

Edward Skinner
Marine Resources Coordinator
Tarmac Marine Dredging Ltd
UMA House
Shopwhyke Road
Chichester
West Sussex
PO20 2AD

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Friday 29 June 2018

Via e-mail

Dear Edward,

Re: King's Channel explosive dumping ground

Thank you for contacting Wessex Archaeology regarding research into the King's Channel explosive dumping ground. As per your email communication with Euan earlier this month, please find below our collated research as well as specific answers to the questions you provided by email on 11 June, 2018.

Research

East Swin (King's Channel) explosive dumping ground – position 51 47 30 N, 01 30 00 E.

A 2005 literature review conducted by Imperial College Consultants Ltd (http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121203195658/http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/77CEDBCA-813A-4A6C-8E59-16B9E260E27A/0/ic_munitions_seabed_rep.pdf) and the *OSPAR Commission, 2005: Overview of Past Dumping at Sea of Chemical Weapons and Munitions in the OSPAR Maritime Area* (<https://www.ospar.org/documents?d=7258>), confirm that East Swin (King's Channel) was used as an explosives dumping ground. The site is indicated to consist of conventional munitions but neither document contains details on period of use, quantity of munitions dumped or type of munitions dumped. Conventional munitions consist primarily of TNT and other similar material.

Literature has shown that munitions dumped in UK waters included artillery shells, aircraft bombs, gas pots, boxes of explosives and grenades, mines, containers, cylinders, barrels and cans. It is also possible that UK and captured German naval munitions, such as torpedoes and machine gun rounds, could form part of the material in this area.

East Swin is a known fishing area with an overall depth reaching up to 30 m. The northern half of East Swin falls within the Gunfleet military area used by the Royal Navy for mine laying and mine counter measure exercises. East Swin also contains the explosives dump and the Inner Sunk Anchorage for vessels of under 10.5 m draft approaching London or Harwich (http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/ehsclacton_eh_2007/eastswin.cfm?CFID=573996&CFTOKEN=39545028).

The most well-known explosive dumping ground in UK waters is Beaufort's Dyke with an expected 1 million tonnes of dumped material. The Imperial College states that: "It is not possible to identify exactly what munitions have been dumped in the Beaufort's Dyke. (We would emphasise that we believe that this is not because of any withholding of documents

by any parties, but simply that many of the records have been destroyed due to the time-scale involved; and in any event it seems that detailed records were not always made of the exact types of the munitions involved and/or the exact locations.)". If records are known to be destroyed or if they lack detail then it would explain why the information for King's Channel is not readily available.

Further Investigation

Further investigation into dumping records for East Swin would include a visit to the National Archives at Kew to look at old admiralty charts to establish when the dumping ground first appeared on the charts and when it was first used. It is possible that some of the charts may note a period of use or could point to the time when it was no longer in use. In addition, a remote sensing survey would provide an indication of cultural remains in the area that may be identified as dumped munitions.

A freedom of information request has been sent to the Ministry of Defence regarding the East Swin (King's Channel) munitions dumping ground. The request includes information on types of munitions dumped, quantity dumped and period of use. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the company have 20 days to respond and any relevant information in the response will be passed on to the client.

Responses to Questions

1. *Dates it was established and disused?*

Unfortunately, as noted above, the dates that it was established and disused are not readily available. Further research at the National Archives at Kew or a response from the Ministry of Defence request may provide some insight.

2. *What was it used for?*

The explosives dumping ground was used for conventional munitions, which generally consisted primarily of TNT. More detailed information is not readily available. However, as you suggested in your email, it may have included munitions associated with the Gunfleet military area.

3. *Are there any records of quantities dumped?*

We have not been able to find any records of quantities. It is possible that, like Beaufort's Dyke, any original records do not contain enough detail or have been destroyed.

4. *How accurate was the dumping likely to be? Would they have been using DECCA?*

The accuracy of dumping in this area is difficult to comment on given the lack of information. However, it could be assumed that dumping was accurate in most instances but not all. Given the lack of information on the date and type of vessels dumping material, we cannot comment on the use of DECCA.

5. *Theoretically, if proposing an exclusion zone for dredging around the disposal area, do you think it would need extend beyond the dumping ground or would using the boundary be sufficient?*

Using past experience, and given the lack of information, it would be advisable to extend an exclusion zone beyond the boundary of the disposal area. As the dumping ground appears to be approximately 2 km in diameter, I would suggest that an area of approximately 3 km in diameter around the centre point be used as an exclusion zone. However, this is based on no physical evidence and further research and/or surveying would be required to provide accurate advice. I would also recommend contacting your EOD expert for advice.

I hope that this information is of use to you. If you would like to undertake additional research of the King's Channel explosives dumping ground, we would be happy to provide you with scope and costs to this end.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'D. Wilkinson'.

Danielle Wilkinson

Project Manager

d.wilkinson@wessexarch.co.uk