

Bembridge Point

Summary Description

Situated on the north eastern tip of the Isle of Wight this area includes the hazardous rocky ledges and the sheltered area of Bembridge Harbour. These features are known to modern sailors, but have claimed a large legacy of shipwrecks in the past.

Sea Surface

The sea surface in this area is one of contrasts. Bembridge Harbour, the most easterly of the Islands harbours, provides good anchorage areas. Its position on the Island provides shelter from the prevailing winds. The channel approach is marked by navigation aids such as buoys. The Harbour and bay to the south of Bembridge point are popular for water sports and bathing. The rock shelf of Bembridge ledge is exposed at low tide and a caution area is marked in the approaches due to these submerged rock ledges.

Seabed Surface

Bembridge Harbour is a small enclosed estuary with double sandy spits, at low tide the harbour almost dries apart from the main channel. The seabed surface was dramatically changed in the 1880's when over 80% of it was reclaimed. Fishing and shrimping are popular activities in the areas.

Outside of the Harbour the coastline is characterised primarily by rock formations of the Bembridge ledges and limited areas of saltmarsh. Coastal defence structures such as groynes provide defence against erosion and further inundation, however, they are contributing to the process of coastal squeeze.

The outer seaward extents of the marine zone incorporate the Nab and Princess shoals, further potential hazards to navigation.

25 wrecks and obstructions have been recorded in the area. 5 of these occur within the harbour itself, and 10 of these are popular dive sites: *Empress Queen* a paddle steamer sunk in 1916 while carrying troops, *Harry Sharman* a steam tug ran ashore in 1970 and the *France Aimee* a French collier sunk in 1918.

Seabed Subsurface

Limited saltmarsh areas characterise the seabed subsurface zone. There is little charted or recorded within the currently available marine datasets for the seabed subsurface. However, recent research into the development of the English Channel is beginning to reveal evidence for the potential for survival of submerged prehistoric landscape deposits within the seabed. These types of deposits would be expected within the Harbour.

Coastal

The coastal area encompasses Bembridge Harbour, Culver Down, and Whitecliffe Bay. Bembridge Harbour is also often called Brading Harbour. Brading is also the name of the Roman maritime villa situated near by. On its northern side is the Duver, a spit of land leading from the ruined tower of St Helens church and backed by a National Trust area of gorse and open grassland, where 260 species of plants have been identified. Remains of tidal mill dating to 1700 is the island's only remaining windmill.

Culver Down rises more than 300ft, and is topped by a giant stone needle raised in 1849 to the memory of Charles Pelham, Earl of Yarborough, first commodore of the Royal Yacht Squadron. At its seaward end it terminates in the dramatic Culver Cliff, a popular nesting site for various birds. Bembridge Down adjoins it and it features a fortress built in Lord Palmerston's time and used until after WWII, now overgrown and used by an industrial company. Culver Down and Bembridge Down together form a saddle from which there are superb views to Bembridge and across Sandown Bay.



ENGLISH HERITAGE



National Oceanography
Centre, Southampton
MEMBER OF THE UK RESEARCH AND
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Archaeological Potential

The coastal archaeological resource adjacent to the study area include Pleistocene deposits found on Bembridge raised beach, bronze-age artefacts found in the south west of the area, and a range of artefacts dating from the Palaeolithic to Medieval periods discovered on the foreshore.

Offshore the archaeology of this area is dominated by the rich shipwreck resource. Due to the dynamic nature of the marine zone and geological features it is unlikely that submerged prehistoric landscape features will be located close to the shore, however, early landscapes features may be buried under the present day sea floor. This potential rises considerably inside Bembridge Harbour.

The potential to encounter the remains of crashed aircraft must also be considered, particularly as there is document evidence of a WWII aircraft crash in the area.

References

Price, John E. *A description of the remains of Roman buildings at Morton, near Brading, Isle of Wight*. London : printed by J. Davy & Sons, 1881.

Rule, Margaret. *Brading Roman villa*. Brading: Oglander, 1974.

Tomalin, D. *Coastal villas, maritime villas; a perspective from Southern Britain*. *Journal of Maritime Archaeology*, 2006, VOL 1; NUMBER 1, pages 29-84

Links

Bembridge Community Site - <http://www.bembridge.com/>

Brading Haven Yacht Club - <http://www.bhyc.org.uk/>

Brading Roman Villa - <http://www.bradingromanvilla.org.uk/>

Bembridge Harbour - <http://www.bembridgeharbour.co.uk/>

Brading town Council - <http://www.brading.gov.uk/>

Brading Day - <http://www.bradingday.org/>



ENGLISH HERITAGE



National Oceanography
Centre, Southampton
MEMBER OF THE SCIENCE AND
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Images



HWTMA Photo Number	BB – A09
Character Area	Bembridge Harbour Approaches
Description	Bembridge – Shoreline with small cliff edge
Photographer:	
Date Photographed:	



HWTMA Photo Number	BB – A05
Character Area	Bembridge Harbour Approaches
Description	Bembridge – view across Bembridge
Photographer:	
Date Photographed:	



IoE number:	310131
Character Area:	Bembridge Harbour Approaches
Description:	Brading Roman Villa
Photographer:	Catherine Brown
Date Photographed:	18 September 2002
Date listed:	18 January 1967
Date of last amendment:	18 January 1967
Grade	I