

# **Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy**

## **Appendix 1: Theme 4b The District's Maritime Coast – Wrecks**

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## 4(b) Wrecks

### 1. Summary

The Channel and Strait of Dover is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. They have been the setting for a range of maritime activities and events going back to ancient times which also reflects the growing importance of various ports along the Kentish coastline, such as the Cinque Ports. The Channel has seen the arrival of invasion fleets and raiding vessels going back to the Roman period, and has been the scene of a number of naval conflicts. It has often acted as a frontline defence during times of warfare, and then in times of peace is an important trading route for both visiting vessels and those on route to other national and international ports. It is therefore unsurprising that a number of vessels have been lost to the sea over the years and now comprise a valuable collection of wrecks off the coast of the district.

### 2. Introduction

As recent as 15,000 years ago much of the North Sea and the English Channel was part of the continental land mass. As sea levels rose following the last ice age this land mass became submerged beneath the growing Channel and North Sea retreating to a land mass which bridged between Britain and the continent from what is now East Kent and East Anglia. Around 6000 BC the connection with the continental landmass was finally breached creating the Dover Strait and the island we live in today.

The district's proximity to continental Europe has meant that the history of the District has been inexorably linked with the maritime use of the Dover Strait and English Channel since ancient times. Vessels passing between the north countries and southern Europe and beyond would often use the sheltered waters of the Channel rather than risk the more hazardous Atlantic passages. The short crossing between Britain and the continent through Kent has also been extensively used for the movement of different people, cultures, materials and ideas in and out of the country since prehistoric times. The District's archaeological record contains significant evidence going back to the early Bronze Age where the "Beaker" tradition is evident at Lympne and Holywell Coombe which would have reached Britain from Europe around 2400 BC. Further evidence for early cross channel trade and movement is also revealed in the recovery of "exotic" artefacts such as pottery and tool types which reflect continental influences.

The movement of goods and people across the Channel evidently continued through the Iron Age and Roman period, with an important Roman port of entry developing at Lympne (*Portus Lemanis*). A Roman "harbour" may also have developed at East Cliff in Folkestone, though evidence to confirm this has since been lost to coastal erosion. Other Roman remains at the site, in particular the villa at East Wear Bay on the clifftop overlooking the East Cliff, suggests that this site was still an important post along the southern coast and may have played a prominent role with the provincial fleet. Although Lympne would ultimately become redundant as a port before the end of the Roman period, Folkestone has continued to play an important role in cross channel travel whilst other ports have grown and declined in significance as the District's coastline has developed over many centuries, such as at New Romney and

Hythe. Other prominent maritime activities over the course of the District's history include smuggling, fishing, pilotage and preserving life at sea.

As well as being a conduit, the sea between the District and the continent has also formed a barrier and the first line of defence against invading armies. The coastal waters of the district have played host to invading forces, seen the arrival of several raids on the coast and its ports as well as a number of naval engagements. These include Viking raids during the ninth century AD, the Battle of Winchelsea in 1350 and far more recently the First and Second World Wars. All of this coupled with the natural dangers of shipping have resulted in a large number of wrecks in the District's coastal waters.

### **3. Description of the Heritage Assets**

#### ***Dungeness Point and the Varne Bank***

The low-lying coast of Dungeness for many centuries has been a hazard to shipping but has also provided the last viable open-water rendezvous west of Dover. The Dungeness headland, which is recognisable by its lighthouses that have sat at Dungeness Point since the early seventeenth century, protrudes so far into the Channel that ships are able to pass close to it without making a major detour. The water is deep on its seaward face and is also close enough to Folkestone and Dover that it can be readily serviced by pilots and cutters, acting as a final "pre-Downs" pilot station with some advantages over its neighbour at Dover. The Dungeness lighthouses which mark the end of the Dungeness peninsula are also important way marks as references for vessels navigating the Dover Straits. Some notable shipwrecks that have occurred off the Dungeness peninsula include the *Northfleet* Disaster in 1873 and the loss of the German warship *Grosser Kurfurst* just five years later in 1878.

Moving eastwards through the coastal waters towards Folkestone, the Varne Bank is a five and three quarter mile long rectangular-shaped sand bank lying 9 miles southwest of Dover in the Strait of Dover. It lies immediately southwest of the deepest point (68m) in the Strait and is similar to other rectangular banks such as the South Falls Bank and Colbart Bank. Rectilinear-shaped banks are only found on the English side of the Strait, and the Varne Bank is significant as it lies almost directly in the middle of the south/west international traffic English-side channel of the Channel. This presents a constant concern for both shipping and the British Coastguard as the sea above the bank has strong rippling and is noted for its particular roughness during bad weather. With a minimum depth of 3m, it is marked by lighted buoys to the west, east and south as well as a Trinity House automatic light vessel nearby.

Ships that have foundered on the Varne Bank are often mistakenly reported as being lost on the Goodwin Sands, perhaps because the Varne Bank is less well known than its close northerly neighbour. Several proposals have been made to eliminate the bank through dredging due to the increase in shipping through the Channel. In 1802, mining engineer Albert Mathieu made proposals to Napoleon for turning the Varne Bank into an island staging point for an early attempt at a Channel Tunnel. Later during the twentieth century a proposal was made for a Channel bridge that would use the bank as a staging post for a support structure.

