

St. Abbs

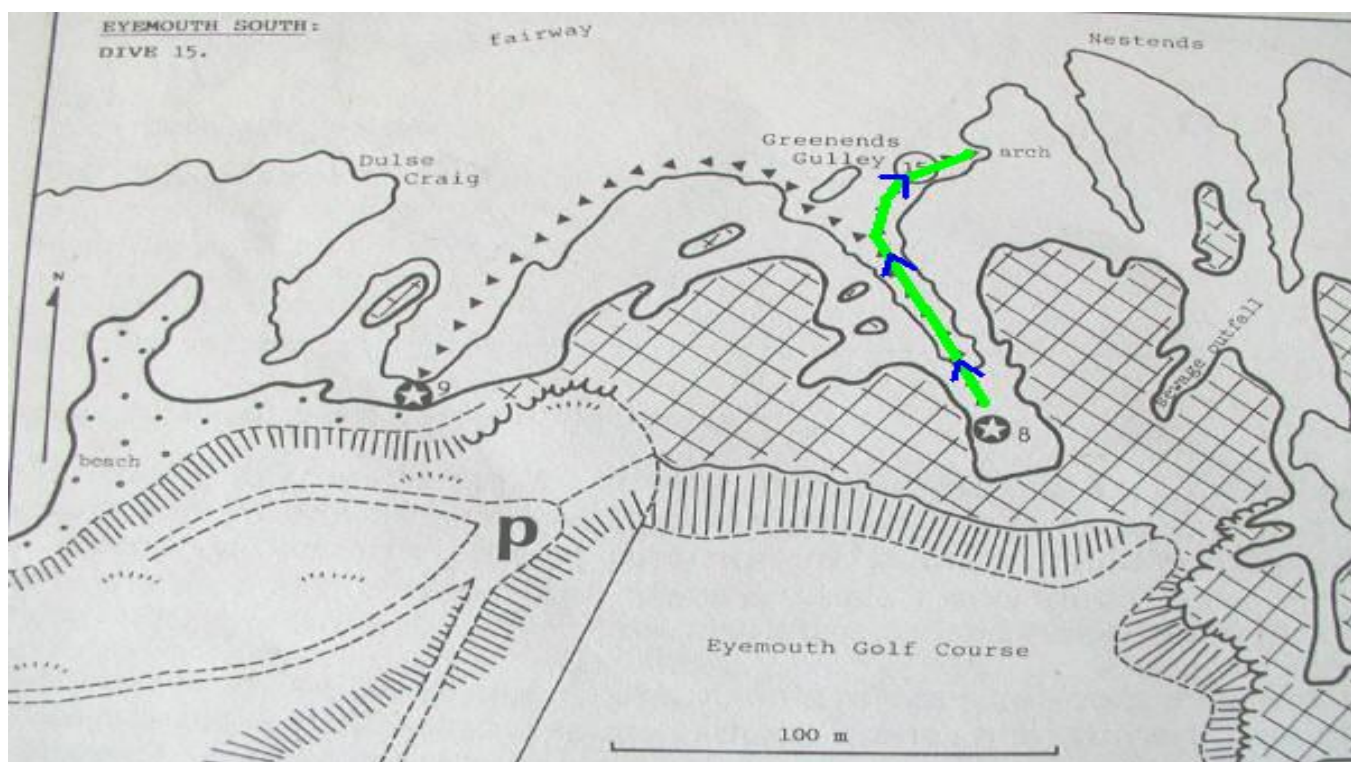
2nd, 3rd & 4th May 2008

Primary Sites:

St. Abbs harbour and South Eyemouth are the primary dive sites. St. Abbs is exposed to easterly winds which can make it choppy around the harbour, whereas westerly winds tend to flatten the sea. At the harbour it is best to park in the diver's car park if at all possible. Drive through the council car park and follow it around to the right where you will enter the diver's car park. Slack water in St. Abbs is 3 ½ hours before and 3 hours after high tide.

