

Solent Eastern Approaches

Summary Description

The Eastern Approaches to the Solent are dominated by dense shipping activity and dredging activity. This strategic waterway has been used for many centuries for navigation. In the modern period the aggregate rich seabed has been utilised for extraction.

Sea Surface

This area comprised the main shipping channel which can accommodate deep draught vessels and high speed craft. Numerous commercial, dredging and pleasure craft can be seen on the water. Due to the density of shipping traffic it is classed as a caution area. To ensure safe passage of ships there are a variety of navigational markers, these include the Nab Tower situated on the Nab Shoal with its fog signals, and flashing light.

The area is designated as a military practice area with the south east section being used for submarine exercises.

Seabed Surface

There are seven licensed aggregate dredging zones and one dumping ground within the area.

With over ninety charted wrecks and obstructions this is also a dense area for the shipwreck resource. These features are scattered throughout the area and form no distinct concentrations which could indicate patterning due to environmental factors.

Popular dive sites within the area include:

The *Cuba* which is the largest wreck in the area, once a passenger liner the ship was used as a troop carrier during the Second World War and sunk by a torpedo.

The *Apley* which was on hire to the Royal Navy sweeping for mines when it hit one and was sunk.

Seabed Subsurface

The most prominent activity impacting the seabed subsurface is dredging which takes advantage of the extensive aggregate resources in the area. Due to this density of dredging zones the area has been subject to marine survey. This has revealed evidence of traces of submerged prehistoric landscapes which are revealing evidence of the development of the Solent and the geomorphology of the whole region. Analysis of these deposits is also demonstrating what the environments and resources utilised by prehistoric human populations was like.

Archaeological Potential

Offshore the archaeology of this area is dominated by the shipwreck resource. However, here the survival of submerged prehistoric landscapes has been confirmed and should be highlighted. Such deposits can reveal important evidence of sea level and climate change and the development of Britain as an island. There is also potential to encounter the remains of crashed aircraft must also be considered, with many recorded losses which date to the Second World War.

References

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

Links

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/enviro/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

Images



Reference:	HWTMA Photo Archive
Character Area	Solent Eastern Approaches
Description	Looking out across Eastern Approaches
Photographer:	Julie Satchell
Date Photographed:	June 2006



ENGLISH HERITAGE



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