However because of its shallow depth the Varne Bank is also a productive location for fishing, in particular for cod and scallops. It also forms part of a 262 square mile Natura 2000 protection zone listed under the name *Ridens et dunes hydrauliques du Pas de Calais*. This zone includes the neighbouring Colbart Bank, the Vergoyer Bank, the *Ridens de Boulogne* and the French side of the Bassurelle Bank. There is a fish and chip shop in Lydd-on-Sea called *Varne Bank*, named after the undersea feature.

### **Wrecks**

Historic England and partners investigate wrecks and underwater archaeological sites in order to help discover, understand and protect this rich heritage of human maritime activity. Information regarding these finds is held within the maritime element of the National Record of the Historic Environment, which has often relied on chance discoveries but in more recent years includes specific and organised projects that have investigated the seabed and greatly enhanced the record. Historic England's marine area of responsibility for recommending assets for designation or closer management lies within the Territorial Sea Limit of England (12 nautical miles from shore). The types of heritage involved in their work include submerged landscapes, wrecks, aviation crash sites and dredged artefacts.

The Kent Historic Environment Record shows around 616 known shipwrecks or the sites where vessels have reportedly foundered within 30 kilometres of the District's coastline. Many of these will have been broken up by time and tide along with other actions such as deliberate clearance efforts, divers and current maritime vessels. Despite this, a great many survive as buried or part-buried maritime archaeological sites. It should be noted that data concerning wreck sites has often relied on reports of where a ship was believed to have sunk, but further investigation would be needed in order to confirm this with absolute accuracy. It is also possible that a ship was known to have sunk along a given route, but the exact location is again estimated until further investigation is able to provide exact data. The Kent Historic Environment Record assumes responsibility for the county of Kent and utilises information supplied by Historic England and the National Maritime Record regarding its maritime heritage. Where there aren't the resources or equipment to carry out specific investigations or surveys of wreck sites, data regarding the location of wrecks may not be completely accurate but is a best estimate using the information provided. Organised surveys and information provided by divers may continue to be utilised in order to enhance the record further.

### **Protected Wreck Sites**

A number of wrecks, recognised as being of historical, archaeological or artistic importance are designated through the *Protection of Wrecks Act 1973* to prevent uncontrolled interference with their remains. The Act defines a restricted area where it is an offence to tamper with, damage or remove any part of the wreck or associated objects, carry out unlicensed diving or salvage activities or to drop materials on to the wreck or the restricted area from above. There is one Protected Wreck Site off the district coastline.

The wreck of the **SM U-8**, a submarine of the German Imperial Navy commissioned in 1911, is located in the English Channel approximately 2km west-north-west of the south Varne buoy and 16km south-south-east of Folkestone. A wreck was first

identified at this general location in 1977 by the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO), and was later classified as a submarine in 1985. However, it was mis-identified in the United Kingdom Shipwreck Index and Shipwreck Index of the British Isles in 1995 as a sailing smack, and was also later confused with the wreck of UB33, another U-boat in the close vicinity. Further investigation was undertaken to confirm the identities of the two submarines, and in 2003 a local diver and submarine researcher conclusively identified the wreck of the U8 from the collapsible gas exhaust columns on deck for the paraffin engine which is present on U8 but not UB33. The condition of the wreck was reported as being largely intact with some damage to the casing. It was formerly designated as a Protected Wreck Site in 2016 and is now safeguarded by the *Protection of Wrecks Act 1973*.

Before 1914, experiments with U-1 to U-4 had taken place as German leadership wanted to use these submarines mainly against British capital ships in the case of a war. By sinking British ships, the German Imperial Navy would be able to counterbalance the number of the fleets in anticipation of a major naval battle on the North Sea. The design for a 500-ton boat with a surface speed of 14.5 knots (U-1 managed 10.6 knots) was submitted by Germanierwerft in February of 1908, with naval contracts to follow for the construction of U-boats U-5 to U-8 in April of that same year. U-8 was the last of a batch of four coastal torpedo attack boats built in Kiel for Kaiserliche Deutsche Marine, and was launched on the 14<sup>th</sup> March 1911 with a commission to Kapitanleutnant Wilhelm Friedrich Starke on 18 June 1911.

The U-boat was 57.3m long, had a beam of 5.6m with a maximum height of 7.3m for the hull and conning tower and a draught of 3.6m. It was built of steel with a double hull and had a displacement of 505 tons surfaced and 636 tons submerged. Four 225hp Korting paraffin engines and two 520hp electric motors powered two bronze propellers meaning that U8 could travel at 13.4 knots surfaced and 10.2 knots submerged. U8 could operate at a maximum depth of 50m and took 65 seconds to crash dive, though it was never able to reach the top speed that it was designed for at 14.5 knots.

The vessel carried a capacity of six torpedoes and was also retrofitted with a reverse facing 105mm deck cannon by the start of the First World War in 1914. It was operated by a crew of four officers and twenty five ratings and was to form the first real German U-boat force which was to be superior in both fighting ability and seaworthiness against all other foreign competitors. The U-8 was significant and marked a turning point in submarine development from small coastal craft to devastatingly effective weapons of war.

