

SUMMARY

This report summarises the work undertaken on the *Coronation* Offshore and *Coronation* Inshore designated wreck sites (located off Penlee Point, Plymouth) during the period 8th November 2011 – 25th November 2012.

Further work is required to establish the extent of the debris trail in order to produce a complete site plan particularly to the southwest of the offshore area of designation. Work continues to record and understand the level of seabed erosion, and act accordingly.

The license was authorised by the Secretary of State, under the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973). The assistance provided by Alison James, Mark James and Mark Dunkley of the English Heritage 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.

On 8th December 2010 a survey licence was granted to the author (for both sites) to continue the work commenced under the previous licence.

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 has identified new artefacts and additional items of interest within the designated areas and surrounding undesignated area.

The core survey team have completed a total of 86 survey dives in this reporting period. Due to the poor weather in this reporting period visiting divers to the sites has reduced from 974 licenced visiting divers in 2011 to 267 in 2012.

2.2 Condition of Site

Until recently it was still believed that all that remains of the *Coronation* at the Offshore site is a scattering of guns and two large intact anchors, identified as Anchors A and B on the site plan prepared by Peter Holt in 1997, a broken anchor (Anchor C) and a large quantity of guns scattered across the Inshore site.

2012 has seen the location of numerous artefacts to the southwest of the offshore site and a new survey matrix has been developed to record one large collection of items. This site has been called the Bosun's Locker as many of the artefacts could be associated with that area of the vessel. A second area containing many cannon ball and heavy items and areas of concretion has yet to be accurately surveyed (this area is outside of the designated area).

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. No diving from the survey team was conducted on the inshore site this year.

The 2007 & 2009 multibeam 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.

3.1 Seabed Erosion

The movement of sand from the site reported back in 2007 is still an on-going process. This has been visually confirmed again this year and the sediment monitoring system at the Offshore site has been monitored at regular intervals to confirm the mobile status of the seabed at the site.

4.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH, EDUCATION & DISSEMINATION

The *Coronation* wreck Project website has developed well and has received 9750 hits since opening (as at 04 Nov 12).

Mr Mark Pearce (Visitors Licensee) has again been actively seeking external sponsorship and support for the research at the sites. Local media and International

diving publications have again published articles on the site and the work being carried out by amateur diving enthusiasts.

Although many clubs enquired about diving, it is estimated that about 50% of them failed to dive due to the poor conditions. It was however, interesting that several groups had added the site as a 'must dive' when visiting Plymouth, and ranked it alongside the James Eagan Layne and Scylla. This clearly shows the interest by diving clubs in protected sites of national importance and the potential that could be cultivated all over the country. The contribution these clubs could make to underwater discovery and archaeology if they could be empowered and encouraged more to take a local interest in their own areas is immense.

A bid for funding of a conservators report on the artefacts and archive of the site has been put to English Heritage and this is currently under review and processing. On completion of this report it is planned that Mount Edgecumbe House will take possession and custody of the artefacts and have provisionally allocated display space at the house for a combined display with the *Metta Catherina* wreck. This is due to open in the spring of 2013. Due to the drawn out process of the commissioning of the work and its completion the artefacts of the *Coronation* may be added at a later date. It would be a great pity if the *Coronation* display were not to be ready for the planned spring opening.

An exchange visit with the Licensee of the wreck of *The London* in the Thames Estuary was organised and completed. As it is contemporary with the *Coronation* it was thought to be a great site for exchanges of understanding and information between respective teams. It is strongly believed that English Heritage could really benefit from exchanges of this nature being cultivated and encouraged more than at present. It forms trust and a mutual learning base for all involved. Two of the London team visited and dived the *Coronation* and Mark Pearce visited and dived *The London*.

4.1 Illegal Diving / Interference - Education Campaign

There were no reported incidents of illegal diving on the sites this year. The monitoring system of the site is working extremely well and the QHM Plymouth and the Coast Watch team at Rame Head are to be commended on their vigilance and support. Diving is still continuing in the intermediate undesignated area between the two sites. This area has confirmed artefacts within and is an area of concern. As previously stated in other reports it may be prudent to reclassify the area into one all-encompassing rectangular / trapezium shaped site especially with the interest in the sites due to the diver trail and the proof that seabed erosion is active and artefacts are being exposed and lost to the sea. The location of two large deposits of artefacts also requires an increased designation area. If the area was to be planned well the total area may indeed prove to be a lesser area than the two current circular designations.

