

***Coronation* Inshore and Offshore Designated Wreck Sites**



HE Illustrator at work on the Bowl illustrations

2016 Licensee's Report

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SUMMARY

This report summarises the work undertaken by the Coronation Wreck Project team on the *Coronation* Offshore and *Coronation* Inshore designated wreck sites (located off Penlee Point, Plymouth) during the period 22nd November 2015 – 21st November 2016.

Further work is still required to establish the extent of the sites in order to produce a complete site plan particularly to the southwest of the offshore area of designation. Monitoring of the level of seabed erosion continues at the offshore site.

The licenses to continue the project's research were authorised by the Secretary of State, under the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973). The assistance provided by the English Heritage / Historic England Maritime Team is gratefully acknowledged.

The continued support of the current survey team and particularly Mark Pearce Visitor's Licensee and Visitor Coordinator is also appreciated.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Coronation was a second rate 90 gun British warship built in 1685 at the Naval Dockyard in Portsmouth. The vessel took part in the Battle of Beachy Head in 1690 and was lost a year later (1691) in a gale off Penlee Point, near Plymouth, Devon. The exact reasons for her loss are still unclear.

In two primary locations, *Coronation* is thought to lie Offshore at Latitude 50° 18.57' North, Longitude 004° 11.98' West and Inshore at Latitude 50° 18.96' North and Longitude 004° 11.57' West. These coordinates are that of the designated positions and have been supplied by the Department of Culture Media and Sport. Licences for both sites were granted to the author to continue the work commenced under the previous licences.

2.0 SITE IDENTIFICATION & ASSESSMENT

2.1 Diving Logistics

The *Coronation* Offshore site is located directly in the path of one of the main sailing routes in and out of the Port of Plymouth (located in Plymouth Sound), and lies within waters controlled by the Queens Harbour Master (QHM) / Ministry of Defence (MoD). The net effect is that there are a multitude of small and medium sized pleasure craft and police boats travelling over the site – particularly on weekends – with the attendant risk to divers. Extra vigilance and a suitably trained boat skipper is required on this site.

The Penlee Point area is subject to relatively strong tidal currents particularly on Spring tides. Although the two sites are approximately 800 metres apart, the Offshore site is approximately 684 metres south west of the Inshore site, with the result that the periods of slack water are considerably shorter on the Offshore site.

After installation and opening of the *Coronation* Diver Trail in 2011 the team has focussed on locating additional artefacts both within and outside of the designated

areas. The visitor scheme continues to identify new artefacts and additional items of interest within the designated areas and surrounding undesignated area.

The core survey team in 2016 have only completed a total of 102 survey dives in this reporting period. This is an increase on 2015 but is still below where we would like to be. This has been due to inclement weather and availability of a dive team when the weather has been favourable.

2016 licensed individuals visiting the sites remain consistent with previous years. 208 licensed divers have visited the site in this reporting period with several completing multiple dives in the year. Again we have seen many returning divers from previous years, which reinforces the current belief that maritime archaeology and access to designated sites is on the increase.

2.2 Condition of Site

The main designated sites remain stable but have again experienced sediment movement off the sites which have revealed additional artefacts. The continued and regular diver activity at the sites has had no obvious affect to the marine life or the main artefacts. 2016 has reported an increase in the sightings of the native Crayfish on the sites and surrounding areas.

The improved station marker anchorage system on the diver trail has proved very effective with only one marker being lost in the 2016 season.

2016 has seen the collaboration of the project team and the Maritime Archaeology Sea Trust (MAST) in the recording and production of the 3D virtual diver trail. It is hoped that this will be live at the time of this report being published.

3.0 GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY & FLORA

The seabed in the survey area is composed of undulating natural rock (with some steep pinnacles) with small pockets (gullies) of sand. A variety of seaweeds are attached to the rocks on the site but in the licensee's opinion this does not obstruct the artefacts from view on the offshore site. The inshore site can be almost unworkable when the summer growth of kelp has become established.

The 2007 & 2009 multi-beam survey data show that the Offshore site lies upon a raised area of rocky seabed that is separated from the Inshore site by a deeper 'channel' that is in places covered in sand. These sand filled gullies are diminishing and so giving the opportunity for new artefacts becoming exposed and subsequently recorded. This continues to be an area of concern as valuable artefacts that are appearing are being lost very soon after exposure. This is not as a result of surface recovery. It is a fair assumption that this procedure is occurring on a much wider area and many artefacts may be being lost to the process. This could be seen as part of the natural wrecking process and history of the site or as a sad loss of heritage.

3.1 Seabed Erosion

The movement of sand from the site reported back in 2007 is still an on-going process. This has only been visually confirmed this year as the sediment monitoring system at the offshore site has been rendered ineffective due the substantial loss of

sediment/sand. Some areas are now showing signs of a redepositing of material on the site thus aiding the preservation of the artefacts that have become exposed. Some sand bagging took place in the most vulnerable areas in 2015. Some of these sandbags have been replaced as they have become damaged by storm action. There has been some evidence of sediment levels increasing in small areas of the site, but in general the site is a dynamic and mobile site.