In August 1914 U-boats were initially used by the Imperial German Navy as an advanced line of observational outposts in the Heligoland Bight to guard approaches to the Eems, Elbe and Jade Bight. Their potential was slowly realised, and patrols began to extend into the North Sea as far as Fair Isle seeking to attack the British Grand Fleet. From the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1914 U8 was commanded by Alfred Stoß who led patrols from Brunsbüttel to the North Sea, Dover area and around the north Scottish islands. By February 1915 U8 had been transferred to the Ostend base, and on the 21<sup>st</sup> of that month set out on what would become its most successful patrol. U8 worked mainly in the eastern English Channel where it was responsible for

sinking two British steamers, *Branksome Chine* and *Oakby* on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and then another three the following day; *Harpalion*, *Rio Parana* and *Western Coast*.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1915 U8 along with U20 (the U-boat that infamously sank the liner RMS *Lusitania*) departed from Ostend towards the Channel where she was to sink as many enemy vessels as was possible in the shortest space of time before returning to port. This was to be U8's final patrol, and there are a number of accounts that give details of the sinking and the events that led up to this from both sides of the war. British accounts are recorded by several eye-witnesses and a summary of the official British account is recorded by Messimer. As the official documents from the U8 were thrown overboard upon her sinking, the German viewpoint is recorded by Captain Alfred Stoß some three years after the event.

U20 left U8 to pursue other patrol areas whilst U8 crossed the Ruytingen Bank minefield on the surface, quickly followed by another dense minefield. Fog had reduced visibility and so U8 remained on the surface in order to obtain an accurate position fix before entering the Dover Strait. U8 attempted to dive and wait on the bottom close to South Foreland when the fog thickened, but rocky conditions and a strong current made this strategy untenable and so Captain Stoß brought U8 back to the surface ready to dive again if needed. Once the fog had cleared, U8 was soon spotted by a British destroyer 1.5 nautical miles away. U8 was forced to dive but was again spotted by HMS *Viking* at 12:10 who according to British records fired shots which caused U8 to continue diving manoeuvres. However, German accounts contradict this and state that the fast approach of the destroyer actually caused U8 to dive, not shots fired.

U8 became trapped at the entrance to the Dover Strait between two minefields to the north-east and two destroyers to the south-west. For the next four hours, U8 was chased around the Dover Strait by several destroyers with clearer weather conditions making hiding increasingly difficult. Occasional periscope sightings would give the U8 away. The events that occurred over these four hours is unclear from conflicting records, however it is evident that U8 travelled a complicated submerged path in repeated attempts to evade the numerous British destroyers. All records of the events agree that an explosion was heard at 15:30, possibly from U8 fouling a net which was part of the Dover Barrage.

By 15:55 the destroyers *Mohawk*, *Nubian*, *Cossack*, *Ghurka*, *Ure* and *Syren* had joined the hunt for U8. Just before 16:00 HMS *Viking* fired an explosive sweep followed by another from *Ghurka* at 16:16. At either 16:45 or 17:45 (depending on various translations of Stoß's account) another explosive sweep which is attributed to HMS *Ghurka* shook U8 causing the U-boat to start taking on water and sustaining damage. The U-boat was brought to the surface where the two destroyers *Ghurka* and *Maori* opened fire, making successful hits on the conning tower. Once on the surface, the crew were ordered through the hatch whilst Stoß and two other officers scuttled U8 which *Ghurka* records show as sinking at 17:12. There was no loss of life during the sinking of U8 and all German crewmen were taken prisoner by the British forces.

The sinking of U8 was significant as it was the first U-boat of the First World War to be sunk in England's coastal waters. At the time it also proved the effectiveness of

the Dover Patrol, though it would be the only U-boat which would be sunk as a result of an effective use of an explosive sweep. Based on diver's reports and geophysical investigations, the wreck survives relatively intact with the hull largely complete and upright on the seabed with the conning tower and periscopes still *in situ*. It appears that minimal damage was caused to the hull by the explosive sweep and it is likely that more damage was actually caused when the crew and Captain scuttled U8 once she had surfaced and surrendered. Some fixtures, most notably the propellers, have been salvaged and it is possible that a section of the hull is now buried in the seabed nearby. Damage was caused to the internal fittings during the wrecking process, such as a fire in the starboard switch panel and burst hull seams. Because the conning tower hatch was left open once U8 had been evacuated, it is likely that the interior may have also partially filled with sediment. Confirmation of the internal conditions would need to be confirmed by future investigation.

The U8 is significant evidence for the exceptional technological advances that were made in the first ten years of German U-boat construction. It is also the only known remaining U-boat of its type (U5). The other three coastal torpedo attack U-boats that were constructed in 1908 by Germanianwerft have either been broken up or their locations are still unknown. U5 was mined during the war but then was raised and toured internationally to raise funds before being broken up. U6 and U7 were both sunk by torpedoes in 1915 and have never been located. U8 is also the only surviving example of the 14 U-boats that were powered by Korting heavy-oil type engines and sunk in English waters. U11 is the other example but it has not been conclusively located. Overall U8 is a rare example of a pre-First World War German-built submarine and is also the earliest U-boat wreck in English territorial waters.

