

Sub Aqua Diving *in & around Snowdonia*



Marine Wild Life, Llanfairfechan (Photo: Paul Kay)



www.snowdonia-active.com

“Reefs, rocks, shipwrecks and even submerged caverns make North Wales an extremely popular destination for both novice and experienced divers alike.”

Introduction

Sub-aqua or scuba equipment allows divers to explore the wonderful underwater environment all over the world. The sport has been established in North Wales for many years, with retail outlets, air-supplies, dive-boats and support facilities increasing year upon year. The letters S.C.U.B.A. stand for Self Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus.

Snowdonia, the Llyn Peninsula and Anglesey have a wide variety of marine dive-sites. Reefs, rocks, shipwrecks and even submerged caverns make North Wales an extremely popular destination for both novice and experienced divers alike. Even when the weather is bad, a commercial dive-site at Llanberis in the heart of the Snowdonia National Park ensures that there is always somewhere to dive.

Apart from the sheer enjoyment of being underwater, there are many other aspects to the sport of scuba-diving. Some enjoy the thrill of exploring the many shipwrecks that have occurred around the Welsh coast, perhaps taking things a little further to enter the world of marine archaeology and research into the history of these maritime tragedies. Others love to observe and identify the incredible marine-life that flourishes in these waters, possibly progressing to become involved in underwater photography, marine conservation and species recording. For anyone already qualified to dive, check the Nautical Archaeology Society website at www.nasportsmouth.org.uk and the Seasearch website at www.seasearch.org.uk

History

The sport of scuba-diving began shortly after the Second World War, when enthusiasts adapted any available equipment to allow them to explore the underwater world. Television programmes by Hans and Lotte Hass, Jacques Cousteau, Lloyd Bridges and many others, inspired a generation to band together to form diving-clubs where ideas and experiences could be shared and a formal training program could be established.

The British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) was formed in 1953 and still flourishes fifty years later, with hundreds of branches in the UK and worldwide. For the location of your nearest BSAC branch, go to www.bsac.com

Today, the sport has progressed from the original 'macho' image, to a pastime open to all who have a reasonable level of confidence in the water and who can pass a basic medical fitness check.

Further Information

For further details of diving conditions in North Wales, see:

- The Essential Underwater Guide to North Wales, Volume One, Barmouth to South Stack ISBN 0-9545066-0-X.

Priced at £16.95, this 240-page book contains detailed information on diving around the Llyn Peninsula and the West Coast of Anglesey. It has shore-dives, boat-dives, wrecks, accurate GPS positions, slipway details, dive-shop locations, charter-boats and local legislation. Visit www.calgopublications.co.uk or ring 01244 660579.



Specialist Outdoor Equipment
High Street, Llanberis, Tel: 01286 871534
Offer Awyrd Agored Arbenigol





Bardsey dive-boat (Photo: Chris Holden)

“ enjoy the thrill of exploring the many shipwrecks that have occurred around the Welsh coast, perhaps taking things a little further to enter the world of marine archaeology and research into the history of these maritime tragedies.

• Anglesey Wrecks and Reefs

by Andy Shears and Scott Waterman. ISBN 0-9542602-0-1. £14.95 This 91 page book is a practical guide to diving the wrecks & reefs around the coast of Anglesey, but note that some of the GPS positions in this book were incorrectly printed.

• Underwater Photography

by Paul Kay, Guild of Master Craftsman Publications Ltd. ISBN 186108322X. Priced at £24.95. A book to inspire and instruct all amateur photographers, starting with the basics before introducing more advanced topics in a step-wise fashion.

• www.divevivian.com

For details of the freshwater diving at Vivian Quarry in Llanberis, Tel: 01286 870889.

LOCAL DIVE CLUBS

For details of local dive-clubs, check the following web-sites:

- **Menai Sub-Aqua Club** - www.menaisubaqua.org
- **Lleyn Sub-Aqua Club**, - www.lleynscuba.org.uk
- **Gwynedd Sub-Aqua Club** - www.bsac71.portland.co.uk
- **Rhosneigr Sub-Aqua Club** - www.lneston38.freeserve.co.uk
- **Rhyl Sub-Aqua Club** - www.rhysac.i12.com
- **Chester Sub-Aqua Club** - www.chestersubaquaclub.co.uk

LOCAL DIVING EQUIPMENT OUTLETS:

- **Anglesey Divers**, Holyhead - www.diveanglesey.co.uk Tel: 01407 764545
- **Diving Services Anglesey**, Trearddur Bay - www.ateal.co.uk/dsa Tel: 01407 860318

