

The Warship Hazardous Project Site Report - October 2006

Introduction

No extension to the licence for the winter period was sought at the end of the 2005 season. Weather conditions deteriorated early in October 2005 and as last year, there was considerable shingle movement along the coast from an easterly direction; this again made the slipway at Bracklesham unusable.

As stated in last year's report the nearest useable launching point is an hour and fifteen minutes boat ride away at Itchenor in Chichester harbour, making the whole exercise very expensive and a little impractical in the very changeable sea conditions experienced at this time of year.

This year again it was decided to use one weekend a month, on the best neap tides to work on the site and run the diver trail, with additional trail days added later in the season. A second weekend per month was programmed to carry out work on the artefact display, to continue work on the archive and to monitor the wet-stored artefacts. Therefore ten site working/diver trail weekends were scheduled for this season.

Poor weather conditions early in the year, meant the first visit to site was not possible until the 23rd April, however visibility and sea state was good at this time, enabling a good inspection of the site to be carried out.

No damage from commercial fishing activities was noted during this first inspection.

Year 2006 Objectives

Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels and timber degradation, using points set up in 2002.

Survey position of dummy "artefacts" for ongoing research into environmental effects on site conditions and distributions.

Carry out further planning of areas / artefacts exposed due to erosion.

Survey and recover artefacts exposed by erosion and under threat of loss or damage.

Continue with conservation of artefacts in wet storage at present.

Continue operation of the diver trail.

Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.

Complete report outlining environmental conditions affecting wreck site and implications for future management

Mark 300th Anniversary of wrecking of Warship Hazardous with public outreach events