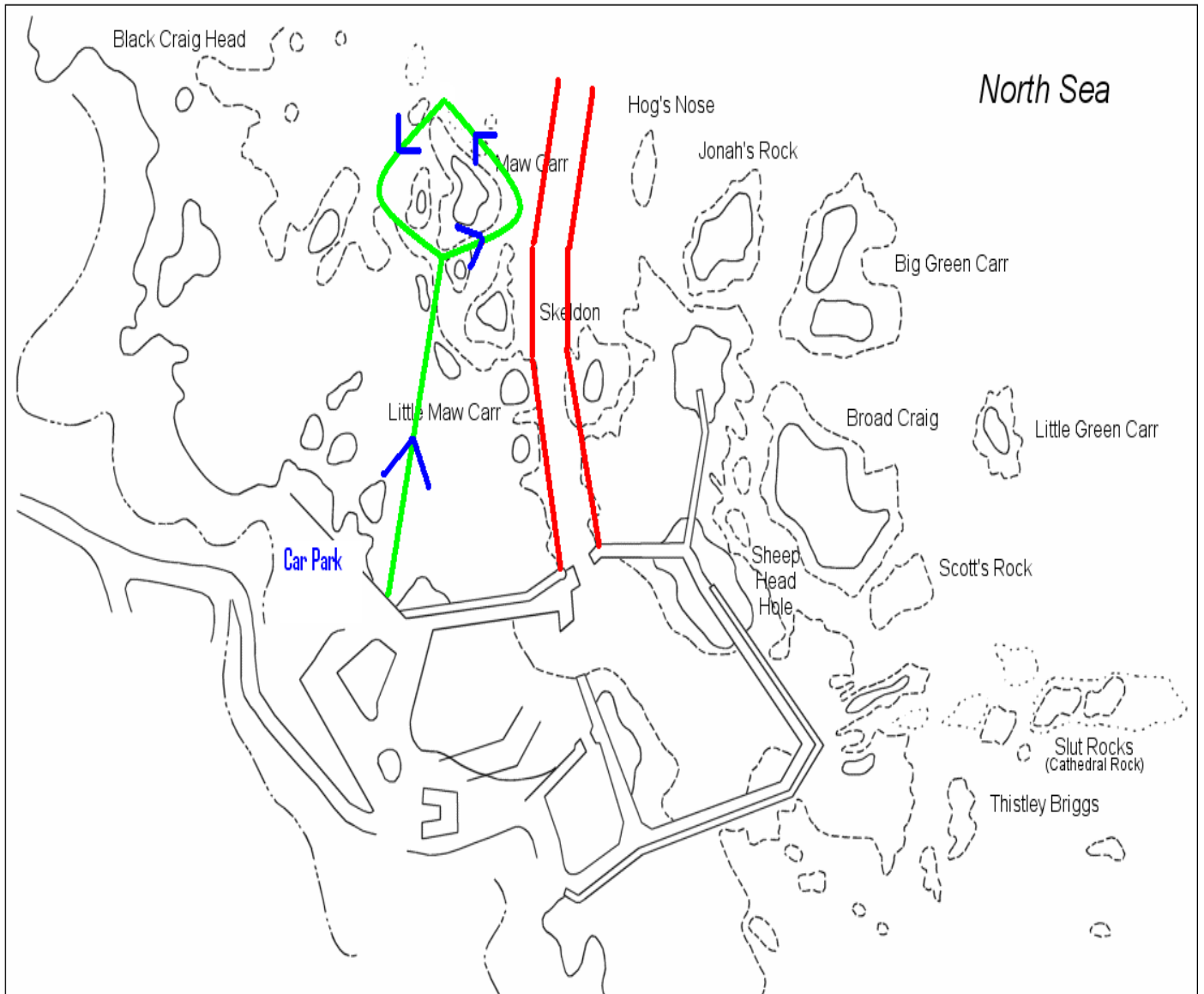
Eyemouth(South): Greenends Gulley

This dive site faces north and as a result it can be unsuitable to dive here during strong northerlies. The entry and exit points are the same, and require you to clamber over some rocks to get to the water's edge from the dirt track. It is easier on high tide, but heavy swells in the gulley make entering and exiting treacherous. After entering the water you will quickly drop to around 10m. Following the gulley out to the sea you will come across plenty of lobsters and crabs on the various ledges. Emerging from the gulley you will find lots of kelp on the seabed. Following the channel around to the right you will come across a wide stony gulley, if you keep going over the sand ramp and crevice you will come across a natural chimney opening into the next gulley. Return to the exit point following the same path that you took out. Max depth of the dive is 13m and care should be taken not to venture too far north offshore as there are shipping lanes there. If the swell renders exiting at Greenends Gulley hazardous, then you can always continue around to the gulley just east of Greenends Gulley. This is where the old sewage outfall used to be, but that has now been moved 15 miles out to sea, and there is a handy slipway here for exiting. This will be our night dive on Friday. High tide is at 10:10pm, so any time from 7pm onwards would be suitable for this dive. Torches are a necessity on this dive.



