

1.2 BROAD CHARACTER: INDUSTRY

1.2.4 CHARACTER TYPE: SHIPPING INDUSTRY

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE-EAST ANGLIA

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING/DISTINGUISHING ATTRIBUTE

The offshore zone in this region is a crossroads for shipping with constant streams of commercial traffic transiting from Harwich, Felixstowe, Ipswich, the Thames Estuary, northern England and the continent. Part of the offshore zone acts as the main deep water route into the Port of London from the North East.

Harwich International Port and the port of Felixstowe are two of the UK's leading multi-purpose freight and passenger ports handling freight and passenger traffic to and from Scandinavia and the Low Countries (<http://www.harwich.co.uk>) As such the traffic using this area is continuous and dense.

There is a busy coastal trade around East Anglia, which tends to stay close to the coastline, with deep water traffic generally crossing further out to sea. There is a deep water shipping route immediately adjacent to the median line with Holland in the eastern sector of the region. As such, this area has denser shipping routes. Shipping includes vessels such as cargo and bulk ships, ferries, gas carriers and tankers (Jones et al. 2002).

Of the smaller waterways, the Orwell Estuary is transited by a considerable amount of large traffic at all times of the day and year

Contemporary shipping traffic within the region is extremely dense, with traffic concentrated in the south-west corner of the region, in the region of Harwich and Felixstowe, as well as in two dense shipping lanes which run up the western and eastern sides of the region respectively. The remainder of the area sees less traffic, but is never the less criss-crossed with shipping lanes running from south-west to north-east and from south-east to north-west.

HISTORICAL PROCESSES; COMPONENTS, FEATURES AND VARIABILITY

Britain as a whole has always been a trading nation and emerged as one of the leading industrial powers of the 19th century due in no small part to the strength of the shipping industry (Hedges 1974, 5)

The region has been an important maritime centre for millennia. Probably the earliest evidence for boat building comes from Walton, where a logboat was discovered in 1936 close to an area where Neolithic finds were also discovered (Sturt and Dix 2009, 46). England has had long distance trade connections with the continent since at least the Bronze Age, although no certain boat remains have been discovered from East Anglia.

It is likely that ports existed at Felixstowe (Good and Plouviez 2007, 69) and Dunwich in the Roman period and therefore that shipbuilding activity occurred there. Thirteen amphorae from a garden in Aldeburgh (ibid. 54) also indicate the importance of shipping in the period.

East Anglia was settled by Germanic peoples from the continent following the end of the Roman period and Ipswich, Dunwich, Southwold and Beccles became important ports during the Anglo-Saxon period. The 7th century ship burial from Sutton Hoo on the River Deben provides concrete evidence of the importance of shipping to the region at this time. A similar ship burial, probably of 6th century date was found at Snape on the River Alde. A longboat found of the coast at Covehithe dates to the middle Saxon period.

A major shipbuilding industry was located in East Anglia in the medieval and post medieval periods. Ipswich was an important centre for shipbuilding from the medieval period onwards, reaching its zenith c 1500 when the port was known as the shipyard of London, constructing vessels up to 100 tons (Wren 1976, 134). Between 1740 and 1812, 48 Royal Navy ships were built at Ipswich, which had five dockyards at this time. At one time the shipyards extended six miles downstream to Pin Mill situated on the south bank of the Orwell and many Thames Sailing barges and large colliers were built there (*ibid*). Pin Mill's heyday ended with the introduction of the iron hull (Edwards 1991).

Orford also possessed a thriving medieval shipbuilding industry, which provided ships for Edward III in his battles against France. This continued into the post medieval period and Sir Francis Drake's ships Greyhound and Pelican (renamed the Golden Hind) were built in Orford, in 1545 and 1577 respectively.

Harwich had a shipbuilding industry by the 15th century (Weaver 1990). Private shipbuilding continued in the naval yard until 1827. The yard was taken over in 1740 by John Barnard, shipbuilder of Ipswich.

Woodbridge retains its thriving boat building industry. The town was known for building merchant ships and men of war for the navy from 1500 to 1850 (Wren 1976, 189) and the area enjoyed coastal and continental trade until the railway opened in the 19th century.

Smaller shipbuilding centres included Aldeburgh and Walberswick in the medieval period (which was used as a port by the Icelandic fishing fleets in the Tudor period Wheatley 1990) and at Slaughden quay until 1880; the latter included collier brigs, cod smacks and shrimp boats.

VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS

The traditional hubs of the shipping industry, including Harwich, Ipswich and Woodbridge located along the coast of the area, provide an important sense of place for the local community and an important economic resource, attracting investment through the tourist economy. Awareness of the importance of the medieval and post-medieval ship building industry for the area provides an important sense of historical identity. The modern shipping hubs of Harwich, Felixstowe and Ipswich are also crucially important for the local and national economy and also lend distinctive cultural characteristics to the region.

RESEARCH, AMENITY AND EDUCATION

Research into the archaeology of shipping in the region has been conducted, especially on early Anglo-Saxon ships, such as the example from the Sutton Hoo ship burial, however, there is scope for much more research on the topic. There is also scope for a regional study of shipbuilding.

Communities in the region have strong links to the shipbuilding industry as a local tradition. The study of shipbuilding and wreck sites gives cross-curricular educational opportunities, in science, mathematics, english, history and environmental studies. Museums and historic shipyards also constitute valuable educational resources.

CONDITION AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

The character of the area with regards to shipping routes may change in light of the forthcoming London Gateway Project - a proposed redevelopment of the former Shell Haven Refinery on the north side of the Thames Estuary.

RARITY AND VULNERABILITY

There was a large and extensive medieval and post-medieval shipbuilding industry in the region, which has now largely been lost due to changes brought about by the British industrial revolution. However, the volume of shipping in general is not rare, and is even increasing.

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