### ***Merchant Shipping Act 1995 and Protection of Military Remains Act 1986***

The vast majority of the wrecks lying offshore from the District are not safeguarded through the *Protection of Wrecks Act 1973*. Two other pieces of legislation which afford some protection to shipwrecks are the *Merchant Shipping Act 1995* and the *Protection of Military Remains Act 1986*.

The *Merchant Shipping Act 1995* requires that all wreck material that comes from UK territorial waters and any wreck that is landed in the UK from outside these waters must be declared to the Receiver of Wreck. *Wreck* is defined as anything which is found in or on the sea, or washed ashore or in tidal water that may have come from a shipwreck or vessel regardless of age or importance. Finders who report their finds to the Receiver of Wreck have salvage rights.

The *Protection of Military Remains Act 1986* deals with military remains of both aircraft and ships. All military aircraft are automatically designated under this legislation but shipwrecks are not. Vessels are not automatically designated but may be designated under this Act either as a 'Protected Place' or as a 'Controlled Site'. Divers may visit a Protected Place as long as they do not disturb the remains but are prohibited from visiting Controlled Sites. Designation as a 'Controlled Site' is only applicable to wrecks of less than 200 years age (since sinking) in UK waters and for 'Protected Places' vessels lost after the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914. Wrecks designated as 'Protected Places' can include UK vessels outside UK waters and foreign vessels lost within UK waters. The Ministry of Defence's criteria for designation include:



- Whether the wreck represents the last resting place of servicemen;
- Whether the wreck has suffered disturbance and looting, and whether designation is likely to stop such disturbance;
- Whether diving on the wreck attracts public criticism; and
- Whether the wreck is of historical significance.

In addition wrecks that are considered dangerous are designated as 'Controlled Sites' as might be those wrecks designated as 'Protected Places' which suffer sustained disturbance.

The Ministry of Defence has been undertaking a rolling programme of designation since 2001. To date the wrecks of twelve vessels have been designated as 'Controlled Sites', none of which are in the District's offshore waters. Fifty five wrecks have been designated as 'Protected Places'. Only one lies within the District's coastal waters, the **HMHS Anglia** which was only recently designated in 2017.

The wreck site is located in the eastern English Channel, approximately one mile east of Folkestone. In 2014 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by English Heritage (EH) through the NHPP Heritage at Risk contract to undertake a geophysical survey over the wreck of the HMHS Anglia. The survey acquired high resolution side-scan sonar, magnetometer and multibeam bathymetry data in order to determine the location of the wreck as well as to establish its condition and assess its character. This record was critical in obtaining the appropriate designation for the site as a 'Protected Place' (war grave) under the *Protection of Military Remains Act 1986*, and also in determining the appropriate future management of the wreck. The survey was also able to determine that the wreck appears to be upright and mostly coherent with a few items of debris lying nearby. It is orientated north-south with the bow to the north and partially buried in some areas by sediment. The top of the superstructure appears to have been removed and a large amount of the interior structures are visible. The remains of the funnels are clearly visible as well as some other identifiable features, though the remaining structure appears broken up and more chaotic.

HMHS *Anglia*, originally Twin Screw Steamer (TSS) *Anglia*, was built by William Denny and Brothers Limited in Dumbarton (Scotland) as one of a pair of cross channel passenger steamers built for the London & North Western Railway Company. She was launched on the 20<sup>th</sup> December 1899 and entered into service for the Holyhead-Dublin ferry service in April of 1900. TSS *Anglia* was used on the Holyhead-Dublin route until 1908 when she was then transferred to the Holyhead-Kingston ferry route.

Shortly after the declaration of the First World War in 1914, the *Anglia* was commissioned by the Admiralty as an armed boarding steamer, a role that continued until late April 1915 when she was then converted into a hospital ship. HMHS *Anglia* was assigned to transport wounded servicemen in France and Belgium from French ports back to Dover. She became well known during November of 1915 when King

George V had to be brought back home aboard the *Anglia* following a riding accident during a visit to the Western Front. It would only be a few days later that same month that the *Anglia* would sink about a mile east of Folkestone after striking a mine that had been laid out the night before by the German submarine UC-5.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1915 the HMHS *Anglia* was returning from Boulogne with hundreds of wounded soldiers aboard. At approximately 12:30 whilst one mile east of Folkestone Gate the *Anglia* struck a mine on the port side forward of the bridge and immediately began to sink bow first. The Captain at the time, Lionel John Manning, survived the event and would later give evidence stating that the *Anglia* sank within 20 minutes of striking the mine. The first two wards were underwater almost immediately whilst others began to be evacuated with able bodied crew and patients helping the more severely injured. It has been stated that many of the injured on board would have been evacuated in an acute state with some receiving little medical treatment before leaving France and others were known to have had amputations only days earlier. Because of the angle that the ship was listing, the crew were not able to use the lifeboats on the starboard side but did manage to launch one from the port side saving around 50 lives before it became impossible to launch any more. Reports from survivors state that there was no major panic on board, but a calm determination to get the wounded to safety. Many of the survivors later praised the efforts of the crew and nursing staff for their efforts to save lives.