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.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The ever changing nature of the seabed across the area presents exciting opportunities to further increase our knowledge of the site. The uncertainty of the contents of the intermediate site and surroundings combined with the increased diver activity and visitor recording sheets gives great opportunity to develop the knowledge of these 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.
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. The continuation of sediment monitoring on the offshore site be accurately monitored and recorded at regular intervals to ascertain seabed erosion, and confirm the depth of sediment in the gullies.
4. Continue the search for the unaccounted for Best Bower anchor and cannon, using side scan sonar and diver survey techniques.
5. Cataloguing of the existing material and documentary archive. Most of the archive still resides with a previous licensee Mr Peter McBride. This work is on-going and permanent residence for the artefacts has been agreed at Mount Edgecumbe House subject to the conservation assessment mentioned at paragraph 4.0.
6. Commence diver survey of the targets identified by the magnetometer and sonar survey commissioned by EH and carried out by MAST.
7. On-going liaison with Plymouth University to combine their training requirements for survey techniques with the requirements of the team to record the intermediate site area.
8. Maintenance of the Diver Trail and carry forward the momentum and outreach activities that the Diver Trail has generated.
9. Re-designation of the sites to include the newly located items and potential extent of the wrecks debris trail. See Annex A.

6.0 REFERENCES

- Black, J. 2003, *Coronation Offshore, Penlee Point, Plymouth: Designated Site Assessment: Full Report*. Wessex Archaeology, Salisbury (unpublished).
- Ward, S. 2006, *Coronation Inshore and Offshore Licensee's Site Report*, Nautical Archaeology Society, Portsmouth (unpublished).
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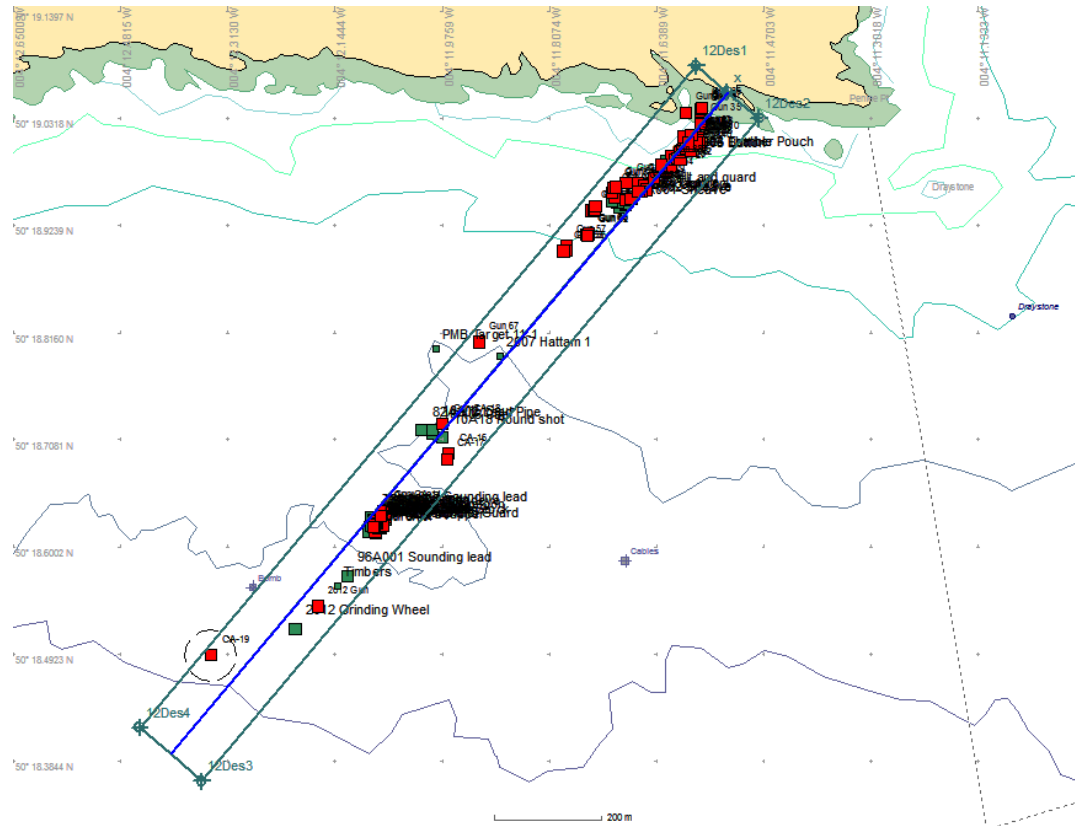
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Annex

A. Proposed area for the new designation of the *Coronation* protected site.

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**PROPOSED AREA FOR THE NEW DESIGNATION OF THE CORONATION
PROTECTED SITE**



Designation Coordinates

1. 50° 19.0960 N 004° 11.5750 W
2. 50° 19.0440 N 004° 11.4749 W
3. 50° 18.3677 N 004° 12.3341 W
4. 50° 18.4207 N 004° 12.4327 W