• Marine Wildlife Photo Agency (Photography Equipment),

Tel 01248 681361 or 07702 411614, e-mail: paul@marinewildlife.co.uk

For your specialized underwater photography needs, contact Paul Kay. Based in Llanfairfechan, North Wales. Paul holds an honours degree in Scientific Photography from the University of Westminster, is a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, holds an HSE Part 4 commercial scuba-diving certificate and is the author of the recently published book 'Underwater Photography'. Contact him for details and prices on new and second-hand equipment. He also specializes in second-hand Seacam & Subal housings and believes that he has the best selection of used housings in the UK! Website for cameras - www.underseacameras.com

For marine life photographs - www.marinewildlife.co.uk

For other photography - www.paulkayphotography.co.uk

CHARTER BOATS CATERING FOR DIVERS:

• Shearwater Coastal Cruises (Alan & Susie Gray)

'Eriador', Lon Pin, Llanbedrog, Pwllheli, Gwynedd LL53 7PG

Tel: 01758 740899, Mob: 07815 717241

Based in Pwllheli, 'Shearwater' is a 12.3 metre, twin-engine, fast catamaran that caters for up to 12 divers. The boat runs diving trips to the North Llŷn Bardsey, South Llŷn, the St. Tudwal's Islands and Sarn Badrig. In addition to diving trips, they cater for coastal nature-cruises, evening-cruises and barbecues, often escorted by the local dolphins. Why not enjoy the taste of freshly-caught mackerel as you view the setting-sun over Bardsey Island. For nature cruises, individual bookings can be made via the Tourist Information Centres at Pwllheli (01758 613000), or Porthmadog (01766 512981). Group bookings should be made direct with Shearwater.





Shearwater 2 (Photo: Chris Holden)



Halfaled dive-boat (Photo: Chris Holden)

“ Marine-life at Criccieth Beach is surprisingly plentiful, with many dogfish, pollack, pipefish, tom-pot blennies, crabs, prawns and lobsters in depths of up to about 8 metres of water.”

• **North Wales Diving** (Jason Owen)
 Bryn Awel, Nebo, Caernarfon LL54 6DY
 Tel: 01286 882611, Mob: 07990 683901
 www.divenorthwales.ukdiver.com
 E-mail: info.divenorthwales@ukdiver.com

Catering for up to 10 divers, the 11.5 hard-boat 'Hafaed' normally operates out of Pwllheli but can be moved to a base on the North Llyn if required. Dive sites include North Llyn, Bardsey, South Llyn, St. Tudwal's Islands and Sarn Badrig.

• **Water-line** (Paul Turkentine)
 Ty Newydd, Carmel, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL54 7AG
 Tel 01286 882619, Mob: 07768 490320
 Web site www.water-line.co.uk
 E-mail info@water-line.co.uk

Why tow your boat all the way to the coast when you can have a boat waiting in the water where-ever you want? Waterline can provide a 5.2 metre RIB with a 90 hp four-stroke outboard to cater for a small group of divers, thus avoiding the inherent problems of organising a large group. A 'shuttle service' for a larger group can be organised if conditions and choice of site allow. Waterline specializes in scenic, photographic and marine life, especially around the Llyn Peninsula, but they also cover Anglesey, the Menai Strait and Puffin Island.

• **SBS Boat Charter** (Aubrey Diggle)
 Tel 01407 740083
 Mob: 07866 014393
 E-mail sbsdiverib@lineone.net

By the time you've towed a boat all the way to Anglesey and launched it, you will be ready for a rest rather than a dive. SBS Boat Charter will have one or two RIBs already in the water, ready and waiting for you. Catering for up to 8 divers per boat, all you have to do is don your dry-suit and load your diving-gear. 'Cobra' and 'Arctic Wolf' are both twin-engine, 6.8-metre RIBs which operate from Trearddur Bay or Holyhead to cover the whole area from Llanddwyn Island to the Skerries.

• **Quest Diving Services** (Scott Waterman)
 Tel 01248 716923
 Mob: 07974 249005
 E-mail questcharters@aol.com

Based at Menai Bridge, Quest Diving operates a new 40-foot hard-boat to cover dive-sites at Menai, Puffin Island, Anglesey, Caernarfon Bay, Liverpool Bay, the Isle of Man and Ireland. Catering for up to 12 divers, it has a 700hp engine and features a tail-lift for ease of boarding.

The following marine dive-sites are examples taken from 'The Essential Underwater Guide to North Wales' by Chris Holden.