The collier SS *Lusitania* was in the vicinity at the time and proceeded to assist with the recovery of survivors from the *Anglia*. However, she also struck a mine and was sunk. The majority of the survivors were rescued by the destroyer *Ure* and other vessels such as the SS *Channel Queen* and submarine depot ship HMS *Hazard*. Estimates of the numbers of people on board and the numbers of lives lost vary between reports. It is reported that around 400 persons were aboard the *Anglia*, though some state that there were “about 500 patients” as well as crew. Reports vary again between 129, 164 and 167 lives lost during the sinking of both crew members and patients.

Longstanding campaigns have called for the ship to be protected in order to safeguard the remains, and in particular to honour those who died on board and lost their lives in service to country. Whilst it lay unprotected, divers were able to remove items from the wreck which could include human remains and other personal items or associated artefacts as long as they were declared to the Receiver of Wreck. A spokesman from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) had said previous to 2014 that “while the wreck meets some of the criteria for designation (as a war grave) the situation was complicated by the fact that in 1965 the Department of Transport sold the wreck to the Folkestone Salvage Company therefore the decision was made not to designate the wreck”. The survey undertaken by English Heritage and Wessex Archaeology in 2014 ultimately led to the successful designation of the HMHS *Anglia* under the *Protection of Military Remains Act 1986* in March 2017.

### ***Undesignated Wrecks at Sea***

The overwhelming majority of the wrecks off the coast of district are not covered by designation. As well as the recorded loss of individual ships and in some cases identified wreck sites, there are likely to be a vast number of other vessels which have been lost without specific record. With use of the off-shore waters for coastal

and cross channel navigation since prehistoric times, as a frontline in defence of the country and later as a conduit for longer sea voyages, it is unsurprising that a large number of wrecks are located in the off-shore waters of the District as a result of the natural dangers of weather and navigation through the Channel and Dover Strait, as well as resulting from naval engagement. The most notable or well-known of these include the Battle of Winchelsea in 1350, the *Northfleet* Disaster and the loss of ships during the First and Second World Wars.

The waters off the shore of the District have been the scene of various documented raids and conflicts from the Roman period through to the twentieth century. There is evidence for commercial traffic between the Kent coast and the continent during the Roman period, but no confirmed Roman wrecks are known in the waters of the District. Evidence from various areas that would have been important along the Roman coastline suggest that there was increased activity by the Roman navy (*Classis Britannica*) towards the end of the Roman period, perhaps in response to coastal raids by North Germanic tribes. Archaeological evidence from the site of the Roman Saxon Shore Fort at *Portus Lemanis* (Lympne) and Folkestone's East Cliff area suggests that the *Classis Britannica* may have had bases here, or at least individuals associated with the fleet stationed there. Wrecks relating to this military activity may still await discovery as none have been found to date.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles hint at the arrival of invaders and settlers immediately following the withdrawal of Roman rule and record ninth century raids by Vikings along the East and South Kent coast. Evidence suggests that there were two raids on the Romney Marsh by Vikings and their longships. The first was in 841 AD and resulted in large numbers of people being killed on the Marsh. The second raid came in 892 AD when it is believed that around 250 Viking longships rowed past Romney and continued inland as far as Appledore. The Vikings then established camps in order to winter there, and it was not until King Alfred engaged them in Essex during the following year that the Vikings finally abandoned their attempts at permanent settlement here and left in 896 AD.

Naval conflicts off the coast of the District continued into the medieval period. The Battle of Winchelsea or the Battle of Les Espagnols sur Mer ("The Spaniards on the Sea") took place on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1350 in neighbouring Rother District, and was an English victory commanded by King Edward III and the Black Prince over a combined Castilian and Genoese fleet commanded by Don Carlos de la Cerda. The English fleet was 50 ships strong; however the vessels of the Castilian and Genoese fleet though numbering less at 44 were much larger. Throughout much of Edward III's reign, English shores and ships had been harassed by pirates. Castilian and Genoese ships had fought against England as the allies or mercenaries of France, and there had been instances of piratical violence between the trading ships of both nations. Edward's recent string of victories had placed him in a strong position to wage war against his enemies, and so in August of 1350 he announced his intention to attack the Castilians who were currently on their way home from Flanders after capturing a number of English trading ships and throwing the crew overboard.

The rendezvous of his fleet was at Winchelsea, and on the 28<sup>th</sup> August the king embarked on his flagship the *Cog Thomas* with the Prince of Wales on another ship. The forces then engaged one another the following day on the 29<sup>th</sup> August resulting

in heavy loss of ships for the Castilians, between 14 and 26 vessels being captured and some others sunk. Only 2 English vessels were sunk but there was significant loss of life. The battle was ultimately an English victory with some wrecks approximately resting within the coastal waters of the district. Two are identified by the Historic Environment Record relating to the Battle of Winchelsea.