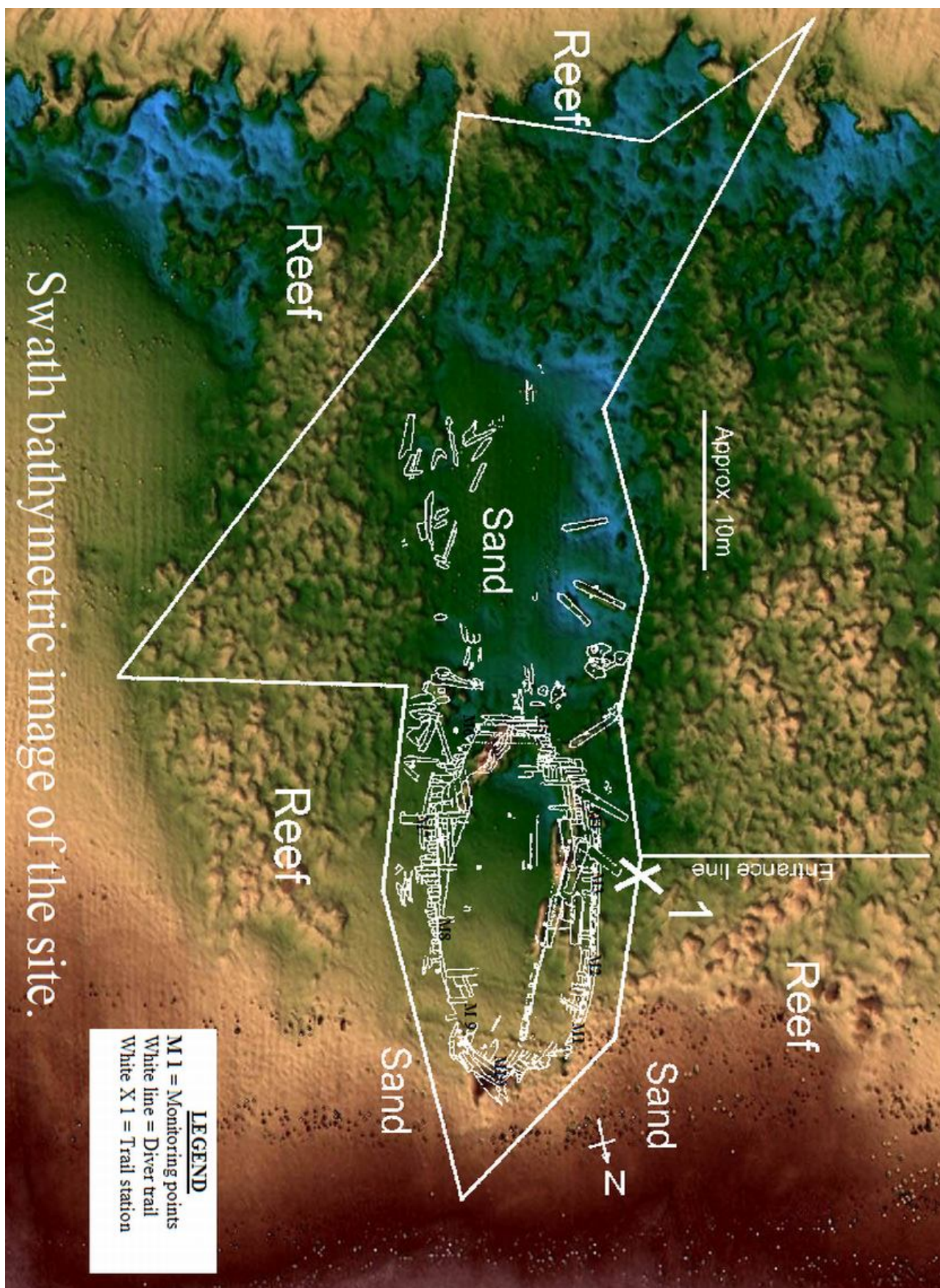


Figure: Swath bathymetric image of the site with site plan and diver trail overlay.

Field work

Six days of diving have taken place on site this season, at these times monitoring of seabed levels and timber degradation were carried out, some loose artefacts were recovered, diver trail cables were replaced as required and a new set of trail numbers were attached.

Various loose datum points were firmed up and tags replaced, some new datums were established on the northeast side of the site in preparation for planning to be carried out in that area and a number of broken datums were replaced.

Results

The very short weather windows this year have made it impossible to carry out any planning of the areas found uncovered at the start of the season, however three new datums were set in place in preparation for this work, along with stabilisation of existing datum pins.

It was also necessary to replace some existing datums and numbered tags due to general wear and tear.

Three loose artefacts were recovered on the first dive, after positions were surveyed in, and were then placed in wet storage. Work on conserving these and previously recovered artefacts is ongoing.

The development of a digitised site database is continuing and will be further added to this winter.

A post-graduate student from the University of Southampton is undertaking research into the site dynamics and site formation processes of the Hazardous site. Dummy artefacts were placed on-site in 2004 and have been periodically monitored in order to observe artefact movement patterns. Some of the artefacts remain visible on the seabed, though far removed from their original locations. Many are 'missing', presumed buried or lost off-site. Conditions have not permitted a comprehensive survey to be undertaken this year. Data is being entered into Site Recorder, although the results of this initiative have yet to be fully assessed.

Observations

Observations on the first dive of the season by the licensee were as follows:

A great deal of scouring was noted from the northwest quadrant on the outside of the hull structure, adjacent to the buried gun and carriage, through the area of the beak and down the east side as far as the cannon ball mound.

A drop in seabed level of 330mm was recorded, since the last recorded level on 18th September 2005 at monitoring point M10 on the beak. The pin holding the diver trail cable at this point was lying loose on the seabed. The scour is at least a metre wide. Much new timber structure is showing down the east side outside the frames, one brass artefact was recovered in this area and a large number of lead tangles and much lead caulking was noted. There is at least one timber complete with treenails, rectangular in section and of frame size, loose on the seabed in this area.

Monitoring point M6, sited under the cannonball mound and fixed by a 40mm copper nail to one of the hull frames has come away, due to gribble worm activity. This tag has been re-fixed, as close to it's original position as possible, but 40mm lower.

There is evidence of considerable scouring at the extreme south end of the site, north of the low cliff and stretching back towards D6. There also appears to be some erosion of seabed material generally up the west side of the site. A pewter plate was recovered laying loose on the seabed some 3+ metres west of the portside frames, 13.30m southwest of D4 and 8.28m northwest of D32. Adjacent to the plate, a section of clay drain was measured in and recovered; both artefacts were found lying on top of undisturbed seabed, suggesting that the artefacts have moved from their original positions.

