

Broad Character: Navigation

Character Type: Navigation Activity

Regional Perspective: Southern England

Compiled by Seazone Solutions Ltd / M A Ltd, January 2011, after comment from D Hooley, English Heritage

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING/DISTINGUISHING ATTRIBUTES

This Character Type identifies areas characterised by distinctive human activity directly relating to the passage of shipping traffic, such as navigation routes, anchorages and ferry crossings, including intimately associated areas and features such as buoyage at anchorages, and ferry crossing terminals.

Southern England's coastal and marine region constitutes one of the world's busiest seaways. Within a 15 mile radius of the Channel Light Vessel (located at 49°55'N 2°54'W in the English Channel) there are around 47,000 commercial vessel movements a year. This reduces to around 19,000 per year within a 15 mile radius of St Catherine's Lighthouse, located on the south coast of the Isle of Wight (James et al, 2010).



St Catherine's lighthouse, Isle of Wight (© T Millership)

Some of the UK's major ports operate in this region, many of which have long histories of operation, due to this region's significant role in shipping and continental/international trade for many centuries. Southampton is one of the major ports of the country. The modern port was opened in 1843 and since then has grown to become the flagship port operated by Associated British Ports (www.abports.co.uk). It handles in excess of 42 million tonnes of cargo annually. Other major ports in the region include Portsmouth Commercial Port and Newhaven in Sussex.



Port of Southampton (© Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology)

A number of ferry services also operate from this region. These include local passenger ferries across rivers and waterways such as the Hamble River and Southampton Water, as well as continental ferry services which operate from Poole, Portsmouth, Weymouth and Newhaven, taking vehicles and passengers to the Channel Islands, France and Spain.

Associated Sub-Character types such as anchorages and harbour pools are also present throughout the region.

HISTORICAL PROCESSES; COMPONENTS, FEATURES AND VARIABILITY

Evidence from the historic environment illustrates that there were wide ranging trading links between southern England and the continent from the Early Bronze Age (MA Ltd, 2007), with the calm and sheltered waters of the Solent ideal for coastal navigation and fishing. This focus of activity is also expressed in the form of Bronze Age barrows, several flanged and socketed axes, palstaves and pottery fragments that have been found just off the coast and along the shore of this area (MA Ltd, 2007).

By the Iron Age there was a comprehensive trading network between Britain and continental Europe. With the invasion of Britain, under the Emperor Claudius in AD 43, this trade increased dramatically (Cunliffe, 2001). With this increase came a corresponding increase in the amount of shipping needed to carry it (MA Ltd, 2007). The waters around the Solent linked the continental Roman Empire with major Romano-British provincial settlements in Chichester, Southampton and Portchester Fort (directly bordering Portsmouth Harbour) which served the Roman Navy. Additionally, vessels would have landed in a variety of less well-known locations throughout the Solent (*Magnus Portus*), which has a number of large maritime villas on its shores (Drummond & McInnes 2001).

With the decline of the Roman Empire, Britain was effectively left to defend itself from the raiding Saxons and Franks. The early medieval period is characteristically sparse in terms of direct evidence for maritime trade (MA Ltd, 2007).

In the seventh to ninth centuries a centralised settlement pattern and greater political control developed in England. It is at this time that the first of England's seaports were established. The large number of Anglo-Saxon towns that were also ports or had associated ports, such as Hamwic (Southampton) demonstrates the importance of continental sea trade for the Saxons (Friel 2003). Material expression of this maritime transport during this period has been located in Langstone Harbour (www.hwtma.org.uk).



Archaeological investigations at Langstone Harbour (© Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology)

Coastal shipping played a significant role in trade around the British Isles in medieval times, with most of the trading routes being either coastal, along the channel, or cross channel. Large quantities of goods were moved from around the coast to the larger ports and from there they were shipped to the continent (Friel 2003). Southampton played an important role in coastal and continental trade during this period. In the twelfth century Southampton was almost exclusively involved in the wine trade between Gascony and England. By the fifteenth century Southampton had expanded its trading links to include Italian city states, notably Genoa (Wheatley 1990). These trading links are reflected in the recorded shipping losses in the Wight area with the majority being French vessels, with Italian, Portuguese and Flemish and several coastal vessels of English origin also having been recorded. Poole Harbour also had large continental trade similar to that of Southampton which is expressed in the number of shipping losses in the area.