SHORE DIVES

• Criccieth Beach (a)

The beach to the west of Criccieth Castle provides an easy shore dive, suitable for novices or for a shallow night-dive. It is also suitable for snorkelling, being shallow with lots of life. Best dived at local high-water (3 hours before Liverpool) during calm weather or if the wind is from a northerly direction, this sand and shingle beach has rocks at low-water and wooden groynes running seawards. Southerly winds soon reduce the visibility to nil. Marine-life is surprisingly plentiful, with many dogfish, pollack, pipefish, tom-pot blennies, crabs, prawns and lobsters in depths of up to about 8 metres of water. Between 75 and 100 metres directly out from the entry ▷



Vivian Quarry (Photo: Paul Kay)



Porth Ysgaden (Photo: Paul Kay)



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point, there are several large rocks, jealously guarded by numerous shannies. These small fish are easily distinguished from other blennies by the lack of tufts on their heads. During the summer months, rhizostomidae jellyfish will be seen slowly drifting with the tide, looking just like huge blobs of wobbly jelly.

Cars can be parked by the beach shelter at the west end of the promenade and diving gear carried down the steps onto the flat concrete strip. More steps lead onto a gravel beach broken up by wooden groynes. The only difficult part of this site is the steep climb back up 40 steps to the car park.

A line of yellow buoys off the beach marks the marine 4 mph speed-limit area. The bay is a popular site for jet-skis, so surface marker-buoys should be used - but note that on occasions, the jet-skis have treated them as a slalom course.

• Porth Ysgaden (b)

Probably the most popular diving area along this stretch of coast, Porth Ysgaden (The Bay of Herrings) is easily recognised from a distance by a derelict house and chimney on the headland. It provides a shallow, sheltered beach suitable for novices, but divers must be aware that the bay is popular with dive boats, water-skiers and lobster boats. Shore cover and marker-buoys are essential when diving off the 75-metre wide beach and watch out for mooring-ropes and lobster-pot lines. The bay faces south-west, so a strong wind from this direction quickly stirs up the sand to give poor visibility.

An interesting, shallow shore-dive can be undertaken from the beach by keeping to the rocks along the northern side of the bay. This area never has any current, making it a good site for novices. There are many crevices and small caves along this edge, all totally full of life. I have seen a dozen prawns and a goby in one small cave at a depth of less than 5 metres, making this an ideal location for the underwater photographer. Ling, plaice, wrasse, leopard-spotted gobies, pollack, sea-hares, spiny spider-crabs, edible-crabs and small lobsters provide an ideal introduction to marine life. The middle of Porth Ysgaden bay has a large area of flat sand with some kelp and bootlace weed, but the rocks against the cliffs are covered in dense kelp. About 50 metres off the point, there is a 1 metre long, admiralty-pattern anchor, stuck at the bottom of a deep crevice.

• Trefor Pier (c)

Trefor Pier is the most popular dive-site along this coast, as it provides an excellent location for novices, photographers and marine-life enthusiasts alike.

This wooden pier was built in 1912 at the end of the existing stone breakwater and was used for exporting granite from the quarries visible on the hillside above Trefor. It closed to commercial traffic in 1971. Sheltered from southerly winds but exposed to westerly winds, the pier is about 75 metres long and 8 metres wide. It runs out to sea in a northerly direction, with 20 vertical legs along each side and a single column down the centre.

Underwater visibility can be 10 metres or more but varies considerably, depending on weather conditions and the time of year. South-westerly to north-easterly winds usually cause poor visibility, while heavy rain creates a runoff from the quarry workings on the hillside above Trefor, again affecting visibility. On arrival, however, if the water appears to be murky against the breakwater, don't abort the dive until you have fully checked out the site by walking the length of the pier. There may be only one or two metres visibility against the breakwater, but four or five metres further out. As this is a small but very popular dive-site, it is best visited at quiet times, avoiding weekends in mid-summer.

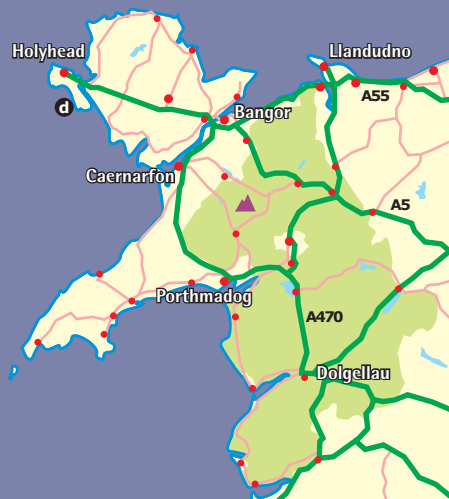
The best dives are at local high-water, which is about two hours earlier than high-water at Liverpool. On spring-tides, there will be a maximum depth of about 7 or 8 metres under the pier, but on low-water, only about 4 metres. As this is a popular angling venue, it is essential to stay underneath the pier to avoid the fishing lines. Also take care to avoid the lost fishing-hooks and knives lying on the seabed under the pier. ▶