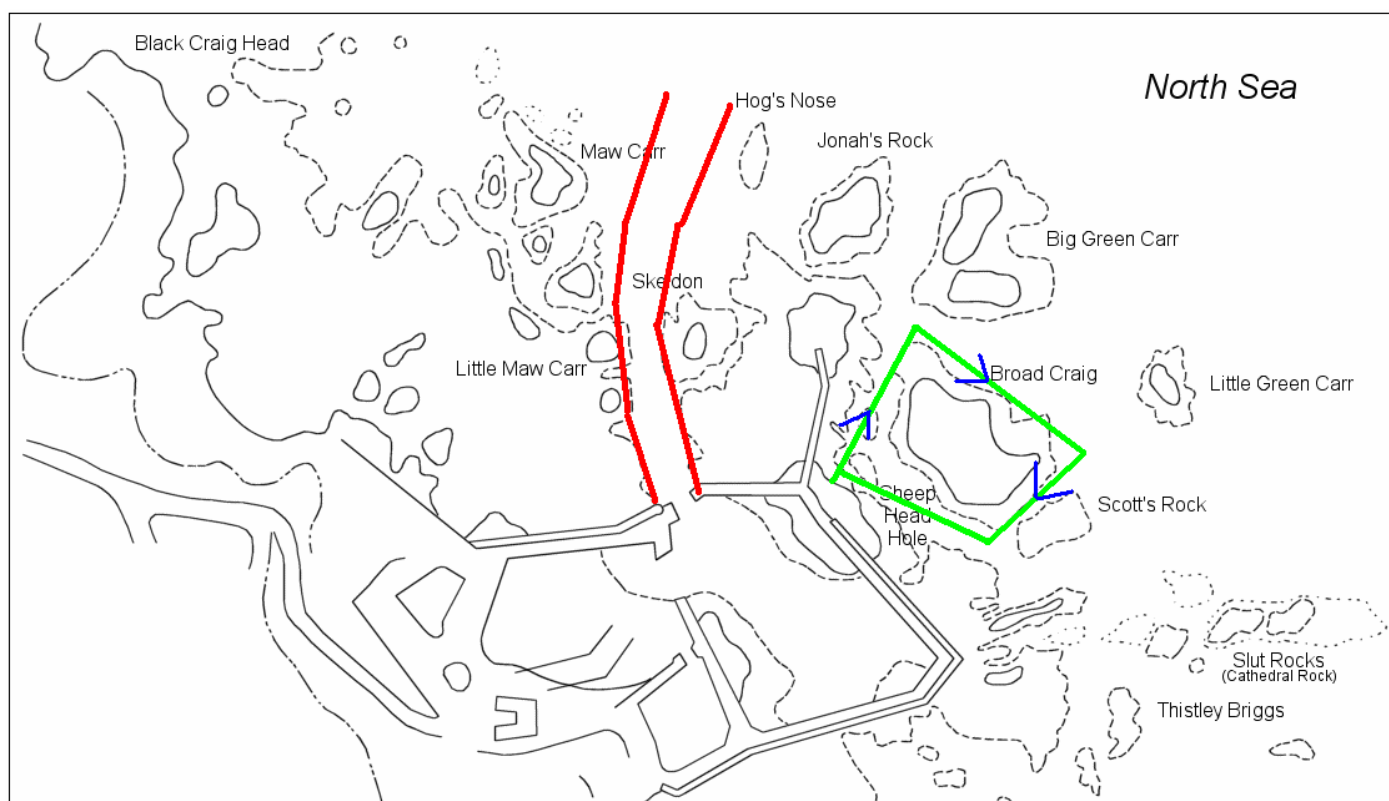
St Abbs: Seagull Rock / Maw Carr

This dive site is just north of the car park. The depth around the rock is a max of 11m on a high spring tide. This dive should only be done at high tide as it would be too difficult to reach the site at low tide. The entry and exit points are the same. They are just below the car park by the sewage pipe. You can approach the rock on the surface or fin out underwater on a compass bearing. The rock should be circum navigated in an anti-clockwise fashion keeping close to the rock in order to ensure that you don't go near the fairway on the eastern side, which is used by harbour traffic. As soon as you reach the rock each buddy pair should send up their DSMB. On the north/seaward facing side of the rock there is a deep cave full of fish life. Torches would be useful here. We should do this dive first on Saturday as high tide is at 10:35am. We should meet at the car park at 8:30am and aim to have the first pair in the water around 9:15am