4.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH, EDUCATION & DISSEMINATION

The *Coronation Wreck* Project website continues to be well supported and has received a further 2019 hits totalling 19,034 hits since opening (as at 17 Nov 16).

A new and much improved user friendly and interactive website www.coronationwreck.org has been developed and is now live. The financial support given by Historic England is very much appreciated and has assisted in the development of our Outreach Programme.

The support of Historic England in the drawing up of the Pewter Dish recovered from the site is once more appreciated and the drawings are now with the archive and have been available to view via the website and Facebook page.

Several groups visiting Plymouth had enquired at very short notice to dive the site. Unfortunately, the new licencing system requiring a licensee to be present has prevented the visitors from being able to dive the site. This is a very big disappointment to the project and the divers themselves. The previous licensing system and management of the visitors trail worked extremely well and it is requested that this may be reviewed and reinstated. The interest in the site in 2016 again highlights the interest by diving clubs in protected sites of national importance and the general trend towards an increasing and respectful interest in our nation's maritime heritage. It is hoped that the new licensing system will be reviewed and amended to support the responsible access to the sites without being restricted by administrative procedures.

4.1 Conservation Report / Storage and Display

Unfortunately contact with the Mount Edgecumbe Estate has all but ceased in spite of numerous attempts to continue the dialogue and the plan to exhibit at Mount Edgecumbe House is now looking very unlikely. The planned development of Fort Bovisand has also been scrapped and so a potential home there has also been lost. The National Royal Navy Museum (NRNM) at Portsmouth have expressed an interest in the collection but coordinating a meeting with the director and Mr Peter McBride is proving problematic. It is hoped that a favourable time can be found over the winter period for this meeting to take place.

4.2 Illegal Diving / Interference - Education Campaign

There were no reported incidents of illegal diving on the sites this year nor have we experienced any problems with pot fisherman depositing their creels on the sites. The monitoring system of the site continues to work extremely well and the QHM Plymouth and the Coast Watch team at Rame Head are to be commended on their continued vigilance and support. Diving is still continuing in the intermediate undesignated area between the two sites and surrounding area. These areas have confirmed artefacts and still remain an area of great concern.

The MoD Police continue to support the Licensee and have visited divers at the site to confirm their validity of being there.

The majority of local operators now fully support the *Coronation* Wreck Project and offer official visits to the site coordinated through the website and administered by Mr M Pearce. The Skippers of the Charter boats are now listed as additional Licensees so this does help with visiting divers, but does not address those whom wish to visit the site on their own boats and only hear of the site once in Plymouth.

The information boards provided by EH and displayed at Fort Bovisand, Penlee Point and at the National Marine Aquarium are still in a good state of repair and are regularly visited and read by numerous passing individuals many of which have been totally unaware of the *Coronation* site prior to seeing the information panels. These have been a very positive addition to the outreach programme of the project.

5.0 RE-DESIGNATION OF PROTECTED AREA

This remains an area of extreme frustration and annoyance for the project team. It has been confirmed that the areas are not to be re-designated. It is hoped that this will not result in artefacts being lost from the record due to divers recovering items from the undesignated areas.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Unfortunately, this year saw the loss of our dedicated and much loved project boat Skipper; Jim Trotter. His friendship, enthusiasm and meticulous attention to detail will very much be missed by the team and all who met him.

The team's activity on the site this year has increased somewhat compared to 2015 this primarily being down to having our own project boat, however it is less than we would have hoped for. Dive charter boats remain supportive of the project but it is not financially viable to visit the site with less than 6 divers on board. The ever changing nature of the seabed across the area still presents exciting opportunities to further increase our knowledge of the site. It is hoped that the team can now extend the research area and the following work is recommended:

1. Continued diver survey of the sites and the areas to the southwest of the site and the targets identified by the magnetometer and sonar survey commissioned by EH and carried out by MAST.
2. Diver survey of the intermediate site and the corridor between the two designated sites to ascertain the extent and nature of the debris linking the two sites.
3. A focussed effort to secure a permanent display of the artefacts from the *Coronation* sites.
4. Continue the search for the unaccounted for Best Bower anchor and cannon, using side scan sonar and diver survey techniques.

5. Maintenance of the Diver Trail and carry forward the momentum and outreach activities that the Diver Trail has generated.
6. On-going liaison with Plymouth University and the Military to combine their training requirements for survey techniques with the requirements of the project team to record the intermediate site area and set up an on-going multi-discipline research study for the undergraduate courses conducted at Plymouth University.

7.0 REFERENCES

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ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE RECOVERED BOWL



Colonation Shipwreck
Feuter Dish †



Colonation Shipwreck
Feuter Dish †