Trefor Pier (Photo: Chris Holden)



Spider crab (Photo: Paul Kay)



For such a small area, the marine-life is diverse and plentiful, but only for those divers prepared to look carefully. Freshwater eels, octopus, lobsters, edible-crabs, pipefish, swimming crabs, squat lobsters, spiny spider-crabs, dragonets, tiny flatfish, dogfish, bib, sea-scorpions, two-spotted gobies, sand gobies, pollack, corkwing wrasse and ballan wrasse have all been seen on a single dive. Plumose anemones and dead-men's fingers grow on the wooden supports, while every single crack in the breakwater wall seems to have its own resident prawn or tom-pot blenny. Kelp and bootlace weed grow on the supporting legs and on the many wooden beams and blocks of cut-stone which litter the seabed.

Carcases of dead fish are often seen, presumably having been caught and thrown back by the anglers on the pier. Watch carefully, as the fish, crabs and lobsters all congregate to feed off this unexpected bonus. Another way to create a mini feeding-frenzy is to simply waft away the sand and watch how the fish move in, hoping for an easy meal.

Parking is not permitted alongside the pier, but diving gear may be unloaded near the breakwater and vehicles left in the main car park where there are basic toilet facilities and an emergency telephone. Notices state that diving is not permitted among the boat-moorings, and that the 'A-flag' should be flown while divers are in the water. Just where and how the flag is to be flown while you are under the pier is not stated.

This is an excellent place for a night-dive, but again, stay within the confines of the pier as anglers also enjoy their sport during the hours of darkness. There are picnic tables close by, so after the dive, why not have a barbeque on the beach?

• Porth Diana at Trearddur Bay (d)

Best dived at high-water, this site provides a sheltered bay immediately opposite 'Diving Services Anglesey'. It is suitable for novice divers or for a night dive, since entry and exit are from a gently sloping beach. Much of the bay comprises a sand and shingle seabed and as such is a useful site for training drills, but the more interesting diving is along the base of the rocks or around the reefs just outside the bay. Beware of passing boats, or boat mooring-lines that will snag surface markers-buoys. If you bring your own boat into this bay, watch out for the drying rocks as well as divers without marker-buoys.

Despite the sheltered area, the marine-life is interesting, especially for newcomers to our sport. Hermit crabs, snake-lock anemones, mussels and wrasse will be seen, while this is one of the few places where I have seen a 15-spined stickleback.

Do not park on the double yellow lines. Parking at 'Diving Services Anglesey' is for customers only, unless a £5 per car parking ticket has been purchased. This is strongly recommended to avoid having to carry diving gear some distance from a legal parking area and is far cheaper than a parking-fine. It is one of the few places where air and spare-parts are available within only a few metres of the dive-site, but note that the gate is not normally open before 9.30 am.

• Porth Dafarch, near Trearddur Bay (e)

Porth Dafarch is a pleasant, south-westerly facing, sandy bay, bordered by high, jagged cliffs. Although long known to divers as 'Bog Bay', the water quality is good, with regular monitoring carried out. There are ice cream vans, toilet facilities, limited car parking and a narrow slipway. Access for boats is normally blocked by padlocked bollards, so only lightweight inflatables can be launched here. During the summer months, surfers, windsurfers, speedboats and water-skiers use the bay, so take great care when diving here, and always use SMBs. However, the site provides a shallow shore dive with very easy entry and exit in a relatively confined area with lots of marine-life. All these features combine to give a site ideal for training, or for anyone with a young family who needs a dive-site next to a safe, sandy beach.

At high-water, a long swim is necessary to clear the flat sand, but at low-water there is a long walk to the tide-line where, out in the bay, maximum depths will be ▷



Porth Diana (Photo: Paul Kay)



Timbo Boiler (photo: Paul Kay)



only around 6 to 8 metres. Access from the sandy bay to the open sea is via a relatively narrow channel where the rocks are usually occupied by anglers, so watch out for their lines or lost fishing tackle. This channel is shallow and out of the main current, so night dives can be enjoyed here - especially if combined with a barbecue on the beach.

Old telegraph cables run down the middle of the bay but these are sometimes buried under the sand. More modern optic-fibre telecommunications cables may also be seen. You may also find the remains of what appears to be a riveted, iron-hulled vessel with large 'U'-shaped girders, though these are often hidden under the sandy seabed. During one mid-winter dive, a small marine boiler, about the size of a small car, was seen mostly buried in the sand after swimming out of the bay to the left. Is this an auxiliary boiler from the wreck of the 'Missouri' further offshore, or is there is a second wreck closer inshore?