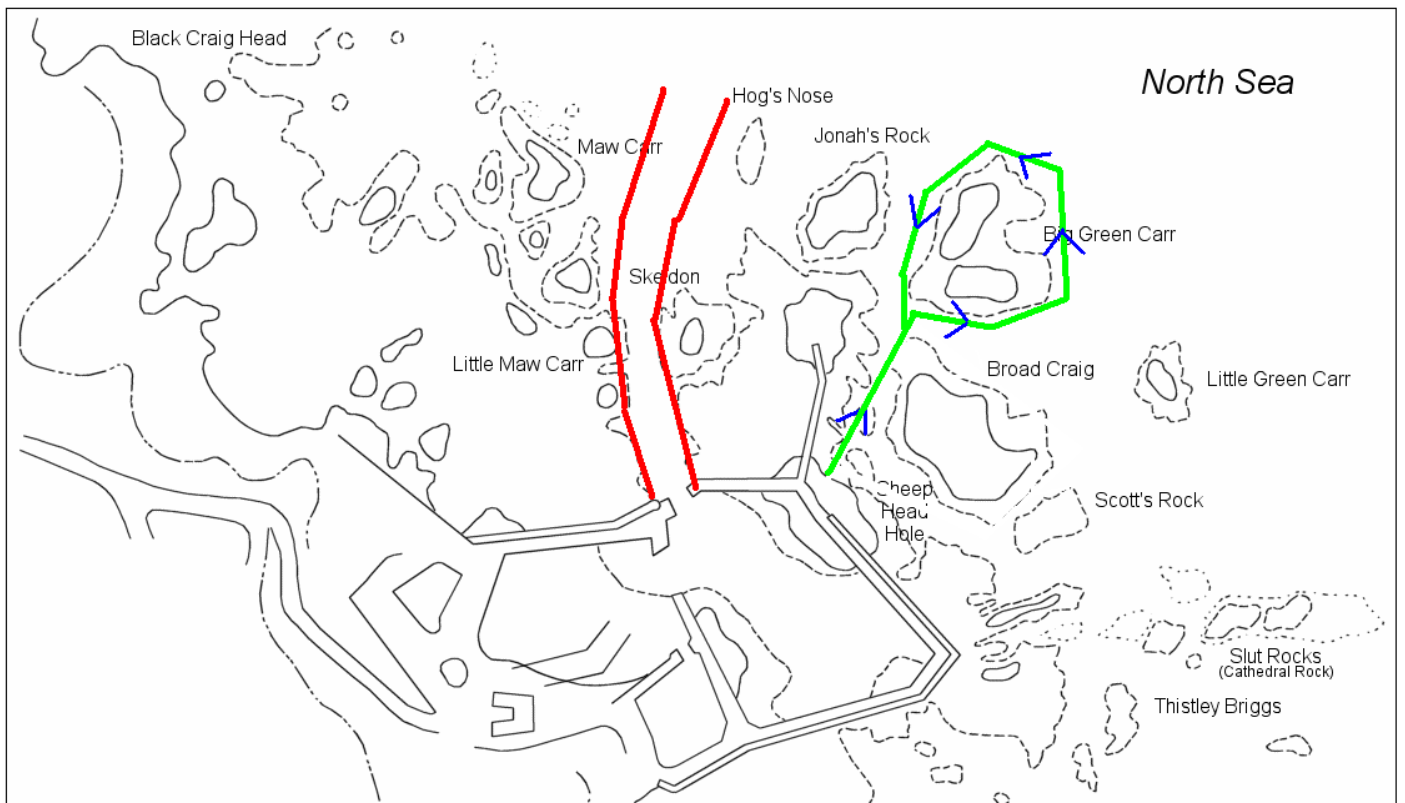
St Abbs: Broad Craig

This dive site is a little bit of a trek from the car park. Using a trolley if you have one would be very useful here. The site is sheltered and reaches a depth of about 10m. The entry and exit points are again the same. They are just where the harbour and the break water meet. You will have to climb down some rocks to get to the water. The rock should be circum navigated in a clockwise fashion in order to ensure that you don't end up going up towards Big Green Carr. On the shore side of the rock the sea bed is quiet sandy and reaches about 6m, good for doing CBLs or mask clearing 😊. On the seaward side there is a lot of kelp and other kinds of seaweed. On the eastern side you will pass through a gully where the walls are covered in dead man's fingers. You might even find a conger here, or so the book says anyway. We should aim to do this dive as soon after the first one as we can in order to take advantage of the high tide.



