

We are animals - not plants!

A) Finger Bryozoan or Sea Chervil (*Alcyonidium diaphanum*)

These are colonies consisting of small animals called by scientists Polyps. A colony can be of all shapes varying from very knobbly and branched (A) to long and thin (A₁). But they all feel very rubbery to the touch. The illustration is of an approximately full size colony. These are nearly always washed up as a result of a storm from offshore waters. Extremely common.

CAN CAUSE MILD IRRITATION TO THE SKIN (Known by North Sea Fishermen as “DOGGER BANK ITCH”)

B) Hornwrack (*Flustra foliacea*)

Biologically very similar to the Finger Bryozoan, but fronds are flatter and more seaweed like. Look for lots of small square holes in rows similar to the ‘windows’ in high rise flats, they house the polyps; these work for the common good of the colony. Usually stranded on the shoreline. (B₁) A lighter coloured colony is also shown for comparison. Very Common.

C) Bread crumb Sponge (*Halichondria panicea*)

Variable in colour - from cream, yellow, brown to green. This sponge can be smooth or an irregular crumbly lump. Large pores or siphons - similar to mini volcanoes - can be seen dotted over the surface - as sponges feed on suspended matter in seawater. They can break up easily - hence the common name – as torn off lower shore rocks by wave action, and then found along the strandline.

D) Sea Orange (*Tethya aurantium*)

A typical hard round mass of sponge, quite hard to the touch, can look like a large golf ball. Can be variable in shape and colour – from greys to orange. Two representative shapes shown (D & D₁)

E) Mermaid’s Glove Sponge (*Haliclona oculata*)

Finger branches glove like, forming fragile shrub like colonies, occasionally washed up on the beach from deeper water.

F) Sea Gooseberry or Comb jelly (*Pleurobrachia pileus*)

These are active predatory creatures superficially similar to jellyfish and are occasionally found in rock pools in the Thanet area. When the sun catches them they glitter beautifully, whilst they whirl around hunting using the two long sticky tentacles to snare prey. HARMLESS TO HUMANS.

G) A typical Sea Fir

A close relative of Jellyfish and are named **Hydroids**, nearly always found covering rocks or sea weeds. Easily mistaken for very small trees. TOTALLY HARMLESS.

Arrows indicate aids to identification.

Images & text by Lester Hovenden, NEKMPA Coastal Warden

7-2015

North East Kent



Marine Protected Area



The North East Kent Coast is one of the best sites in Europe for wintering birds, and marine life of the chalk caves, reef and sandy bays.

For more details:

www.thanetcoast.org.uk

or www.nekmpa.org.uk

Tel: 01843 577672

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**We are Animals - not Plants
on the Thanet coast**

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