Between 1652 and 1654 the First Anglo-Dutch War was fought entirely at sea between the navies of the Commonwealth of England and the United Provinces of the Netherlands. It was caused by disputes over trade and began with English attacks on Dutch merchant shipping that later expanded to extensive fleet actions. During the sixteenth century England and the Netherlands had been close allies against the ambitions of the Habsburgs, and had also co-operated during the Spanish Armada of 1588. England supported the Dutch during the Eighty Years' War by sending money and troops, but resentment had begun to grow when the Dutch replaced England as dominant traders with the Iberian Peninsula having made peace with Spain by the end of the sixteenth century. This resentment would culminate in the Anglo-Dutch Wars which began with the First Anglo-Dutch War in 1652. A series of wars would be fought until the final defeat of the Dutch by the English in 1797 at the Battle of Camperdown.

The Battle of Dungeness took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1652 near the cape of Dungeness as part of the First Anglo-Dutch War. At this time, the Commonwealth of England had mistakenly believed that the United Provinces of the Netherlands would desist from bringing out a fleet after their defeat at the Battle of the Kentish Knock. Many English ships had been sent away to the Mediterranean and Baltic, whilst others remained in repair or were undermanned as sailors had deserted due to wages not being paid. This left the English in a weakened state and badly outnumbered in their home waters. Meanwhile the Dutch were making every effort to reinforce their fleet in order to convoy merchantmen to the south also using warships.

The English fleet, commanded by Robert Blake, was defeated at the battle with a number of ships being lost or sunk. The aftermath resulted in several reforms to the English Fleet which included dividing the fleet into squadrons under junior flag officers for better command and control, requiring that all impressed vessels be under the command of naval captains and the issuing of Sailing and Fighting Instructions which significantly enhanced an admiral's authority over his fleet. The victory gave the Dutch temporary control over the English Channel and so also control of merchant shipping. However, by the end of the First Anglo-Dutch War in 1654 the English Navy had triumphed and ultimately gained control of the seas around England forcing the Dutch to accept an English monopoly on trade with England and her colonies.

Other vessels that have been lost in the waters off the District's coastline are the result of accidental collisions or disasters. Perhaps the best known of these is the *Northfleet* Disaster of 1873. The *Northfleet* was a British full rigged ship of around 951 tons that had been built at Northfleet in Kent in 1853. She had spent much of her career trading between England and Australia, India and China, and in 1872 was chartered to carry labourers and their families, 340 tons of iron rails and 240 tons of

other railway line equipment to Tasmania under the command of Captain Edward Knowles.

The *Northfleet* had left Gravesend for Hobart on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1873 with 379 persons on board; the pilot, 34 crew, 3 cabin passengers and the assisted emigrants comprising 248 men, 42 women and 52 children. Bad weather had forced her to drop anchor at several points before leaving the Channel, and on the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup> January she was at anchor about three miles off Dungeness. At around 10:30pm she was run down by a steamer that backed off and disappeared quickly from the scene. The *Northfleet* was heavily laden and so she sank within half an hour of the collision, so quickly that other vessels in the vicinity did not realise that anything was amiss until it was too late. In the ensuing panic a total of 293 people drowned and only 86 were saved. Only two boats managed to get clear of the sinking vessel, one without any oars and the other badly damaged. Captain Knowles went down with his ship, and his wife was one of the only women on board to survive.

It was not until eight months after the collision that the offending steamer was identified. This proved to be the Spanish steamship *Murillo* which had stopped off Dover on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1873. A Court of Admiralty condemned her to be sold and her officers were severely censored. In commemoration of the lives lost during the *Northfleet* Disaster a window in the south wall of the chapel of St Nicholas Church in New Romney depicts angel trumpeters calling the lost souls to heaven out of the waves.

Only five years later an accidental collision between two German warships occurred near the same place as the *Northfleet* Disaster. The *Grosser Kurfurst* and *Koenig Wilhelm* collided resulting in the sinking of the former and the loss of 300 lives. Both of these disasters would later contribute to a greater lifeboat presence at Folkestone and Dungeness.

Many of the vessels lost in the waters off the District's coastline date from the First and Second World Wars. The Dover Strait was an important line of defence preventing German naval craft from entering the English Channel in the First World War. This line of defence was maintained by the Royal Navy's Dover Patrol which operated from both Dover and Dunkirk and was involved in many skirmishes. The sinking of the SM U-8 for example was not only significant as it was the first U-boat of the First World War to be sunk in England's coastal waters, but also because it proved the effectiveness of the Dover Patrol.

The Second World War saw the Strait of Dover and English Channel as the first line of defence between Britain and occupied Europe. Many ships were lost during the war due to bombing, striking mines or from attack by U-boats. Vessels sunk include steam ships, merchant vessels and destroyers.

#### **4. Statement of Significance**

The district has a wealth of wreck sites, though only two are actually designated. These wrecks are an immensely valuable resource which testifies to the prolonged importance of the region for maritime trade, transport and defence and the long history of navigation through and across the Channel and Strait of Dover.

Collectively, and due to the significant importance of individual examples, the wrecks are of **outstanding significance**.

