

Bouldnor Cliff

Summary Description

This scenic area just inside the Western Solent is one of contrasts. The sea surface is home to a range of yachts and small craft, in addition to the regular Isle of Wight ferry service. While within the sea floor lies a legacy of prehistoric submerged landscapes and Mesolithic human occupation evidence that is of national importance.

Sea Surface

This seascape stretches from the Lymington River on the mainland over to the Yar estuary on the Isle of Wight and incorporates Bouldnor Cliff. The two discreet waterways are shared by yachtsmen, fishermen, and the Isle of Wight ferry. The channel flowing in between these two inlets is a main navigation channel featuring commercial shipping activity, and as such is designated as a caution area due to high speed and deep draught vessels. Navigation buoys mark the shipping channel and the entrance to Lymington, most notably 'Jack in the Basket'. From this position, Hurst Point Lighthouse can be viewed and used as a guide. Anchorage areas around the entrances to the estuaries are specifically marked.

Both Yarmouth and Lymington are noted centres for yachting and recreational boating activity. Numerous sea fishing and dive charter boats also operate from the ports.

Seabed Surface

The two estuaries in the area have different characteristics. The Yar Estuary is protected from wave action due to its position on the north coast of the island. Within the estuary there are extensive mud flats, much of the area is exposed at low water, the narrow estuary mouth is congested with harbour traffic and the ferry terminal. Outside of the estuary the coast is dominated by small cliffs and shingle deposits. Opposite on the Hampshire coast the narrow entrance into the Lymington River is bounded by extensive salt marsh and mudflats. Maintenance dredging is carried out in the estuary and in the marinas to maintain navigable depths.

A submarine pipeline stretches across from mainland to the IOW. Other seabed activities include commercial fishing and shell fishing through the area.

There are over 16 wrecks and obstructions recorded in the area. The 'Yarmouth Roads' designated protected wreck site lies just off the north coast of the Isle of Wight close to Yarmouth. The substantially buried remains of this 16th century Spanish trading vessel were partially excavated in the 1980's. One of the most prominent wrecks in the area is the Margaret Smith which lies just offshore from Bouldnor Cliff, and represents the remains of a gravel dredger sunk in 1978.

Outcropping on the seabed surface are prehistoric submerged landscape deposits and associated stratigraphy, these are included within the seabed subsurface section.

Seabed Subsurface

The most well known archaeological site in this area – the submerged prehistoric landscapes at Bouldnor Cliff – have been used to name this area. This is an indication of the importance of the remains situated within the seabed here. A sediment archive reflecting the development of the 'old Solent River' that was flooded to from the modern Solent is preserved along this stretch of the north west Isle of Wight coastline.

Investigations of the preserved forests situated here began in the 1980's but it was after the first discoveries of humanly worked flint that survey and excavation of a number of occupation features began. To date hundreds of worked and burnt flints have been recorded from in and around the excavation site. A number of Mesolithic hearths and features have been recorded, with potential for further material near by.

Additional activities impacting the seabed subsurface include shellfishing, where trawls are dragged across the seabed to recover shellfish.



ENGLISH HERITAGE



National Oceanography
Centre, Southampton
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON AND
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Coastal

The coastal area is home to a variety of shoreside structures and facilities supporting the various maritime industries. Both Yarmouth and Lymington feature marinas, yachting clubs and ferry terminals. Additionally Yarmouth is home to a lifeboat station and pier. The near by Fort Victoria, originally a Palmerston Fort, is now a centre for tourism and features the Underwater Archaeology Centre run by the HWTMA.

The Lymington coast is bounded by salt marshes, adjacent to which are extensive remains of Post Medieval salt working sites.

Archaeological Potential

Investigations of the submerged landscapes at Bouldnor Cliff began back in the 1980's when a preserved prehistoric forest with associated peat deposits were identified. In 1998 the first humanly worked flint tools were discovered which prompted archaeological survey and excavation which is still ongoing on the site. This area is recognised as being of national and international importance. There are also traces of submerged prehistoric landscapes on the north coast of the Solent which are currently under investigation.

Although prehistoric landscapes may be the most prominent archaeological features in the area, the shipwreck resource must not be overlooked. The Yarmouth Roads wreck demonstrates the intensive use of the area for trade for many centuries and further sites should be expected.

References

Defra, 2002. Futurecoast: Shoreline Behaviour Study. Unpublished CD Rom. Halcrow Group Ltd.

Momber G. 2000. Drowned and deserted: a submerged prehistoric landscape in the Solent. *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 29:86-99

Momber, G. 2004. The Inundated Landscapes of the Western Solent. In N. Flemming (ed.) *Submarine Prehistoric Archaeology of the North Sea*, 37-42. London: Council for British Archaeology.

Sparks, B, Momber, G, and Satchell, J. 2001. *A decade of diving, delving and disseminating : the HWTMA 1991-2001*. Southampton: Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology.

S. E Rigold, 1985 [Yarmouth Castle Isle of Wight](#)

Links

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/futurecoast.htm>. Shoreline Behaviour Study

<http://www.solentforum.hants.org.uk/forum/intro.html>: Solent Forum

<http://www.scopac.org.uk/> Sediment Transportation database

<http://www.hwtma.org.uk/> Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology

<http://www.lymingtonharbour.co.uk/>

<http://www.hwtma.org.uk/projects/bouldnor/index.htm> HWTMA Bouldnor Cliff Project

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.5540> English Heritage: Bouldnor Cliff

<http://www.yarmouth-harbour.co.uk/> Yarmouth Harbour

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConProperty.231> English Heritage: Yarmouth Castle -

<http://www.yarmouth.ukfossils.co.uk/> UK Fossils Yarmouth



ENGLISH HERITAGE



National Oceanography
Centre, Southampton
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON AND
NATIONAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

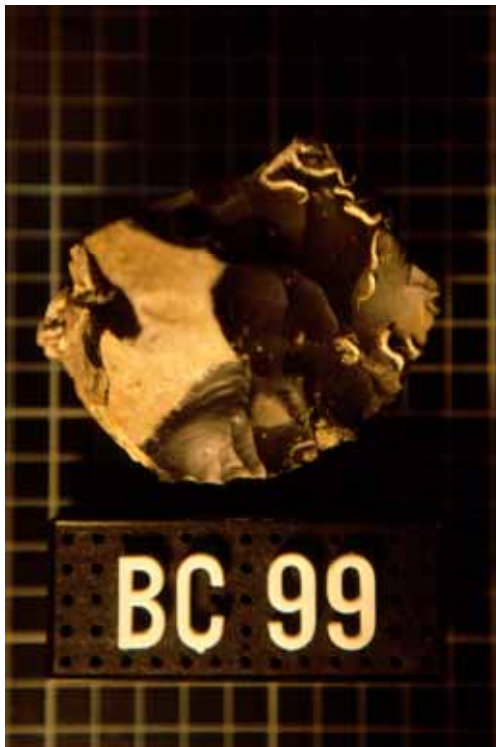
Images



HWTMA Photo Number	YRD – A05
Character Area	Bouldnor Cliff
Description	Yarmouth Roads – Yarmouth harbour and ferry



HWTMA Photo Number	BCB – A01
Character Area	Bouldnor Cliff
Description	Bouldnor Cliff Beach – beach with tree line



HWTMA Photo Number	BCA – B21
Character Area	Bouldnor Cliff
Description	Bouldnor Cliff Artefacts – sample of flint