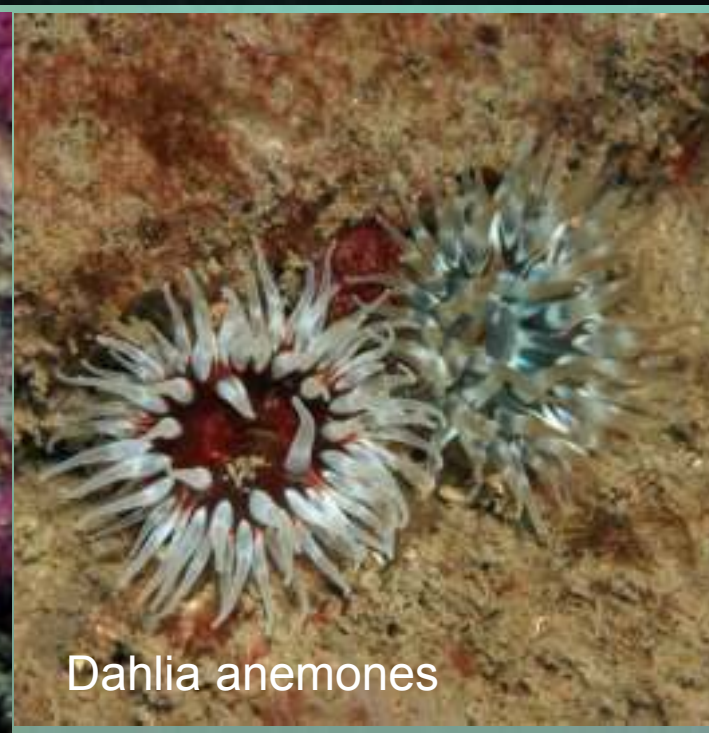
Jewel anemones



Devonshire Cup Coral



Elegant anemones



Dahlia anemones

And, before you know it, you are up and out



So, stop-off at Cawsand Beach for an ice cream

Image: Nick Nutt

And, finally, enjoy *Scylla* but pay attention all divers
(and fish):