### ***Evidential Value***

The wreck sites have considerably high value in potentially providing important evidence on a number of nationally important issues. The vessels themselves demonstrate the history and nature of navigation through and across the Dover Strait and along the coastal waters and Channel from prehistoric times. The evidence of their cargoes in particular can provide important new information on the trade contacts and the movements of goods and in some cases peoples to and from the continent, around Europe and further afield. Many of the wrecks have particular value in representing exemplars of vessel types, cargos and particular maritime activities, namely transport, trade and warfare and demonstrate the development of craft and boat building skills through the ages. They also provide considerable potential to help us understand the lives of the mariners. For example, the well-preserved wreck of the SM U-8 is an invaluable resource to better understanding the development of pre-World War One German U-boats and their rapid advancement as effective weapons for warfare. Many wreck sites can also be associated with documented events such as great naval conflicts, navigation disasters and major conflicts. They therefore have considerable potential to provide direct evidence and links to these events.

### ***Historical Value***

The wreck sites have the potential to illustrate the development of maritime craft from early times through to the twentieth century. They can help to illustrate the development of navies and naval warfare and the lives of naval seamen. Through the cargoes the historical development of trading contact between Britain and Europe and later between the European powers and their developing overseas empires is also evident. Many of the wrecks can be associated with nationally significant events, such as the First and Second World Wars, and therefore provide a powerful link to the past. There is also considerable potential to provide direct evidence for maritime activity beginning in the Roman period, such as the presence of the *Classis Britannica* in the Channel, and going through to the twentieth century. Remains of wrecks associated with various documented conflicts that have taken place in the waters around the coastline also provide further evidence of important maritime activity, such as the Battle of Winchelsea and Battle of Dungeness.

### ***Aesthetic Value***

The presence of wrecks scattered across the sea bed off the coast of the district are evocative and aesthetically striking reminders of the maritime past as well as the hazards that the coastal waters held for shipping and mariners. Whilst none can be seen above the water mark and so can only be valued and experienced underwater, they provide a unique sensory experience of maritime heritage with some also representing great historical events and conflicts. Accounts of shipwrecks are also evocative in their telling and representation in media such as artwork, literature and photographs.

### ***Communal Value***

The connection of the District's maritime coastal communities with their maritime heritage is strong. The shipwrecks themselves provide reminders of the past and

create powerful connections to the maritime heritage of the District. Particular examples may include the District's role in the defence of the country and transportation of wounded soldiers back from the Front during the First World War reflected in the wrecks of SM U-8 and the HMHS *Anglia*. There is also significant local pride over the role of lifeboats and preserving life at sea for many towns along the coastline which is again reflected in the wreck sites off the District's coast.

Naval life and participation in major conflicts generates a significant level of public interest particularly through popular fiction by Forester, O'Brian and others. The discovery of shipwrecks fires the public's imagination and helps to illustrate the events and times associated with them. As artefacts recovered from the seabed are often well preserved, the wrecks can provide discoveries that immediately connect with the public. The wrecks of the twentieth century serve as memorials to these conflicts and honour the loss of life in service of one's country. Artefacts from these vessels can also serve in building and maintaining positive relationships with previous enemies, in this case illustrated in the return of the Sm U-8 propeller to the German Navy.

## 5. Vulnerabilities

The most significant threat to the long term future of the historic wrecks at sea off the District's coastline is from the dynamic environment in which they rest. The sandy and often highly mobile sea beds on which they lie can result in the movement, burial or exposure of wrecks and their associated objects and structures leaving them vulnerable to marine processes and deterioration. Unfortunately because wrecks are often in remote locations, their management is also challenging and changes to their condition are often difficult to predict. Objects that may be of historic as well as evidential importance to a particular wreck are at risk of being washed away or buried which could arguably detract from the overall character of that particular wreck. This is of even more importance at Protected Wreck Sites such as the HMHS *Anglia* where human remains are involved and for the SM U-8 which is of particular historical value. The condition and exposure of the more important wreck sites in the District's coastal waters should be regularly monitored through inspection and geophysical survey with systematic recording and recovery of objects when necessary.

Historic England regularly reviews the condition of the country's Protected Wreck Sites and includes any of particular concern on its *Heritage at Risk Register*. There are only four wreck sites included on the 2017 register deemed to be most at risk, none of which are located within off-shore waters. The number of protected wreck sites at risk has evidently fallen since 2016 which is largely as a result of projects commissioned by Historic England that have targeted the reduction of risk through careful management. Historic England together with other organisations is funding the on-going monitoring work which will continue to ensure that sites are prevented from becoming at risk.

The wrecks also remain vulnerable to interference and disturbance by divers. The vast majority of the District's wreck sites are not protected by designation and divers are able to legally dive on the wrecks without licence. Most act responsibly, respect and do not disturb the wrecks and report findings to the Receiver of Wreck as is required. Under the *Marine and Coastal Areas Act* anyone who wishes to remove an

object from a wreck, or from the seafloor, with the aid of a platform, vessel or other surface support system must first have a marine licence, which are granted by the Marine Management Organisation. Many divers belong to clubs with codes of responsible diving and the British Sub Aqua Club have an Underwater Heritage Advisor and support initiatives to protect the country's wreck heritage.