Pollack, wrasse, blennies and gobies will be seen, while large numbers of sand-eels lie buried in the sandy seabed, darting out of their hiding places when disturbed. This is especially noticeable during a night-dive, when the rocky areas become alive with free-swimming lobsters and conger-eels.

Underwater visibility can be extremely good, but quickly deteriorates in a south-westerly wind when there can be heavy surf in the bay.

BOAT DIVES

• Carreg-y-Trai reef, St. Tudwal's Islands (f)


This reef lies about 400 metres south-east of St. Tudwal's Island East. It provides an excellent dive-site, with a mix of wreckage, rocks and marine-life. Located about two miles from Abersoch slipway, it is charted as a rock that dries by 3.3 metres in about 15 metres at low-water. At low-tide, two separate rocks will be seen above the surface, but the underwater reef continues for some distance to the north. These are all completely covered at high-water, but there is a red, can-shaped 'Bell-buoy' moored about 400 metres to the east, to give some warning of the danger. At low-water, up to 40 seals can be seen on the rocks, but they leave their resting place to feed as the tide rises. Divers then often see them underwater, and some of the juvenile seals have been known to tug on a diver's fins. If you suffer from sea-sickness, stay upwind of the reef at low-water to avoid the stench of decaying fish given off by the seals as they laze upon the rocks. They may look cute, but they do have bad breath and body odour!

• Bardsey Island (g)

Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli) lies 1.75 miles south-south-west of Braich-y-Pwll, the extreme tip of the Llyn Peninsula. A trip right round the island, starting from Aberdaron, is about 11 miles - but take plenty of fuel, as this is not the place to run dry! Bardsey is the third largest island off the coast of North Wales after Anglesey and Holy Island, measuring about 1.75 miles from north to south and 0.75 miles maximum from east to west. The highest point on Bardsey is at 167 metres, giving superb views across Bardsey Sound towards Aberdaron, eastwards to Harlech, southwards as far as Pembroke, and westwards to Ireland.

There is excellent diving here, but timing is critical due to the strong tidal flow, overfalls and whirlpools. Dive sites include two offshore rock-pinnacles, a motor-vessel wrecked in 1915 and an unidentified sailing vessel that was carrying a varied cargo, including horse-brasses, stirrups and belt-buckles.

• Wreck of the 'Segontium' (h)

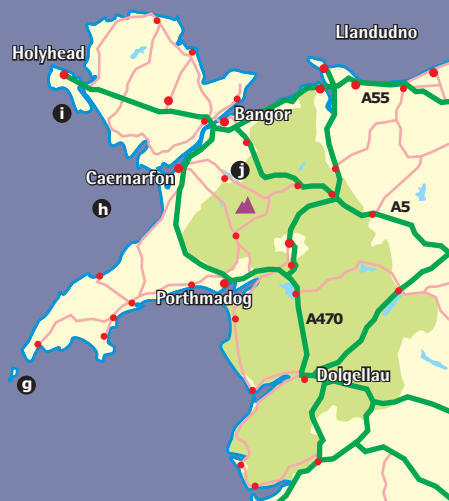
The 'Segontium' really is a superb dive-site, located out in the middle of Caernarfon Bay. This is one of the few intact, upright and almost complete shipwrecks to be found off the Llyn and Anglesey coast within a reasonable depth. The site is a haven for marine-life of every description, with fish, crustaceans and anemones of all shapes, sizes and colour being encountered. 



Bardsey Sunset (Photo: Paul Kay)



Barrel Jellyfish (Photo: Paul Kay)



The 'Segontium' is still largely complete, sitting upright on a sandy seabed and lying north - south with the bows to the south. The deck lies at about 24 metres, reducing to 20 metres at the wheel-house. The bows and wheel-house are very prominent and the whole wreck can easily be covered in one dive, making the task of relocating the shot-line very easy. Just about every piece of the vessel is covered in soft corals such as plumose anemones, but perhaps one of the few criticisms of this wreck is that it is difficult to make out any of the finer details of the 'Segontium' because of this thick coating of marine-life. When looking downwards from the deck towards the seabed, it sometimes appears that the whole sand is moving, but this is simply due to a massive shoal of fish viewed from above and not the extreme effects of nitrogen narcosis!

This wreck seems to have a magnetic attraction for fishing nets, and there are currently large trawl-nets wrapped around the remains of the mast and on the stern. At one time, the wreck was festooned in monofilament drift-nets, which created a strange effect when diving because of the large number of dead fish suspended in the water. They also meant that the conger were always well fed and very large! Fortunately, most of the netting has now gone, but a net cutter, sharp knife or pair of scissors is still recommended when diving here as there are always lost fishing-lines, lures and hooks entangled in the wreck. Divers must be extremely wary of these nets and fishing-lines, especially if the visibility is poor after a storm or during the plankton bloom.

