

## Chapter 14 Archaeology

### Guiding Principles:

Chapter 4 details all the guiding principles relevant to the overall management of the Harbour. Whilst all should be given some consideration the following are of particular relevance to archaeology.

Key Guiding Principle numbers: 1, 5, 23, and 24.

### 14.1 Background

Poole Harbour has been historically important as a commercial port since before Roman times and evidence of human activity has been identified which dates back to a pre Iron Age era. This long period of human occupation, along with the excellent preservation of coastal and marine structures and artefacts, submerged by rising sea levels, has led English Heritage to identify Poole Harbour as one of the most important areas for coastal archaeology in the country. The Harbour has also been included on a list of wetland sites and landscapes of national importance. This has been prepared by Exeter University for English Heritage as part of a protocol for the Heritage managements of England's Wetlands. A comprehensive study of Poole Harbour's heritage is currently being undertaken by the Poole Harbour Heritage Project with the aim of extending the available archaeological information. The study considers the heritage of the Harbour under the following four groups of headings:

- Natural changes in the Harbour
- Man-made changes in the Harbour
- Settlements in and around the Harbour
- Industry, trade and recreation associated with the Harbour

### 14.2 Marine Historic Assets

Dorset's Historic Environment Record (HER) and the maritime section of the National Monuments Record (NMR) contain information on the numerous palaeoenvironmental and archaeological sites in and around the Harbour. The Receiver of Wreck, part of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency is also a useful source of information, as it is a legal requirement that any wreck material recovered from UK territorial waters is reported to them. These along with the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) are the primary sources of archaeological information relating to the Harbour. However the archaeological and heritage section for the 2005 channel deepening project, environmental impact assessment, compiled by Wessex Archaeology has been useful in drawing all this information together.

Although there are sites within the Harbour that have produced artefacts of a Palaeolithic and Mesolithic origin most marine historic assets of significance date from the iron age or later. Evidence suggests that Poole Harbour was probably inundated sometime during the Mesolithic period and that ships have been visiting the Harbour from at least the Iron Age. Sources indicate that shipping activity within Poole Harbour increased throughout the Roman and Saxon period. At this time Wareham was the principal port within the Harbour, with the port of Poole being established by early Medieval times.

#### Cleavel Point & Green Island Causeway

Following on from work undertaken by scouts in the 1950s the Poole Bay Archaeological Research Group and Bournemouth University investigated this feature in 2001 on behalf of the Poole Harbour Heritage Project. It consists of two stone structures, one running out from Cleavel Point on the mainland and the other projecting from Green Island with a 70m gap in between. The mainland pier is 160m long and between eight and ten metres wide and is normally 2m below the water surface and is only exposed at very low tides. As there is no evidence that the piers were ever linked, it is believed that the structures are the remains of two harbour piers rather than being a causeway. Timbers used to support the flagstone surface of the piers have been carbon dated to 250BC, making it the oldest identified constructed port structure in North West Europe.

### **Iron Age Logboat**

The boat was discovered in Poole Harbour in 1964 when a dredger brought it up off Brownsea Island. It was made from one giant log, estimated to have weighed 14 tonnes and could have carried up to 18 people. After it was found it was kept submerged in water for 30 years while archaeologists decided what to do with it. In 1995 it was submerged in a sucrose solution, which gradually replaced the soft tissue of the wood but kept the boat's shape. At 32 feet, it is one of the largest surviving log boats of the prehistoric period in the UK, and is believed to have been built by the Durotriges tribe in about 300 BC. The boat indicates the great potential for preservation of other assets within the silts of the Harbour.

### **Studland Bay Wreck**

Situated just outside the Harbour limits in Studland Bay this wreck is significant in that it demonstrates the type of trade taking place at the Port and is also designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973. The wreck, discovered in 1984, is that of an armed Spanish merchantman which is thought to have sunk around 1520 with a cargo of pottery from Seville. Initial investigations were undertaken by the Poole Maritime Trust and around 750 artefacts have so far been recovered from the wreck which has a 50m exclusion zone around it under its designation.

### **Swash Channel Wreck**

This wreck was discovered during an Environmental Impact Assessment for channel deepening works in 2004 and was immediately designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act, 1973. Research to date suggests that the vessel is a large, high status merchantman c1630, which was constructed for operation in tropical waters.



Approximately 40% of one half of the vessel survives on the seabed and includes elements such as the rudder and bow castle that are internationally unique. The site is under threat from natural seabed erosion.

Other significant maritime finds include two Roman ceramic vessels and a Bronze Age axe head discovered by divers in the entrance to the Harbour. Other scattered finds also indicate the presence of several wrecks dating back to the early eighteenth century. Holes Bay was also traditionally used as a dumping ground for old vessels and the remains of many ships can still be found there.

