

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



## **2018 Licensee's Report**

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## CONTENTS

<b>Paragraph</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Page</b>
	Contents	1
	Summary	2
1.0	Introduction	2
2.0	SITE IDENTIFICATION & ASSESSMENT	2
2.1	Diving Logistics	2
2.2	Condition of Site	3
3.0	GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY & FLORA	3
3.1	Seabed Erosion	4
4.0	PUBLIC OUTREACH, EDUCATION & DISSEMINATION	4
4.1	Conservation Report / Storage and Display	4
4.2	Illegal Diving / Interference - Education Campaign	4
5.0	CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	5
6.0	REFERENCES	6
Enclosure 1	Photographic supplement of the 2018 recent discoveries	E1

## **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 02<sup>nd</sup> November 2017 – 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018.

A significant amount of further work is 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 and now also to the south east of the inshore designated site.

2018 has identified significant finds that give a clearer picture of the wrecking process and add weight to the current project team's theory of *Coronation*'s wrecking.

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 2018 completed a total of 62 survey dives in this reporting period, this is a decrease on previous years and is well below where we would like to have been. This number which seems unusually low is due to survey efforts being based outside of the two designated sites in response to the identified magnetic anomalies of the MAST survey project in 2016. These dives have proved to be extremely rewarding with the find of what is believed to be the *Best Bower Anchor* located at 50 18.471N 004 10.694W and a substantial area of concretion, cannonball (in excess of one hundred) and other assorted artefacts at 50 18.499N 004 12.203W.

2018 licensed individuals visiting the sites has declined from previous years. Only 78 licensed divers have visited the site in this reporting period but several have completed multiple visits over the year. We have seen several returning divers from previous years, which reinforces the current belief that maritime archaeology and access to designated sites continues to be high on the recreational divers things to do list.

## **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. 2018 has again been a good year for the Crayfish with many divers reporting regular 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. Unfortunately, six markers have been lost off the site this year and a large trawl line is littering the site. It maybe that this line has caused the ripping out of the float markers but this cannot be confirmed.

2018 has been very disappointing in this area and has seen a further increase in illegal potting of the designated areas by fishermen from no instances in 2016 to over 20 reporting's of pots within the designated sites. This activity could also be attributed to the loss of the marker floats and potential disturbance of the artefacts on the sites. Active engagement with the fishermen is an ongoing task although many of the pot markers are difficult to read the owners details thereby making contact difficult. Vigilance and communication with fishing boats in the area is ongoing and a request to QHM Plymouth to publish a LNTM reminding water users of the restrictions placed on activities within designated sites. This request has not been met at this time.

## **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 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 were replaced in 2016 but no replacement work has taken place in 2017 or 2018. As a generalisation the site remains a dynamic and mobile site.

## **4.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH, EDUCATION & DISSEMINATION**

The new *Coronation Wreck* Project website has been redesigned and continues to be well supported and has seen an increase in its viewing figures and interaction. Its maintenance is an ongoing issue and the blog page is an area for development into the future a dedicated blogger is what is needed to promote the project.

Early booking of a dive site visit via the website has improved access to the sites in 2018.

### **4.1 Conservation Report / Storage and Display**

The National Royal Navy Museum (NRNM) at Portsmouth expressed an interest in the collection but coordinating a meeting with the Director and Mr Peter McBride once again proved problematic. This was resolved when Plymouth Royal Navy Heritage Centre was taken under the wing of the NMRN and annexed. A meeting with Hannah Bradbury resulted in the planned meeting with Mr McBride taking place and a plan put in place to donate the *Coronation* collection to the museum. This is a huge move forward for the team and ensures the preservation and security of the collection within Plymouth. It is hoped that a favourable time can be found over the winter period 2018/19 for the collection to be taken into the custody of NMRN (Plymouth).

### **4.2 Illegal Diving / Interference - Education Campaign**

There were no reported incidents of illegal diving on the sites this year but problems with pot fisherman depositing their creels on the sites has increased again in 2018. This has resulted in damage to the sites and the loss of several station markers on the diver trail. These illegal actions have cost the project in excess of £450 to replace equipment at the sites. The monitoring of the site continues to work 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 undesignated areas between the two sites and surrounding area. These areas have confirmed artefacts and still remain an area of concern as are the newly located sites which contain many artefacts.

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 reasonable 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. These information boards are in need of renovation and hopefully a sponsor can be found to fund their refurbishment.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The team's activity on the designated sites this year has decreased somewhat compared to 2017 this primarily being down to work commitments and the push to locate the best bower anchor and investigate other targets that may be associated with *Coronation*.

Dive charter boats remain supportive of the project but are reluctant to put trips on for less than 6 divers as it would appear not to be financially viable for them.

The ever-changing nature of the seabed across the area still presents exciting opportunities to further increase our knowledge of the sites. 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 corridors between the two designated sites the newly found site of concretions and the location of the best bower anchor to ascertain the extent and nature of the debris linking the sites. This is a very large area and it is envisaged will take several years to complete.
3. A concerted effort to rehome and display the artefacts from the *Coronation* sites within NMRN (Plymouth).

4. Continue the outreach and education programme and hopefully develop the online experience.
5. Maintenance of the Diver Trail and carry forward the momentum and outreach activities that the Diver Trail has generated.

## **6.0 REFERENCES**

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Enclosures:

1. Photographic Supplement



**PHOTOGRAPHIC SUPPLEMENT**

1. Best Bower Anchor viewed from crown. Orientation is crown NW Shank facing SE.



2. Best Bower Anchor viewed from Shank. Orientation-looking NW.



3. Prolific growth of a variety of marine species cover the anchor and surrounding reef.



4. Close up of Broken Anchor Ring



Images captured from GoPro video footage- R Crook