St Abbs: Big Green Carr & Amphitheatre

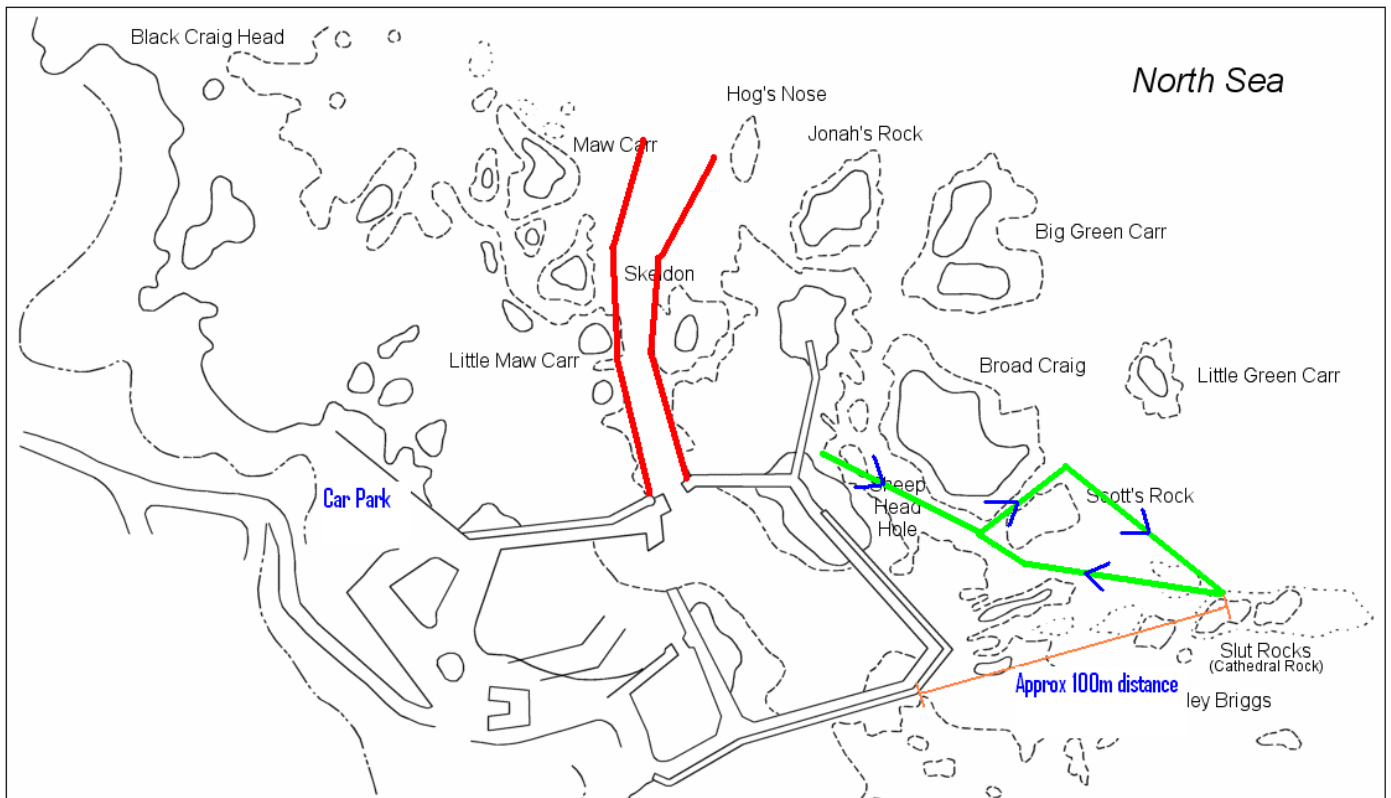
This dive site is right beside the previous one. The eastern side of the rock is where the amphitheatre is situated. This is as the book says "a spectacular, sheer-sided, semi-circular wall of rock". It has a sandy bottom at a depth of 15m. The eastern side is exposed and as a result this should only be dived in slack water, ensuring that you go with the tidal flow on the exposed side (this is where the tidal flow is the strongest). The flow comes from the North on the Flood and goes to the South on the Ebb. Also the site is best dived in the morning to get the most light, ensuring the best visibility. As high tide is at 11:32am, I suggest that we meet at the car park at 8:30am and aim to have the first pair in the water for 9:15am. DSMBs will be required on this dive.