There is a minority however who undertake unauthorised access on wrecks, disturb and remove artefacts irresponsibly and without reporting either for souvenirs or for potential financial gain. As an example, a propeller from the SM U-8 was previously stolen by salvage divers and had spent much of its life being used as a bespoke piece of furniture that has only recently been recovered and returned to the German Navy in 2015. Concerns for the HMHS *Anglia* before it was officially designated were also centred around the potential for theft or damage to the remains through recreational diving that was still possible with no legal protection afforded to the wreck before 2017.

Dredging operations at sea and the exploitation of the sand and shingle of the sea floor can have a significant impact on wreck sites. While the location of known wrecks can be highlighted to operators, many sites are not located and are at considerable risk. While new areas of sea bed operations are normally assessed prior to granting of a license, there remains a high potential for new wrecks to be discovered and disturbed. Recognising this the British Marine Aggregate Producers Association, Historic England and the Crown Estates have in place a protocol for reporting finds and a guidance note for archaeological good practice developed by Wessex Archaeology to assist in protection of the submerged heritage. The following links will take the reader to the finds reporting protocol and the guidance note:

<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/marine/bmapa/index.html>

<http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/marine/bmapa/dredging-hist-env.html>

Other forms of sea bed development, such as the construction of off shore wind farms, the laying of sea bed cables and pipelines can also have an impact on submerged wrecks. Historic England works to ensure any marine development within the English area of the UK's Territorial Waters includes a full consideration of the potential for impacts on maritime heritage assets in the project planning stage. In this way such impacts are appropriately mitigated prior to the commencement of any works and in addition there is also now a protocol for reporting finds during offshore windfarm development projects. Disturbance can arise not only from development works, but also from the anchoring of vessels on wreck sites. SM U-8 for example lies within the hazardous Dover traffic separation zone, and other wrecks will also be located along routes utilised on a regular basis by modern vessels. Fishing with nets is a further potential source of damage to wrecks, though normally most fishing vessels have good knowledge of the location of submerged obstructions.

## **6. Opportunities**

Little can be done to prevent the exposure of wreck sites to the elements, but more organised programmes of surveying and monitoring in partnership with Historic England or through diver observation and remote survey can help to inform management decisions to be undertaken for the benefit of marine heritage assets.



Historic England is encouraging a programme of voluntary licensees to help monitor the Protected Wreck Sites around our coast both in terms of their condition and access. The *Heritage Watch* scheme for example, which is run by Historic England in partnership with Country Eye, also contributes to the ongoing protection of historic sites such as wrecks through engaging the public to report heritage crime and also monitor important historic sites.

Support for programmes of survey that identify the locations and significance of key wreck sites will assist in considerations of where additional protection through designation is required, and also where further monitoring should be in place. Information received from recreational and professional divers may also continue to enhance the record of the maritime heritage in the off-shore waters of the district. Wherever possible, information on the location of known wreck sites accompanied by clear guidance on their safeguarding and any designations should be made readily accessible to stakeholders such as those who have operational interests off-shore and with the sea bed such as divers, fishermen and dredging operators.

There are opportunities where further investigation of known wreck sites may add to evidence as well as understandings relating to particular vessels or historical events. For example, it is believed that the interior of SM U-8 may have partially filled with sediment since its sinking and so detailed surveys of the interior have not been carried out. Future investigations into this could reveal more information around the sinking of U-8 as well as important evidence relating to this rare example of an early German U-boat. There are also opportunities for new wreck sites to continue being identified through activities such as diving and exploitation of the sea bed.

At present the position of finds from wrecks very much remains to emphasise a 'look but don't touch approach'. Any finds must first be reported to the Receiver of Wrecks who plays the main part in identifying them and then determining their ownership. Nevertheless the process would benefit from improved procedures for findings that are reported to the Receiver of Wrecks to be updated on to the Kent Historic Environment Record.

The discovery and investigation of wrecks catches the public attention and imagination. Opportunities should be taken to promote the District's maritime heritage in conjunction with such discoveries as well as commemorating key events or anniversaries of some of the significant events in the District's maritime heritage. The local museums can play an important role in promoting this theme and its assets, such as the new Folkestone Museum and other smaller spaces including the Hythe Local History Room, Dungeness Lighthouse and the Folkestone's Fishing and Heritage Museum. The Museums should be encouraged to play a lead role in celebration and interpretation of the maritime history of the District. Interpretation panels at public locations along the coast and promenades can also explain the wrecks and the rich maritime heritage of the District.

## **7. Current Activities**

There are a number of diving clubs throughout Kent which frequently dive off the coast of the district. Local divers have contributed to the identification of wreck sites, such as the SM U-8 which was conclusively identified as the wreck of the U8 in 2003

by a local diver from the collapsible gas exhaust columns on deck for the paraffin engine which is present on U8 but not UB33 (another wreck nearby). Divers may also continue to enhance records of existing wrecks as well as discover new wreck sites. They can also play a role in the ongoing respectful treatment of wreck sites and protection against theft and heritage crime.

Heritage Watch is a scheme run by Historic England in partnership with Country Eye which engages the public to protect historic sites and to report any instances of heritage crime. Not only is this important in encouraging communal support and participation in the maintenance and protection of the historic environment, but it will also act to protect important maritime heritage sites.

## **8. Sources Used & Additional Information**

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