

# ***Coronation* Inshore and Offshore Designated Wreck Sites**



Pewter Dish 2014



Pewter Dish 2014



Pewter Dish 2015



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## **2015 Licensee's Report**

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## **SUMMARY**

This report summarises the work undertaken by the Coronation Wreck Project team on the *Coronation* Offshore and *Coronation* Inshore designated wreck sites (located off Penlee Point, Plymouth) during the period 26<sup>th</sup> November 2014 – 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

Further work is still required to establish the extent of the sites in order to produce a complete site plan particularly to the southwest of the offshore area of designation. Monitoring of the level of seabed erosion continues at the offshore site.

The licenses to continue the project's research were authorised by the Secretary of State, under the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973). The assistance provided by the English Heritage / Historic England Maritime Team is gratefully acknowledged.

The continued support of the current survey team and particularly Mark Pearce Visitor's Licensee and Visitor Coordinator is also appreciated.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

*Coronation* was a second rate 90 gun British warship built in 1685 at the Naval Dockyard in Portsmouth. The vessel took part in the Battle of Beachy Head in 1690 and was lost a year later (1691) in a gale off Penlee Point, near Plymouth, Devon. The exact reasons for her loss are still unclear.

In two primary locations, *Coronation* is thought to lie Offshore at Latitude 50° 18.57' North, Longitude 004° 11.98' West and Inshore at Latitude 50° 18.96' North and Longitude 004° 11.57' West. These coordinates are that of the designated positions and have been supplied by the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

Survey, Excavation and Surface Recovery Licences were granted to the author (for both sites) to continue the work commenced under the previous licences.

## **2.0 SITE IDENTIFICATION & ASSESSMENT**

### **2.1 Diving Logistics**

The *Coronation* Offshore site is located directly in the path of one of the main sailing routes in and out of the Port of Plymouth (located in Plymouth Sound), and lies within waters controlled by the Queens Harbour Master (QHM) / Ministry of Defence (MoD). The net effect is that there are a multitude of small and medium sized pleasure craft and police boats travelling over the site – particularly on weekends – with the attendant risk to divers. Extra vigilance and a suitably trained boat skipper is required on this site.

The Penlee Point area is subject to relatively strong tidal currents particularly on Spring tides. Although the two sites are approximately 800 metres apart, the Offshore site is approximately 684 metres south west of the Inshore site, with the result that the periods of slack water are considerably shorter on the Offshore site.

After installation and opening of the *Coronation* Diver Trail in 2011 the team has focussed on locating additional artefacts both within and outside of the designated

areas. The visitor scheme continues to identify new artefacts and additional items of interest within the designated areas and surrounding undesignated area.

The core survey team in 2015 have only completed 68 survey dives in this reporting period. This has been due to the sale of the rhib generally used by the team and the problems associated with having sufficient divers to warrant the use of a charter boat. The two primary team members having recently commenced new employments has also limited the amount of time available to utilise as project time in 2015.

2015 licensed individuals visiting the sites remain consistent with previous years. 246 new licensed divers have visited the site since April 2015 with several completing multiple dives in the year. Again we have seen many returning divers from previous years, which reinforces the current belief that maritime archaeology and access to designated sites is on the increase.

## **2.2 Condition of Site**

The main designated sites remain stable but have again experienced sediment movement off the sites which have revealed additional artefacts. The continued and regular diver activity at the sites has had no obvious affect to the marine life or the main artefacts. 2015 has reported several sightings of the native Crayfish on the sites and surrounding areas.

The improved station marker anchorage system on the Diver Trail has proved very effective with no markers being lost in the 2015 season.

2015 has again seen the location of several more artefacts within the designated areas and also beyond the limits of the designations. The publicising of this information has been restricted in order to ensure the items are not removed from the area by the very small percentage of divers who may be tempted to recover them from the still undesignated areas.