## **14.3 Legislation and Guidance**

The National Heritage Act, 2002, gave English Heritage responsibility for underwater archaeology within English territorial waters. This not only included day to day responsibility for wrecks protected under the Protection of Wrecks Act, but also enabled them to schedule an underwater site under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and National Heritage Act 1983. The precise ways in which these powers will be applied is currently under discussion. A list of the key pieces of legislation relevant to the maritime archaeology of the Harbour and its function can be found in Appendix 7, along with a list of current guidance documents.

## **14.4 Potential Threats**

### **Erosion**

Rising sea levels and increased coastal erosion have the potential to impact marine historic assets both above and below the high water mark. While the potential for damage to coastal structures from retreating shorelines is well documented, the impact of moving seabed is less well understood. Previously unknown wrecks can be exposed and old ones covered. This can both enable a wreck or artefact to be examined but can also expose it to physical, biological and chemical decay. In 2004 English Heritage funded the first stage of a Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment of Dorset's coastal archaeology. One of the principal aims of this assessment is to identify areas where the archaeological resource could be threatened by changes in the shoreline, brought about by erosion, sea level rise or coastal management etc. The desk top study is now completed and the information held in the Historic Environment Record at County Hall, Dorchester.

### **Salvage & Diving**

A minority of recreational divers regard a visit to a wreck as an opportunity to remove items of value or interest. This can cause damage to sites as objects are removed without being recorded or properly conserved, it should always be remembered that all recovered wreck has an owner and therefore all such material must be brought to the attention of the Receiver of Wreck; and failure to do so is an offence under

the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. For wreck considered to be of historical, archaeological or artistic importance designation is possible under the Protection of Wrecks Act, 1973. Close to Poole Harbour, two wrecks are afforded statutory protection under this Act which means that access to these sites is only possible through licences granted by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Further information about these sites should be obtained from English Heritage Maritime Archaeology Team. To ensure that recreational scuba divers are aware of the importance of the marine historic environment and how such material should be treated it is important for the Poole Harbour Steering Group to support initiatives that provide education and further public understanding and appreciation of underwater heritage.

### **Fishing**

Heavy fishing gear can damage archaeological sites and trawling has inadvertently caused wrecks to be discovered through attempts to recover trapped or lost fishing gear. Sites where fishing nets are prone to catch might be submerged wrecks and investigation of them has led to the finding of previously unknown wrecks such as the Studland Bay wreck. However, it is crucial that if such a discovery is made that appropriate measures are taken to implement an archaeological investigation. Further information about the appropriate techniques to be adopted should be obtained from local archaeological curators.

### **Development**

Development of the intertidal and marine areas, such as construction of jetties and marinas has the potential to damage archaeological sites. Recently there have been moves to ensure that approved development proposals take adequate steps to ensure the survival of both marine and terrestrial archaeology. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 20: Coastal Planning recognises the need to protect and enhance the archaeological coastal heritage. In particular, works such as Capital dredging can also significantly impact marine historic assets but also have potential to discover new sites, as was the case with the Swash Channel wreck. Overall best practice and guidance recognises that detailed historic environment assessment prior to development, and liaison with archaeological curators, offers the best means to manage a project that seeks to avoid damaging the historic environment.

## **14.5 Reporting Protocol**

To ensure marine historic assets are not lost and to further improve our understanding of the maritime historic environment, a strict protocol for the reporting of archaeological or potential archaeological finds needs to be developed and adhered to. As previously mentioned it is a legal requirement that all wreck found in UK territorial waters is reported to the Receiver of Wreck. Wreck includes a ship, aircraft or hovercraft, parts of these, their cargo and equipment. However any object either on the seabed or raised to the surface should be reported to a suitable body. Locally this should be the Dorset Historic Environment Record or English Heritage's South West Regional Office (Bristol). Both nationally and locally there is a need to produce a central database to record all the information concerning the location of marine historic assets around the UK and in and around Poole Harbour. This would be of benefit to both archaeologists and developers looking to undertake work on the seabed or along the shoreline.

## Management Objectives:

The following is a list of the management objectives identified. Whilst some are specific to archaeology, others may relate to activities and issues discussed in other chapters of this plan. All management objectives can be found in the matrix contained within Section 2, which also lists proposed management actions.

- To ensure coastal defence schemes do not adversely affect archaeological features, or ensure adequate mitigation and recording.
- To understand what historical assets may be lost or damaged in the future, due to natural changes in the coastline and identify the mitigation measures necessary to protect the resource.
- To adhere to best practice archaeological investigation techniques.
- To ensure dredging does not cause undue damage to archaeology through prior investigation and appropriate mitigation.