• Wreck of 'Hermine' (i)

The Liverpool-owned iron barque 'Hermine' ran ashore between Porth-y-Garan and Raven's Point in June 1890. All the crew were rescued by a breeches-buoy system.


Lying against the cliffs a mile south of Trearddur Bay slipway, this wreck is a very popular dive-site, being suitable for novice and experienced divers alike. Obviously, the cargo of Peruvian sugar has long gone, but the wreck is spread over a large area and consists of iron plates, pipes, ribs, bits, tubular iron-masts, lengths of chain and halliard winches. Now well smashed up, the remains lie close to the shore in between 10 and 16 metres of water. At the deepest part of the wreck, there is a quantity of wooden planks, leading to speculation that this could be from an earlier wreck lying underneath the 'Hermine', although it could be decking from the 'Hermine'. Immediately to the west of the wreck, there is a 20-metre long tunnel that has been formed by an underwater boulder resting between the cliffs and an off-lying reef. Dangerous only if there is a severe underwater swell, this passageway emerges in a gully that leads directly onto the wreck. Although there is always sufficient light in the tunnel, it is worth taking a torch to shine on the rocky walls and illuminate the anemones. As you emerge onto the site of the wreck, there are several overhangs, gullies and vertical cliffs.

Wrecks always attract marine-life, so on a single dive expect to see octopus, conger, wrasse, leopard-spotted gobies, starfish, squat-lobsters, hermit crabs and much, much more. Many parts of the wreck are completely covered in small mussels. There are many lobster-pots around the wreck, so although lobsters and edible-crabs are often seen on the wreck, few crustaceans are large enough to be legally taken. Several of these lobster-pots have lost their buoys, so loose lengths of rope may be encountered.

Strong currents will be found on the flood-tide, so SMBs are strongly recommended, but also note that the site is very popular with shore-anglers. This means that it is often strewn with lost fishing-line, hooks and weights.

Freshwater Diving

• Vivian Quarry (j)

Vivian Quarry is located in the centre of the beautiful Snowdonia National Park, near the village of Llanberis. It has been set up as a commercial diving-centre to provide an all-year round dive-site with easy access and good facilities such as ample parking (pay & display), toilets, an air-compressor and a cafe. Check their web site at 



Vivian Dive Centre (Photo: Paul Kay)



Vivian Divers (Photo: Paul Kay)

“ Many people choose to dive because of their interest in marine wildlife, and there is plenty to see around the north of Wales

www.divevivian.co.uk. Alternatively, call 01286 870889 to check the opening hours, but evening and night-dives can be arranged by appointment. Being in the Padarn Country Park, other attractions include canoe hire, boat trips, a lakeside railway, the Slate Museum and Electric Mountain. If you have never dived any of the North Wales quarries, this is the place to start.

This quarry produced slate until 1958, but once the drainage pumps were switched off, the water level rose to produce a depth of around 19 metres. Although relatively small, it provides an excellent site for training purposes, testing new equipment, keeping dive-fit or for a night-dive. Underwater visibility is normally very good, but dead leaves in the deeper parts of Vivian tend to become stirred up and cause poor visibility. This is only a problem at weekends, when the site can be very busy.

Parts of the old quarry buildings remain, with a circular blast-shelter located near the southern, deepest part of the site. This structure has the original protective wall across the entrance, and has gained a colony of garden gnomes living on the roof. Another blast-shelter against the quarry wall has been blocked off for safety reasons, with the entrance usually guarded by yet another gnome. Don't argue with him. Keep out!

After your dive, don't miss the free tour of the nearby Slate Museum, with its collection of mining and cutting equipment. See the gigantic waterwheel which once powered the workshop. Take 15 minutes to watch the 3-D film-show. The museum has a nice warm cafe for thawing out after a mid-winter dive and sells books about the history of the slate industry.

CODES OF CONDUCT

Codes of Conduct for divers are available at the following web-sites:-

- The Sub-Aqua Association - www.saa.org.uk
- The British Sub-Aqua Club - www.bsac.com
- Marine Mammals seawatch Foundation - www.seawatchfoundation.org.uk
- Whale and Dolphin Cetacean Society - www.wdcs.org
- Friends of Cardigan Bay - www.fraw.org.uk
- Marine Conservation Society - www.mcsuk.org
- Underwater Photographers Code of Conduct - www.underseacameras.com

BYLAWS

The North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee administer the area around the North Wales Coast. Bylaws are in force regarding the sizes, quantities and restricted areas for marine life such as crabs, lobsters and fish which may be taken by divers. Severe penalties may be applied to anyone breaking these bylaws. For the full text of local fisheries legislation, visit www.nwnwfsfc.org or Tel:01524 68745

TRAINING

Anyone contemplating the sport of scuba-diving should undertake a fully-recognised training-course which has an emphasis on the conditions found in British waters. This can be achieved by joining one of the many sub-aqua clubs that can be found in England, Wales, or Scotland.

