

Summary Description

This offshore zone is traversed by modern shipping both accessing the Solent and in the south of the area vessels travelling through the English Channel. The density of shipping is represented in the high numbers of shipwrecks in the area. The previous nature of this area should not be forgotten as the area was once dry land during times of lower sea level, indicating the potential for submerged prehistoric landscapes to be present.

Sea Surface

This offshore area extends towards the median line with France. Activity on the sea surface is dominated by commercial shipping routes which cross through the area to reach Portsmouth Harbour, Chichester Harbour, and other Solent ports. This is the primary route to Southampton docks for large vessels as the much narrower Western Solent provides a more hazardous route. Frequent ferry traffic into and out of Portsmouth is also regularly featured. It is designated as a military practice area and was previously a licensed UK Deal area.

Seabed Surface

The seabed surface area contains more than 97 surveyed wrecks. These features are scattered throughout the area and form no distinct concentrations which could indicate patterning due to environmental factors.

An example of a popular recreational dive site is the *Fallodon*, a WW1 casualty which was hit by five torpedoes and sank 28th December, 1917, 12 miles east off St Catherines Point at a depth of 30m (Pritchard and McDonald, 2001, pp141).

The seabed depth of this offshore area ranges from 30-100m.

Seabed Subsurface

There is nothing 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.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeology of this area is dominated by the shipwreck resource. However, the potential for the survival of submerged prehistoric landscapes should be highlighted. Such deposits can reveal important evidence of sea level and climate change and the development of Britain as an island.

References

Pritchard, Martin and Kendall McDonald, 2001. *Dive Wight and Hampshire: A Diver Guide*: Middlesex, Underwater World Publishing Ltd.

Links

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

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