## **3.0 GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY & FLORA**

The seabed in the survey area is composed of undulating natural rock (with some steep pinnacles) with small pockets (gullies) of sand. A variety of seaweeds are attached to the rocks on the site but in the licensee's opinion this does not obstruct the artefacts from view on the offshore site. The inshore site can be almost unworkable when the summer growth of kelp has become established.

The 2007 & 2009 multi-beam survey data show that the Offshore site lies upon a raised area of rocky seabed that is separated from the Inshore site by a deeper 'channel' that is in places covered in sand. These sand filled gullies are diminishing and so giving the opportunity for new artefacts becoming exposed and subsequently recorded. This continues to be an area of concern as valuable artefacts that are appearing are being lost very soon after exposure. This is not as a result of surface recovery. It is a fair assumption that this procedure is occurring on a much wider area and many artefacts may be being lost to the process. This could be seen as part of the natural wrecking process and history of the site or as a sad loss of heritage.

### **3.1 Seabed Erosion**

The movement of sand from the site reported back in 2007 is still an on-going process. This has only been visually confirmed this year as the sediment monitoring system at the offshore site has been rendered ineffective due the substantial loss of sediment/sand. Some areas are now showing signs of a redepositing of material on the site thus aiding the preservation of the artefacts that have become exposed. Some sand bagging has taken place in the most vulnerable areas. This has been a slow process hampered by dive boat and diver availability.

The loss of sediment in 2014 resulted in the discovery of a Marine's musket (finder R.Crook), a pewter side dish (finders C. Sandercock & R. Sandercock) and two model Marine Figurines (finders M. Pearce & P. Aldersley) being exposed and recovered for conservation/preservation at York Laboratories. The pewter items have now been returned to the project (Annex A gives details).

The MMO licence allowing the deposit of protective sandbags has now been extended to allow further protection works to continue subject to DCMS issuing the appropriate licences to do so for 2015/16.

### **4.0 PUBLIC OUTREACH, EDUCATION & DISSEMINATION**

The *Coronation* Wreck Project website continues to be well supported and has received a further 2435 hits totalling 17,015 hits since opening (as at 07 Nov 15).

Mr Mark Pearce (Visitors Licensee) has again been actively seeking external sponsorship and support for the research and protection at the sites, although in these times of austerity this line of support and finance is becoming even more problematic.

Several groups visiting Plymouth had enquired at very short notice to dive the site. Once more they were very fortunate that the timely support from EH/HE permitted many of the groups to dive the site who otherwise may not have been able to through traditional application procedures. This again highlights the interest by diving clubs in protected sites of national importance and the general trend towards an increasing and respectful interest in our nation's maritime heritage. It is hoped that the new licensing system will be flexible enough to support the responsible access to the sites without being restricted by administrative procedures.

### **4.1 Conservation Report / Storage and Display**

Unfortunately contact with the Mount Edgecumbe Estate has all but ceased in spite of numerous attempts to continue the dialogue and the plan to exhibit at Mount Edgecumbe House is now looking very unlikely. With the planned development of Fort Bovisand an approach will be made to ascertain the potential for a home for the *Coronation* collection within the newly developed fort and surroundings.

### **4.2 Illegal Diving / Interference - Education Campaign**

There were no reported incidents of illegal diving on the sites this year not have we experienced any problems with pot fisherman depositing their creels on the sites. The monitoring system of the site continues to work extremely well and the QHM Plymouth and the Coast Watch team at Rame Head are to be commended on their continued vigilance and support. Diving is still continuing in the intermediate

undesigned area between the two sites and surrounding area. These areas have confirmed artefacts and still remain an area of great concern.

The MoD Police continue to support the Licensee and have visited divers at the site to confirm their validity of being there.

The majority of local operators now fully support the *Coronation Wreck Project* and offer official visits to the site coordinated through the website and administered by Mr M Pearce.

