

Beaulieu River

Summary Description

The picturesque Beaulieu River is a popular New Forest visitor destination and is also frequented by yachts and small boats. Its position within the western Solent means the entrance to the estuary is sheltered, however, its shallow depth and adjacent saltmarsh mean that it can be a difficult passage for boats. The quiet rural nature of the modern estuary was once busier with shipbuilding being undertaken at Buckler's Hard.

Sea Surface

Much of the sea surface activity in the river is dominated by yachts and motor boats, although the density of traffic is not high. The main Yacht Harbour and Marina is based at Buckler's Hard.

A number of other features of the sea surface are charted through digital data, these include warnings of submarine cables and pipes. There are areas which are designated as prohibited for anchoring.

Seabed Surface

The estuary environment is characterised by formation of spits and a spartina marsh. The river mouth in particular has been affected by the movement of Warren Farm Spit which has formed in the inner part of the estuary mouth parallel to Needles Ore Point. These changes have been affected by the erosion of mudflats in the Western Solent and in the estuary. Navigational markers guide boats through the navigationally hazardous sandbanks into the estuary.

Activities taking advantage of the intertidal environment include shellfishing.

The charted wreck resource includes six wrecks, one of which is the *Minca*, a barge which was abandoned by the Army after the Second World War, this site is occasionally dived by recreational divers.

Seabed Subsurface

Some shellfishing occurs within the area which can impact the subsurface deposits of the river. There are extensive saltmarsh and mudflat deposits which form the upper levels of the seabed surface around the river. To date there has been little investigation of the sub surface deposits of the river, however, there is a high potential for these to include traces of submerged prehistoric landscapes. This information can provide important data on prehistoric environments for human occupation and for the development of the river and Solent as tidal water ways.

Coastal

The coastal environment features coastal grazing and a bird sanctuary on Gull Island. The North Solent Shore National Nature Reserve stretches from near Calshot Spit to beyond the saltings at the entrance to Beaulieu.

The coastal archaeological resource of the area shows a particularly dense and diverse range of sites and periods. Adjacent to the study area features include Mesolithic artefacts from the east side of the river, the remains of a prehistoric hillfort, salt working sites, the extensive shipbuilding complex at Buckler's Hard and bombing decoy sites. There are numerous historical buildings in the area associated with the Beaulieu and Exbury estates.

Modern maritime installations include the marina facilities and a range of landing stages along the river.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of the Beaulieu river is high. To date there has been little intensive archaeological investigation of the estuary, however, excavations at Buckler's Hard have revealed the extent and nature of this important shipbuilding yard.

There is a high potential to encounter evidence of preserved prehistoric landscape deposits within the river bed and a wealth of prehistoric sites and finds from adjacent to the river. This exploitation of the marine resources and environment has continued through all periods with visible evidence of use of the River from the Iron Age, to the modern period.



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- Re-investigation of interglacial sediments at Stone Point, Lepe Country Park, Hampshire* QUATERNARY NEWSLETTER 2006, NUMB 108, pages 43-51 QUATERNARY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Links

- Welcome to Buckler's Hard - <http://www.bucklershard.co.uk/>
- Beaulieu (links to National Motor Museum, Palace House and Beaulieu Abbey) - <http://www.beaulieu.co.uk/>
- Beaulieu Light Railway - <http://www.beaulieulightrailway.co.uk/>
- Exbury Gardens - <http://www.exbury.co.uk/exbury/index.htm>
- Lepe - <http://www.hants.gov.uk/countryside/lepe/>



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Images



HWTMA Photo Number	BRP – A24
Character Area	Beaulieu River Area
Description	Beaulieu River Project – aerial view
Photographer:	Unknown



HWTMA Photo Number	BRP – A06
Character Area	Beaulieu River Area
Description	Beaulieu River Project – River, boats and bank
Photographer:	Garry Momber
Date Photographed:	1995



HWTMA Photo Number	LEP04 – B05
Character Area	Beaulieu River Area
Description	Lepe – Sea in foreground, land in distance
Photographer:	Garry Momber
Date Photographed:	2005