Weather conditions generally in the bay this year, were far less favourable than for many years. This resulted in the cancellation of many of the planned diving weekends and of those that presented good

surface conditions, several presented zero visibility below water due to suspended sediment in the water column.

Over the course of the season increased turbulence on site has caused further undermining of some of the guns on the west side of the site, first noted last season. The hull structure which supports the cannon ball mound, remains undermined by up to half a metre on the east side, as recorded last season. If this trend continues through the winter months, serious destabilisation of the hull structure in this area is bound to result. This will, as reported last year, add further to the 33% loss of wreck and associated information, witnessed by the licensee over the last twenty-four years.

Artefacts

Work continues on stabilisation of artefacts in wet store.

Conservation work on a number of fragile artefacts is ongoing at The Mary Rose Trust.

Diver Trail

Cleaning and repairs plus replacement of two sections of the diver trail cable and refitting of trail numbers was required before any trail days could be run.

All though there were a number of bookings, all but one of the ten scheduled diver trail days, were cancelled due to bad weather, it was therefore not possible to “catch up” last seasons booked, cancelled trips either. As a result there were only six visiting divers to the site this year.

All visiting divers are given lectures on the history, discovery and present work taking place on the site, along with an overview of the flora and fauna of the area. Included is a visit to the museum display, which continues to be well received by both public and divers alike.

300th Anniversary

A successful open day was run at the Hazardous Display at Earnley Gardens in September to commemorate the final voyage of the Hazardous; to raise public awareness of the project in the local community and to formally open the new conservation centre. The event was attended by members of the ACHWS, EH, MCA and Chichester District Council as well as members of the public.



Figure: Displays at Open Day

In November 2006, on the date of the loss of the Hazardous, a commemorative bronze plaque, funded by the local council, will be unveiled on the shore overlooking the site.

Capacity Building

Aided by a lottery grant from the Awards for All Scheme it has been possible to purchase, site and furnish a portacabin as a new project base/wet store and conservation area beside the display unit at Earnley Gardens.

Some of the funding has been utilised for the purchase of a laptop computer to assist with public lectures and the acquisition of electronic measuring equipment to aid conservation work.

Work has begun on designing a project web site and it is hoped that this will be up and running by spring 2007.



Figure: arrival of the new Project base/wet store and conservation area

English Heritage Funded Initiatives

Archive Project

The project funded by English Heritage to assess and consolidate the Hazardous archive has been completed. This has resulted in deposition in a publicly available archive. The project also includes a conservation assessment of the material culture. This project is phase one of a four-stage programme outlined for the Hazardous site which will result in research and publication of the current site data and information. It will also address the urgent need for further excavation on the site, which is constantly being eroded with the resulting loss of our nation's maritime heritage.

Environmental Project

During 2006 the project entitled 'Quantifying the Hazardous Threat: An assessment of site monitoring data and scoping of available environmental data sets' was completed. This project produced interesting results showing that the site is situated within unusual sediment transport pathways. In recent years there has been a net drop in sediment in and around the site, this is mirrored by changes in sediment movement on the adjacent coastline. This project also looked at areas of the wreck site most at threat from erosion and areas that hold highest archaeological potential; this resulted in prioritising areas for future excavation and recording.

Diving Schedule

Diving operations were carried out on six separate days. This resulted in 1837 working minutes underwater by nine divers.
In excess of 270 minutes was spent underwater by six visiting divers.

Plans for 2007

Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels and timber degradation, using points set up in 2002.

Continue surveying positions of dummy "artefacts" for ongoing research into environmental effects on site conditions and formation processes.

Carry out further planning of areas / artefacts exposed due to continued erosion.

Survey and recover artefacts exposed by erosion and under threat of loss or damage.

Continue with conservation of artefacts in wet storage at present.

Continue operation of the diver trail.

Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.

Web site development.

Submit Project Design to EH for project to outline the research potential of the wreck site, prior to a further project application that will take forward excavation.

Submit a further "Awards for All" application to take forward further community site initiatives.