The information boards provided by EH and displayed at Fort Bovisand, Penlee Point and at the National Marine Aquarium are still in a good state of repair and are regularly visited and read by numerous passing individuals many of which have been totally unaware of the *Coronation* site prior to seeing the information panels. These have been a very positive addition to the outreach programme of the project.

### **5.0 RE-DESIGNATION OF PROTECTED AREA**

This again is an area of extreme frustration and annoyance for the project team. A further year has passed with no progress on the re-designation of the sites and no information at all in 2015 has been disseminated to the team in spite of requests for updates. This whole process has been very disappointing and has left the team feeling very despondent and unsupported almost to the point of discontinuing with the project.

### **6.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The teams reduced activity on the site this year has primarily been down to the lack of our own project boat. Whilst dive charter boats are happy to assist the project it is not financially viable to visit the site with less than 6 divers on board. With Mr Pearce's recently purchased boat it is hoped that 2015/16 will enable us to visit the site at short notice when good weather and diver availability coincide. The ever changing nature of the seabed across the area still presents exciting opportunities to further increase our knowledge of the site. It is hoped that the team can now extend the research area and the following work is recommended:

1. Complete the re-designation of the sites as a priority.
2. Continued diver survey of the sites and the areas to the southwest of the site and the targets identified by the magnetometer and sonar survey commissioned by EH and carried out by MAST.
3. Diver survey of the intermediate site and the corridor between the two designated sites to ascertain the extent and nature of the debris linking the two sites.
4. A focussed effort to secure a permanent display of the artefacts from the *Coronation* sites.
5. Continue the search for the unaccounted for Best Bower anchor and cannon, using side scan sonar and diver survey techniques.

6. Maintenance of the Diver Trail and carry forward the momentum and outreach activities that the Diver Trail has generated.
7. On-going liaison with Plymouth University and the Military to combine their training requirements for survey techniques with the requirements of the project team to record the intermediate site area and set up an on-going multi-discipline research study for the undergraduate courses conducted at Plymouth University. 2015 has seen three university students use the Coronation site as a focus for their research.
8. Identify and commission a professional high quality archaeological illustrator to record the conserved artefacts from 2014.
9. Investigate the origins of the small dish recovered in 2014.
10. Investigate and develop a strategy to create a virtual dive trail for non-divers utilising the HE initiative Project 7374.

## **7.0 REFERENCES**

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### Annexes:

- A. Photographic supplement of the 2014 recovered *Coronation* artefacts post conservation 2015.



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PHOTOGRAPHIC SUPPLEMENT OF 2014 RECOVERED ARTEFACTS  
POST CONSERVATION 2015

Marine Figurine1 (Finder - M Pearce)



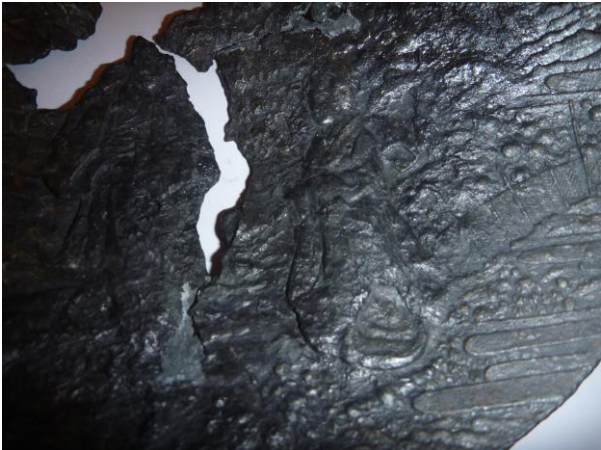
Marine Figurine Fragment 2 (Finder - P Aldersley)



Side Dish (topside) (*Finders - R.Sandercock & C. Sandercock*)



As yet unidentified origin but potentially of Japanese/Chinese origin from the “*Willow Pattern*” style of art work? \_Possibly on board Coronation as a gift or traded from an Officer of the East India Company? (author’s personal perspective).



Side Dish (underside)