By the early 1600s English merchants had gradually expanded their trading areas to include new markets in the Baltic and the Mediterranean. This resulted in an increase in trade, most of which was centred on London and several other larger ports along the south east. By the seventeenth century England's overseas growth greatly increased, which not only benefited the capital, but can be seen to have developed the regional centres which directly traded with it (Friel 2003). This period of prosperity is reflected in the country's merchant fleet, which grew in size between 1580 and 1680, and continued to do so into the eighteenth century (Adams 2003; Ransley et al 2010).

The trade in goods to supply the growing port of Portsmouth, and coastal trade taking goods along the south coast towards London, is reflected in both the quantity and diversity of shipwrecks in the post medieval period. The Yarmouth Roads wreck is a good example of a trading vessel from this period. Located within the Solent in 1984 the site is the wreck of a late 16th or early 17th century merchantman, possibly the Spanish Carrack *Santa Lucia* lost in 1567 (Watson & Gale 1990). This wreck site is protected under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

Within the Wight area the Industrial Revolution played a major role in stimulating the development of ports, with Southampton and Portsmouth becoming major centres for trade. This also resulted in a large amount of shipping lost off these shores. The majority of these vessels are English, reflecting the vast scale of England's merchant fleet at this period.

A short post-war shipping boom (between 1918 and 1921) was later followed by an economic downturn in the 1950s. This resulted in a rapid decline in the British shipping industry, facing increased competition from subsidised German, American and Japanese fleets (Friel 2003) as well as competition from air transport. By the 1960s world shipping had undergone a technological revolution with the advent of containerised shipping. The search for economic benefits in world trade saw the development of bigger tankers and larger bulk carriers (Friel 2003).

Today, the South Coast region is one of the world's busiest seaways with around 47,000 commercial vessel movements a year within a 15 mile radius of the Channel Light Vessel (James et al, 2010). Whilst in the Channel, shipping is monitored and controlled by the Coastguard who have stations in the Portland, Solent and Dover areas.



Busy shipping lanes in Southampton Water
(© Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology)

During the Early Modern period, both the White Star and American Line chose Southampton as their transatlantic terminus, which resulted in an increase in shipping to the port. Southampton continues to enjoy a significant transatlantic ocean liner business, as illustrated by the increasing number of cruise terminals in the city.

Other examples of navigation activities in the region include local, regional and continental ferry services. Local passenger ferries have existed within the region for centuries, for example the service across the Hamble River between Hamble-le-Rice and Warsash dates back to at least the medieval period and still utilises the same hards for landing. Other smaller local ferry services include that connecting Chichester to Itchenor and Emsworth, Keyhaven to Hurst Castle, Portsmouth to Gosport, Hythe to Southampton, and Southampton/Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight. Continental ferry services operate from Poole, Portsmouth, Weymouth and Newhaven.



Newhaven-Dieppe ferry (© Maritime Archaeology Ltd)

Historic anchorage areas occur in many places along this coastline. Tidal conditions and associated shore-side settlement or facilities meant that ships sought suitable areas to moor up and/or drop anchor. With the shelter provided by the Isle of Wight and suitable seabed conditions, the Solent has been used as an anchorage from the Roman period onwards (www.hwtma.org.uk/anchorages). While at anchor a surprisingly amount of material is either lost over board or deliberately jettisoned. This has left a legacy of anchorage related material on the seabed. Some of the many examples of anchorage sites in the Solent include the smaller anchorages of Yarmouth and Ryde Roads, the naval use of Spithead which has left a range of seabed traces as has the use of many of the smaller anchorages such as Yarmouth and Ryde Roads, and a number of sites within Portsmouth Harbour where HMS *Victory* is known to have been moored after its active service (www.hwtma.org.uk/victory).

The region continues to support a large number of anchorages due to the high level of shipping and recreational vessels in the modern period. There are noticeably more in the west of the region (the Solent) area which is busier in terms than the more tranquil eastern part of the region (East and West Sussex). Anchorages are found on the (more sheltered) north east and north west coasts of the Isle of Wight. The north west coast is sheltered from prevailing south westerly winds by the Isle of Wight and to some degree by the presence of Hurst Spit at the entrance to the West Solent channel. The channel is much deeper and wider than the Eastern Solent, providing an extensive area for safe anchorage. Historic charts record numerous anchorages in the area contrasting with a distinct lack in hazards. The mainland foreshore features extensive muddy intertidal areas while the Isle of Wight coastline is more narrow and rocky but the lack of offshore hazards and environmental constraints in much of the area makes it a characteristic safe haven for shipping. (Merritt et al 2006)

There are numerous anchorages along the main channel of Southampton Water as well as the Hamble, Itchen and Test Rivers (Merritt et al 2006), and many are found at the entrances to harbours such as Poole and Portsmouth, Langstone and Chichester Harbours where the number of anchorages recorded outside the harbour entrances increased in number on later charts with the development of Portsmouth's naval importance (Merritt et al 2006).



