

# Christchurch Harbour

## Summary Description

Christchurch Harbour and bay is situated to the east of Poole Bay and overlooks the approaches to the Western Solent. The area is popular for watersports and recreation. The exposed Headland at Hengistbury is home to archaeological remains of national importance.

## Sea Surface

The harbour is a popular site for marine recreation activities, most notably sailing, windsurfing, and water-skiing. The main North Channel of the harbour enters into the bay, and floating buoys mark the approach. A caution area is designated on the approach. An anchorage area exist outside the harbour entrance.

## Seabed Surface

The harbour is formed from the rivers Stour and Avon. It has sand and gravel spits at the mouth, there are extensive mudflats and salt marshes within the harbour. It is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated area. The upper parts of the river valleys have been reclaimed.

The harbour is located within a natural coastal bay. The character area stretches from Hengistbury Head eastwards to Hurst Point. The area incorporates six safe sandy beaches, Mudeford sandbank to Highcliffe. The coastline is characterised by sand and shingle. A variety of coastal defence structures continue into the marine zone such as rip rap and groynes.

The approach features Christchurch Ledge, a submerged navigation hazard.

The maritime archaeological resource features five recorded wreck sites, two of which are near shore and three are further seaward. The *Caroline Susan*, a British motor yacht sunk in 1940 is a recognised dive site.

## Seabed Subsurface

While no further features are recorded, it should be highlighted that recent research into the development of the Solent and English Channel is beginning to reveal evidence for the potential for survival of submerged prehistoric landscape deposits within the seabed from times of lower sea level.

## Coastal

The most significant archaeological area is Hengistbury Head. Here evidence of prehistoric cultural activity can be traced from the Upper Palaeolithic period to the Iron Age and displays a wealth and diversity of remains. These remains are situated on and around this prominent headland.

Settlements in the area include Christchurch which dates from Saxon times and lies in the shadow of the magnificent 11th century Priory Church and still retains its Saxon street layout. Mudeford is a small village from where a ferry across the Avon embarks.

Popular coastal areas include Avon Beach, Highcliffe, Barton on Sea, Hordle Beach and Milford on Sea.

Wildlife and conservation features includes coastal grazing and heathland and a nature reserve.



ENGLISH HERITAGE



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

## Archaeological Potential

The archaeological remains at Hengistbury Head demonstrate the wealth of prehistoric occupation evidence and the exploitation of the marine zone. Further evidence of submerged prehistoric landscapes should be expected within Christchurch Harbour.

Offshore the archaeology of this area is dominated by the rich shipwreck resource. However, the potential to encounter further traces of drowned landscape features within the seabed should not be discounted. 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

- Wood, Margaret. *Christchurch Castle, Hampshire*. [London]: HMSO, 1956.
- Jarvis, Keith S. *Excavations in Christchurch 1969-1980*. Dorchester: Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society, 1983.
- Dyson, Taylor. *The history of Christchurch from Saxon times to the present day*. Christchurch : the Author, 1954.
- Powell, Michael F. *1784 : the Battle of Mudeford*. Christchurch : Natula Publications, 1993.
- Tyhurst, M.F. *The coast of Highcliffe Castle : how the castle is being saved from the sea* Christchurch : Natula, c2003.
- Wortley, Violet Stuart. *Highcliffe and the Stuarts*. London : Murray, 1927.
- Salsbury, Henry. *Highcliffe Castle and the Claretians 1953-1966*. [Christchurch] : Natula, c2000.
- Salsbury, Henry. *Highcliffe Castle, Hampshire : a history and guide*. Exeter : pr. by Catholic Records Press, [196-].
- Franklin, Robert, 1935- *The Stuarts of Highcliffe*. Christchurch, Dorset : Natula Publications, c1998.
- Samuel, Olive J. *Chewton Bunny, Highcliffe : the history of a romantic glen* . New ed. [Christchurch, Dorset?] : Smada Publications, c2004.
- Lloyd, A.T. *A history of Barton*. Barton-on-Sea : New Milton & Barton Ratepayers' Association, 1963.
- Rees, Roy. *A chronology of Milford and Keyhaven : Domesday to Millennium*. [Milford-on-Sea] : Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society, 1999.
- Fox, Joscelyn Plunket Bushe- *Excavations at Hengistbury head, Hampshire, in 1911-12 / With appendixes by G.F. Hill and W. Gowland*. London : Society of Antiquaries, 1915
- Lewis, H. *An Investigation of Ancient Cultivation at Hengistbury Head Head Site 6, Christchurch Dorset Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 2002*, Vol 68, pages 83-102
- Cunliffe, Barry W. *Hengistbury Head Dorset*. Monograph - University of Oxford Committee for Archaeology ; nos 13 and 34. (Contents: Vol 1: The prehistoric and Roman settlement, 3500 BC-AD 500 - Vol 2: The Late Upper Palaeolithic & Early Mesolithic sites.)
- Rees, Bill, 1954- *Hengistbury Head : geology and history / by Bill Rees*. Bournemouth : Chalk Ridge, c2001.

## Links

- Christchurch Dorset UK - <http://www.christchurchdorset.com/>
- Christchurch Tourism - <http://www.christchurchtourism.info>
- Mudeford Tourist Information on AboutBritain - <http://www.aboutbritain.com/towns/mudeford.asp>
- Mudeford Ferry - <http://www.mudefordferry.co.uk/>
- Mudeford Sandbank News - <http://www.msbnews.co.uk/>
- This is Mudeford - <http://www.mudefordvillage.co.uk/>
- Highcliffe-on-Sea - <http://www.highcliffedorset.co.uk/>
- Highcliffe Castle - <http://www.highcliffecastle.co.uk/>
- Barton-on-Sea - <http://www.bartononsea.org.uk/>
- Fossils and fossil collecting in Barton-on-Sea - <http://www.barton.ukfossils.co.uk/>
- Barton-on-Sea Fossils - <http://www.discoveringfossils.co.uk/Bartononsea.htm>
- Hordle Parish Council - <http://www.hordlepc.com/>
- British History Online, Hordle Parish - <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=42057#s3>
- Milford-on-Sea Online - <http://www.milfordonsea.com/>
- Milford-on-Sea Parish Council - <http://www.milfordonsea-pc.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2352&CFID=10900831&CFTOKEN=55413345>
- Milford Historical Record Society - [http://www.milfordonsea.com/milford\\_historical\\_society.htm](http://www.milfordonsea.com/milford_historical_society.htm)
- Fossils and fossil collecting in Milford-on-Sea - <http://www.milford.ukfossils.co.uk/>



ENGLISH HERITAGE



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

## Images



HWTMA Photo Number	BS – A06
Character Area	Christchurch Harbour
Description	Barton on Sea – up cliff shot showing sands
Photographer:	
Date Photographed:	
Date listed:	



HWTMA Photo Number	BS – A05
Character Area	Christchurch Harbour
Description	Barton on Sea – along beach & sea
Photographer:	
Date Photographed:	
Date listed:	



IoE number:	101493
Character Area	Christchurch Harbour
Description	Christchurch – Christchurch Priory
Photographer:	Mr Roy Lownds
Date Photographed:	28 September 2002
Date listed:	14 October 1953



ENGLISH HERITAGE



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