St Abbs: Cathedral Rock

The entry and exit points for this dive site are the same as the previous two dives. Cathedral Rock is a rock formation that contains a double arch that penetrates straight through. The arches are covered in white and orange plumose anemones and divers can pass through both arches, although the top one is a bit narrow. Max depth is around 13m and as the currents are strong around the rock formation, it is best to dive it on slack water. There are two ways to reach this dive site. You can snorkel out on the surface to the tip of the rock formation known as Thistley Brigs. This is about 100m offshore and isn't visible at high tide. It is in line with the south wall of the harbour. Alternatively you can follow the main gully between Broad Craig and the harbour wall, passing through the gully between Broad Craig and Scott's Rock, keeping to the left hand side. Once you emerge from that gully Cathedral Rock is 30m ahead at a compass bearing of 120 deg. After investigating the area, if you return on a compass bearing of 280 deg you should find your way back to the main gully between the harbour wall and Broad Craig. Note that if you do decide to dive this site as the tide is on the flood, then it would be best to plan the dive so that you have enough air to return to the exit point underwater. The reason for this being that it is easier to swim against the tide on the sea bottom here as you can be sheltered by the landscape, rather than swimming on the surface.

As this is a delicate dive site and also because it is very popular, care should be taken around the arches in order to ensure that no damage is done. Good fining and good buoyancy are required. DSMBs should be used when returning from the rock.



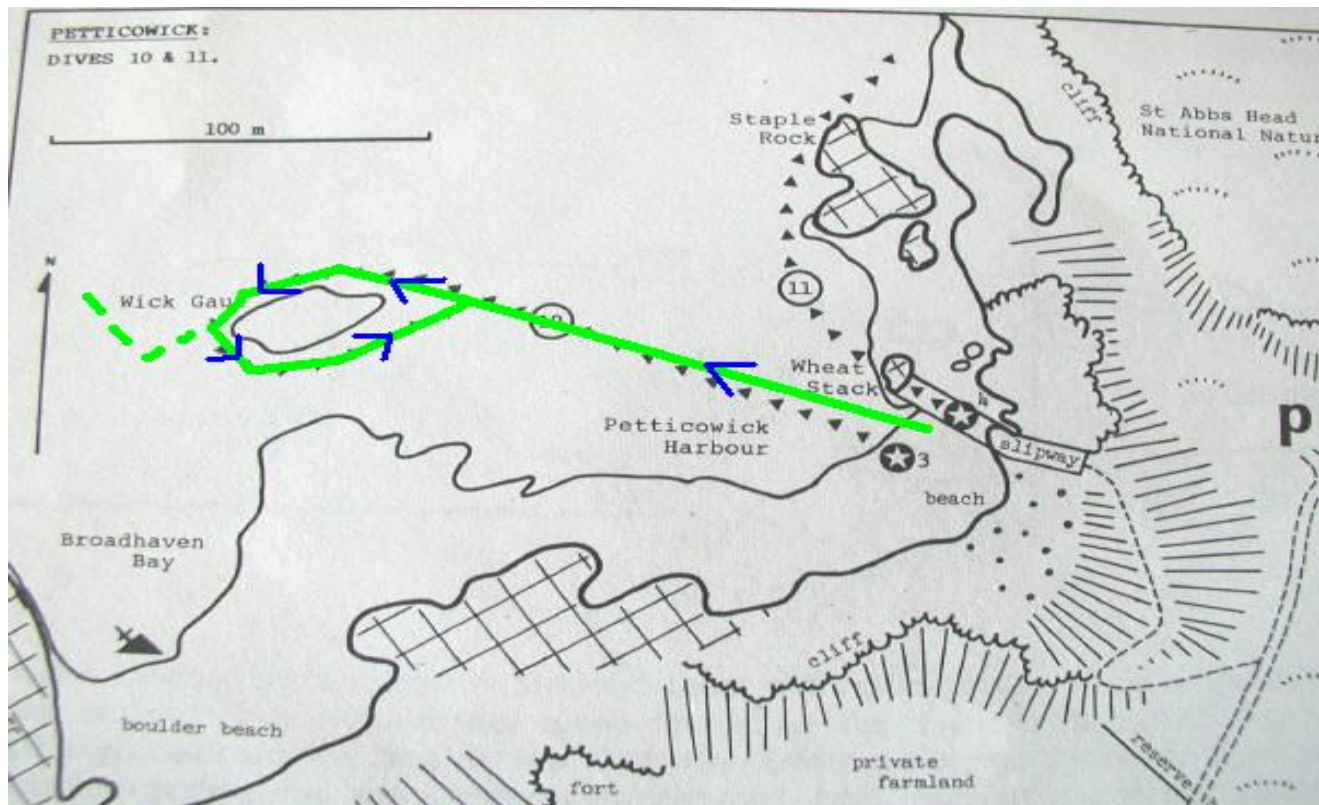
Backup Sites:

Petticowick can be used as an alternative to St. Abbs if it has been blown out by easterly and south-easterly winds, although it is exposed to westerly, north-westerly and northerly winds. Car parking near the dive site is limited (the little book says about 4 cars, but I saw more there last year, possibly 6-8), but this site isn't as popular as St. Abbs. The location is about ½ a mile from St. Abbs village. Care needs to be taken when descending the steep footpath down from the car park down to the bay. The lower part of the footpath has collapsed which makes it more difficult to get down. I would suggest getting the able bodied divers in the group to carry all of the gear down for the group. At this point I would like to remind you all about my dodgy knees, bad back, weak ankles and possible sore head, depending on the night before ☺.

Petticowick: Wick Gaut (& Peanut Boat)

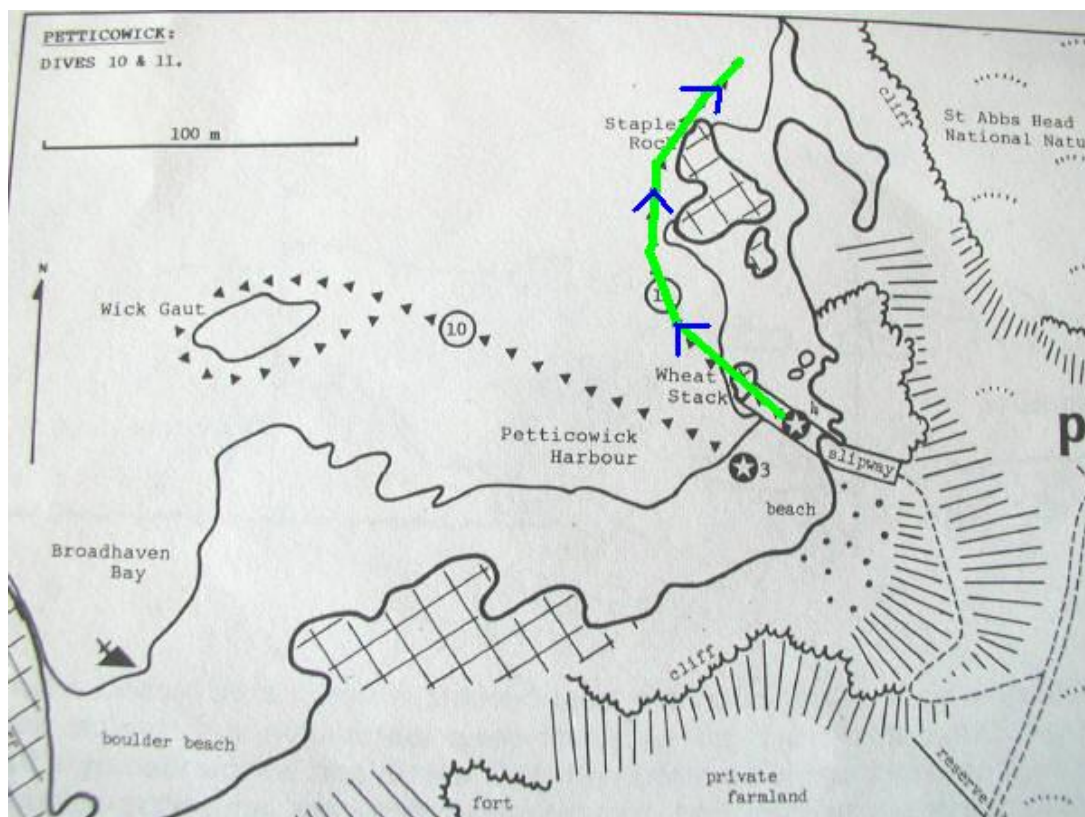
Entry and exit points differ depending on the tide. At high tide you can use the slipway and at low tide it is easier to use the beach beside the slipway. The dive will take you out to a large rock called 'Wick Gaut' on the western side of Petticowick. It is a relatively shallow swim across to the rock across sand, gravel and boulders. You can follow a compass bearing of 300 deg from the slipway and it is about 150m from the beach. The max depth of the dive will be around 12m at the base of the rock. The wreck of the SS 'Odense' is to the south-west of the rock in Broadhaven Bay. This is in about 5-10m of water. It has completely disintegrated and the debris is all around the bay. This vessel is called the 'Peanut Boat' because of the cargo of peanuts that it was carrying. During the dive that I did here in July 2006 with Graham and Hans we managed to find the boiler. According to Graham's log book we crossed a gully at the western side of the Rock, where we found some long metal pipes. From there we turned north and swam for a bit where we came across the boiler. Don't have any compass bearings for this but we can try it out. It didn't take us any more than a few minutes swimming north from the pipes before we came across the boiler.