Check the following web-sites to find your nearest branch:-

- British Sub-Aqua Club (B.S.A.C.) - www.bsac.com
- Sub-Aqua Association (S.A.A.) - www.saa.org.uk

Alternatively, contact one of the professional diving schools that run training courses for the following organisations:-

- British Sub-Aqua Club (B.S.A.C.) - www.bsac.com





Timbo Diver (Photo: Paul Kay)



www.snowdonia-active.com

“ Anyone contemplating the sport of scuba-diving should undertake a fully-recognised training-course which has an emphasis on the conditions found in British waters

- Professional Association of Diving Instructors (P.A.D.I.) - www.padi.co.uk
- Scuba Schools International (S.S.I.) - www.ssiuk.com

Many divers have undertaken their training in overseas locations, which may have been very different to those found in UK waters. All diving organisations offer cross-over training to suit a person’s requirements.

LOCAL CONDITIONS

Diving in the seas around North Wales requires a knowledge and understanding of the tidal and weather conditions of the area. Visitors to the area should seek advice from local sources such as Coastguards, dive-shops, guide-books, local clubs and the Internet.

Tidal streams can be very strong, especially in the Menai Strait and off any of the exposed headlands around the Llyn Peninsula and Anglesey, so check your tide-tables and seek advice beforehand.

However, should weather or tidal conditions prevent a sea-dive, there is always the option of a freshwater dive at Vivian Quarry, located at Parc Padarn, Llanberis, in the heart of the Snowdonia National Park.

SNORKELLING

Snorkelling in Wales? You must be joking! We tend to associate the sport of snorkelling with warmer climates and clearer water, but under the right conditions, there are some very interesting snorkelling sites in North Wales. Many of our dive-sites are some distance from the nearest road and are only accessible by boat if you are carrying full diving-gear. However, these sites are much easier to reach on foot when carrying only a wetsuit, a mask, a snorkel and a pair of fins. Suitable sites are given in ‘The Essential Underwater Guide to North Wales’ by Chris Holden.

You can become a safe and confident snorkeller by contacting the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC). Whether you are just planning a holiday by the sea, or want to actively develop your snorkelling skills, they can help. Contact them at www.bsacsnorkelling.co.uk or ring the BSAC Headquarters on 0151-350-6200.

The British Sub Aqua Club (BSAC) is the UK’s Governing Body for underwater sports.

CONSERVATION NOTES FOR DIVERS

The coast and sea around North Wales is rich in marine wildlife, making diving a rewarding activity. The area is home to a number of nationally scarce species including certain sponges, anemones and cup corals, with more - such as the mantis shrimp *Rissoides desmaresti*, first noted in 1999 - constantly being found. In recognition of the international importance of the local marine and coastal environment, two large areas have been proposed for designation as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). The Menai Strait and Conwy Bay candidate SAC stretches from Little Ormes Head in the east to Abermenai Point at the far southwest of the Strait, and as far north as Benllech on Anglesey. Further south, the Pen Llyn a’r Sarnau candidate SAC reaches from Port Dinllaen in the north down to Aberystwyth, and includes Bardsey Island. These designations will afford the marine and coastal environment long-term protection and ensure that the rich biodiversity here can be maintained for the enjoyment of others in the future. The implications of these designations on diving are positive: they promote the protection of wildlife diversity and ensure that your diving experience is an enjoyable one with plenty to see. Diving is allowed in such protected areas, but divers should always ensure that they act responsibly to reduce the potential impacts of their activities on the local flora and fauna.

Regardless of the area in which you dive, it is good practise to minimise damage and be aware of possible disturbance to wildlife above and below the sea. Wrecks make





Hermine-TG5 (Photo: Tony Gilbert)



www.snowdonia-active.com

“ *The Liverpool-owned iron barque 'Hermine' ran ashore between Porth-y-Garan and Raven's Point in June 1890, when all of the crew were rescued by a breeches-buoy system*

popular diving sites for their biological, archaeological and historical interest. Such structures act as artificial reefs, becoming covered with beautiful soft corals, hydroids and sponges and attracting a host of interesting fish. However, many species that colonise such structures are relatively vulnerable and may be slow growing and the careless placement of a fin or hand causes unnecessary damage. Underwater photography is a popular and rewarding hobby, but care should be taken to avoid disturbing the subjects. The Marine Conservation Society and Project Aware have developed a code of conduct for underwater photographers, much of which is applicable to any diver. For more information visit the MCS website (www.mcsuk.org).