Spithead anchorage, Portsmouth Harbour (© Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology)

A harbour pool is the area of water including and adjacent to a port or harbour, falling under the jurisdiction and activity-controls, of a port/harbour authority. Examples of these in the region include the authorities governing Cowes, Portsmouth, Hamble, Newport, Poole, Newhaven and Southampton Authorities. Their role is to ensure the safety of navigation, the regulation of moorings, works and dredging, enforcement of harbour byelaws and the collection of dues and charges.

VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS

Historically, navigational activities have served as a means of linking different places and people. The people living along its coasts exploited the sea as a means of communication and were culturally, economically and possibly politically linked closely together (Clarke, 1985). The presence of continental ferry routes and the growth of the transatlantic ocean liner business has meant that the region is now even more closely linked with other global communities. It has also meant a growth in the local and regional economy, with residents appreciating the employment opportunities these businesses offer.

As well as the larger commercial trade, the anchorages support recreational activity in the region, meaning that such navigation activities are valued through their tourism benefits.

RESEARCH, AMENITY AND EDUCATION

Wrecks give an indication of navigation and shipping activities. The distribution of wrecks is very dense along the English coast.

In addition to wrecks, distributions of artefacts lost or thrown overboard can indicate anchorages, shipping routes or battle sites. The potential for anchorage areas, even in what are now busy modern harbours, has been investigated by the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology (www.hwtma.org.uk). With the shelter provided by the Isle of Wight and suitable seabed conditions, the Solent has been used for the mooring of ships from the Roman period onwards. A legacy of anchorage related material remains on the seabed due to artefacts being either lost overboard or deliberately jettisoned. To date there have been few detailed studies of these sites meaning their full archaeological importance is not always recognised (www.hwtma.org.uk/anchorages). The HWTMA is researching these sites through field investigations and associated research. The 'Dive onto Victory' project, in particular, has been important in demonstrating the density and diversity of an anchorage collection (www.hwtma.org.uk/victory). Some of the smaller known historic anchorages such as Yarmouth and Ryde Roads on the Isle of Wight were investigated in the 1990s in a pioneering project to use controlled trawls to recover material (www.hwtma.org.uk/spithead).



**Artefacts recovered during Dive onto Victory fieldwork
(© Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology)**

In addition to the archaeological evidence there are a range of historical sources which can add to understanding of these sites. The use of historic charts, sailing directions and paintings can add a new dimension to research.

The development of historic anchorages is linked to particular geographical, environmental and cultural factors which have all had an impact on the archaeological material on the seabed. The international character of ships and shipping mean a range of social, political and economic factors are reflected in the collections the ships leave behind. To investigate these aspects work is ongoing to identify comparative collections from around the globe.

Initiatives integrating research into Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) could be a way of bringing this Character Type into schools to raise regional awareness about the England's maritime legacy and its characteristics. Furthermore HSC aims to raise public awareness in order to engage people with the scale of navigation and shipping activities in their local areas, providing a new perspective about offshore activities that often go unrecognised onshore.

CONDITION AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

The impact of this Character Type on today's landscape/seascape could be considered as ongoing since navigation and shipping activities change through time as shipping techniques evolve. It could be expected that navigation activities would reflect the dominant industries of the time. Therefore, documenting these industries and activities (including fishing and recreational activities) will enable a greater understanding of navigation areas and routes associated with them as well as the maritime character of an area.

Initiatives such as the 'Dive on Victory' project undertaken by the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology (www.hwtma.org.uk/victory) have also helped in raising awareness of the historic aspect of this Character Type by involving local residents and volunteers in the project research and presentation of the results.

Another consideration that might impact on this historic Character Type is increasing disturbance of the sea-floor environment. Preservation of material remains from this Character Type varies considerably, depending on several factors which include, amongst others, materials used for the construction of the vessels, type of cargo, local environmental conditions, currents, water temperature, whether the wreck is exposed or buried, whether the burial environment is aerobic or anaerobic and current activities in the area.

RARITY AND VULNERABILITY

In view of the long history of the navigation activities in the waters of and off southern England, ports, harbours and anchorages occur across the region's coasts and seas.

Wrecks and historic anchorages provide an indication of navigation activities in the region. For example, the significant number of wrecks (over 800) in the Solent area. There is a high concentration along the region's coast with many wrecks deriving from the early modern period (1750-1900) related to coastal trade and fishing.

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