There has been friction in the past between divers and local farmers and fishermen regarding the use of this site. As a result people are asked to be courteous, not to leave any litter behind, not to crowd the car park and not to dive at night.



[Petticowick: Staple Rock](#)

This is the high, red rock that is just north of the slipway. This is a pleasant and relaxing dive along the cliff. At high water the book recommends using the bottom right-hand end of the slipway as the entry point. The exit point can be the slipway or the beach, depending on which is easier. After entering the water you should swim through the short tunnel in Wheat Stack, the rock directly in front of the slipway. After that, veer right over the boulders towards Staple Rock. The depth around Staple Rock is about 8m and if you go beyond the rock to the north there are 2 sheer pinnacles which bottom out at 10m. There is plenty of plant life to be seen on this dive, including lots of soft corals. You will find an area with big boulders a little further offshore at a depth of 15m.



7. Useful Contact Details

- Coastguard
 - Forth District Coastguard 01333-450666 (manned 24 hours)
 - Eyemouth Coastguard 01890-750348
- Police
 - Eyemouth Police Station 01890-750217
- Doctor
 - Eyemouth Health Centre 01890-750599
 - Coldingham Surgery 01890-771291
- Hospital
 - Borders General Hospital 01368-862381
- Hyperbaric Facilities
 - Aberdeen 0845-4086008, www.hyperchamber.com, The NHS service based here co-ordinates the treatment of diving emergencies throughout Scotland
 - Dundee 01382-632080

8. Air / Nitrox

- Air fills are £3.00 for a fill using the Scoutscoft filling station at St. Abbs. This filling station is only open for bank holiday weekends and for the part of the Summer. Phone Scoutscoft to confirm but I think it is open from July onwards at the weekends during the Summer. The station is manned from 9am until 5pm when opened.
- Air fills are also £3.00 from Rock House Diving who are also situated in St. Abbs. They are located just beside the car park. I phoned up and asked for opening hours and they said anytime within reason, so 9am until 5pm should be fine.
- Air fills at Scoutscoft's Dive Centre are charged based on the amount of air that you require to fill your cylinder. They employ a self service credit system whereby you have a key which you can put

credit on and you use this at the filling station. The station is open from 9am until 6pm on Fri/Sat and until 5pm on Sun.

- Nitrox is also available from Scoutscoft's Dive Centre. Cylinders need to be O2 cleaned, and are charged at a rate of £5:50 for 10/12L cylinders, £6.50 for 15L cylinders and £10 for twin sets.

9. Miscellaneous

- Diver car park at St. Abbs costs £5 per bay per day(longer than 2 hours). This is run by the harbour trust and it is usually the harbour master who collects the money. Spaces are at a premium here so you should aim to get there early
- Council car park which is just above the diver car park costs £10 per bay per day(longer than 2 hours). This is a pay and display car park
- The dive sites are exposed to easterly winds which can render them too dangerous to dive in. Westerly winds tend to flatten the sea, but also introduce the risk of being blown out to sea

10. References

- A Guide to Diving in the St. Abbs & Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve, by C. Warman. (Main source for all of the dive info)
- Dive St. Abbs and Eyemouth, by Lawson Wood
- <http://www.marine-reserve.co.uk>
- <http://www.dcordes.freeuk.com/abbs.htm>
- <http://www.rockhousediving.com>
- http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/uk_forecast_weather.html
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/5day.shtml?id=3651>
- <http://www.ukdivers.com/info/hyperbaric.asp>
- <http://www.scuba-doc.com/divuk.htm>
- http://www.musac.co.uk/musac/East_Coast.html