Seals, dolphins and porpoises are all protected species that are relatively common in some areas around North Wales. Bottlenose dolphins and porpoises are often seen around the north coast of Anglesey and the Ormes, and Bardsey Island is a known breeding site for seals. Seabirds are found all along the coast, but are particularly sensitive to disturbance during critical periods such as the breeding season. If you are travelling to your site by boat, take care not to disturb these creatures - reckless disturbance of cetaceans and some wild birds is an offence. General advice on wildlife friendly boat use in the marine environment is set out in the CCW SeaWise Code (www.ccw.gov.uk).

THE SEAWISE CODE

- Enjoy and respect the marine environment.
- Do not act in such a way that will make marine animals or birds behave other than they would normally in their natural environment.
- Be aware of your surroundings and of marine animals and birds. Do not cause them any disturbance.
- Make no unnecessary noise.
- Do not remove any plant or animal from the sea.
- Do not swim with, touch or feed any marine animals or birds.
- Allow marine animals or birds to approach you at sea and if they choose to do so keep your vessel at a steady course and speed. All vessels should be kept at a speed of no more than 6 knots when close to marine mammals.
- If possible, remain at a distance of at least 100metres from seals and cetaceans, basking sharks and nesting birds and stay in the area for no longer than 15 minutes.
- If other vessels join you, move away if necessary to ensure that no more than 3 vessels are in the area at any one time.
- Keep to your route at sea and avoid erratic movements or sudden changes in speed.
- Keep vessel engines and propellers well maintained. Fitting propeller guards can minimise the risk of injury to marine animals.
- Do not dispose of fuel, oil or litter, especially plastics and angling equipment, at sea. Take your litter home.
- Help to protect all marine wildlife.

Many people choose to dive because of their interest in marine wildlife, and there is plenty to see around the north of Wales. The Seasearch programme, funded and overseen by a number of conservation and diving organisations, aims to increase knowledge and conservation of the UK marine environment and through the voluntary participation of divers. Further information on Seasearch projects in this area can be found through the website (www.seasearch.org.uk).

www.hmcoastguard.co.uk - this website provides an insight into the work of HM Coastguard and how the Civil Maritime Search and Rescue service operates.





Thornback Ray (Photo: Paul Kay)



Octopus (Photo: Paul Kay)



www.snowdonia-active.com

“ Vivian Quarry is located in the centre of the beautiful Snowdonia National Park, near the village of Llanberis.

Snowdonia-Active website

www.snowdonia-active.com provides a whole host of information about local activity providers, instructors and guides, accommodation and campsites, outdoor shops and cafes. Check out the Directory, a geographically specific database covering outdoor orientated businesses in the North-West Wales area. The site is host to a whole range of downloadable activity and area guides written by field experts. It also has links to numerous weather forecasting websites.

Public Transport

Although the Snowdonia area is well served with a modern road network there are many alternatives to travelling by private car. The Snowdonia National Park, the Llŷn Peninsula & Anglesey are criss-crossed with a network of local & regional buses, and rail links. In the northern part of the National Park the special Sherpa bus service connects the most popular walking & climbing areas to adjacent towns and villages.

UK Public Transport Information

<http://www.traveline.org.uk> gives links to public transport providers. Click on the map for information about coach, bus, rail, air & ferry services for North Wales & beyond.

Disclaimer

The writer and publishers of this leaflet accept no responsibility for the way in which readers use the information contained therein. The descriptions and recommendations are for guidance only and must be subject to discriminating judgement by the reader. Advice and training should be sought before utilising any equipment or techniques mentioned within the text or shown in any of the photographic images.

Diving is by nature an adventurous sport and should only be undertaken after successfully completing the appropriate training, and by using equipment suitable for the location, depth and type of dive being undertaken. The flooded quarries of North Wales in particular, have claimed far too many lives and should be treated with the greatest respect. Visit the safe environment at Vivian Quarry, Llanberis, before contemplating any of the other flooded quarries.

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Chris has been a keen diver for over 30 years, joining the RAF Sealand branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club in 1971, before moving to Chester Sub-Aqua Club in 1976. He passed the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) First Class Diver examination in 1987, followed by the BSAC Club Instructor and Advanced Instructor exams in 1988. He then spent several very enjoyable years on the BSAC Club-Instructor Training Scheme. Chris is the author of The Essential Underwater guide to North Wales Volume 1 - Barmouth to South Stack.

