

8.0 THEME SEVEN – ARCHAEOLOGY & THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 The East Riding coastal zone has a considerably rich archaeological resource – evidence of its past inhabitants and their activities, which can be broadly divided into two main categories: (a) The marine and maritime heritage which lies actually underwater or within the inter-tidal zone, and (b) Archaeological sites and monuments which once stood some distance inland, but now, as a result of constant erosion, lie on the edge of the coast and are clearly at risk of being lost within the next few years or decades.
- 8.2 The archaeological remains range from the pre-historic to the modern representing the last 10,000 years of occupation and human activity along the coastal areas of the East Riding, and range in date from the Mesolithic (or Middle Stone Age) to the end of the 2nd World War. Records of some 17,000 archaeological sites in the East Riding are held by the Humber Sites and Monuments Record in a publicly accessible archive; of these, over 2,000 individual records relate to the Coastal Zone. In addition there is a wealth of marine archaeology.
- 8.3 The land-based sites within the Coastal Zone range from Mesolithic habitation sites (rich in worked flint and bone tools), to Bronze Age burial mounds, the remains of numerous Iron Age and Romano-British farmsteads and settlements, medieval villages and associated field systems, castles, churches, fish-ponds, harbours and landing stages; most of an extensive system of Roman signal stations on the coast has already been lost. The post-medieval sites include lighthouses, coastguard stations, remains associated with the fishing industry, and a wealth of military installations, including major 20th-century defensive works and radar stations. Industrial archaeology is represented near Speeton, by an iron foundry, and a mineral extraction industry from the cliffs to the north. Some of these coastal sites are protected as Scheduled Ancient Monuments (e.g. Skipsea Castle), or Listed Buildings (e.g. many of the fine medieval churches and older buildings within the Coastal Zone – such as the Old Lighthouse at



Flamborough Lighthouse

Flamborough), but many more are sites of regional or local archaeological significance which are slowly disappearing through coastal erosion. While the more obvious structures such as Skipsea Castle are the most noticeable, the relics of defensive structures from both World Wars are becoming valued in themselves as representing an important historical resource. Many pillboxes and other structures have been lost through coastal erosion, while others have been destroyed or broken up on grounds of public safety or to make way for agriculture. There is still a considerable number that remain, however, some in very good condition. Notable amongst these are the forts at Spurn and Kilnsea, the World War Two sites at Flamborough Headland, the radar station at Bempton and the anti-invasion beach defences at Auburn sands near Fraisthorpe. Spurn also had a military railway which operated sail powered vehicles, a fact of world-wide significance in railway history. An interesting facet of wartime structures on the coastline is that many have become important wildlife platforms, colonised by species of seaweed, marine lichen and molluscs not found elsewhere in Holderness.



Flamborough Lighthouse

- 8.4 The Fortress Study Group has been very active recording and describing 20th century defensive structures in the East Riding, especially in the Heritage Coast areas. It is hoped that this work will not only mean that all existing remains are recorded and surveyed, but that peoples' awareness of the importance of 20th century archaeology will be raised.
- 8.5 A specific desktop assessment was carried out by Dr. Stephen Harrison on behalf of the Flamborough Headland Heritage Coast Project in 2000. This showed the vast extent of the archaeological resource in this area – demonstrated by the existence of 480 archaeological and historical sites and monuments on the headland and ranging in date from the pre-historic period to the 20th century.
- 8.6 Terrestrial archaeological sites have been studied in considerable detail for many years and this has resulted in a vast amount of information. By contrast, underwater archaeology has attracted comparatively little attention, with the result that few sites have been studied in any detail, and the information on those is scattered and difficult to locate. Within the last few years the wealth of the resource underwater has been recognised, and the concept of taking a 'seamless' approach to archaeology in the coastal zone is

becoming the recognised ideal. In addition to the known archaeological sites, many more still remain to be discovered or added to the Humber Sites and Monuments Record: some areas have seen comparatively little fresh fieldwork in recent years, whilst the records of other findings may lie in unpublished sources, or in archives scattered among a variety of institutions. The recent desk-top assessment of the Flamborough Headland added more sites to the known resource, and helped to fill a number of gaps in coverage.

8.7 The Humber estuary and the Yorkshire coast are amongst the most hazardous in the country, leading to substantial numbers of wrecks. A substantial proportion of these wrecks represent the thriving medieval and post-medieval, international and coastal trade of the major Humber ports such as Hull, Hedon, Ravenser, Barton, and Grimsby. Further north, wrecks resulted from the extensive coastal trade in commodities reshipped from Hull to the smaller ports such as Bridlington and Scarborough, as well as from the region's nationally important fishing industry. The far-flung trading connections of these ports ranged from the eastern Baltic to Portugal, and as far north as Iceland and the Arctic. Casualties of both World Wars and numerous earlier conflicts (e.g. from both official engagements and from actions with privateers during the Anglo-Dutch naval wars and the American War of Independence), together with the continual loss of vessels through accident will be represented. Comparatively few sites have been studied in any detail, and the information on those is scattered and difficult to locate. None of the wrecks in the area is protected under the 1973 Protection of Wrecks Act.



8.8 Fishing (both inshore and deep-sea) has always been a major industry along this coast, ranging in scale from small boats operating out of minor creeks and inlets, through smaller and medium sized ports engaged in the coastal trade, to major ports engaged in deep-sea fishing and large-scale importation of foreign fish. As such, the coastal zone contains a myriad of remains of groynes, staithes, jetties, mooring posts, fish traps etc.

8.9 In the inter-tidal zone, the remains of structures, which were once sited on land, are sometimes exposed at low tide. Hence, the remains of Bronze Age track-ways and Iron Age roundhouses are sometimes visible, when the silts that have helped to preserve them are temporarily scoured from the deposits overlying these structures. Because the

techniques necessary to excavate and record these are often identical to those used in maritime archaeology, these should now be considered as marine features – as also should the remains of old boats which have abandoned long ago within what were then the mudflats or the foreshores.

8.10 Since the end of the last Ice Age the relative sea level has risen substantially, inundating many areas of former dry land. These areas are important as they contain information about the rise in sea level, useful not only for tracing the earlier history of climatic and sea-level changes, but also for predicting future changes.

8.11 On land, archaeological sites are protected by the *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979*, which empowers the government, through English Heritage, to schedule archaeological sites. In addition *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* identifies how archaeological sites are to be treated in the planning process: this can require protection of sites and archaeological evaluation or excavation, as part of planning consent. This legislation, as well as the planning process, only applies above low water. Below this their place is taken by several, often very specific, pieces of legislation.

- **Merchant Shipping Act 1995**

States that any material brought to the surface must be declared to the Receiver of Wreck, whose aim is to determine the ownership of the object. The finder will always be compensated, either financially or by being allowed to keep the object. The Receiver aims to place all ‘historical’ finds (those over 100 years old) in museums or similar institutions.

- **Protection of Military Remains Act 1986**


This allows for sites to be designated as War Graves, to prevent interference with human remains. This applies to any UK vessel or aircraft, regardless of location, and foreign vessels in UK waters. It covers all vessels or aircraft lost in military service after 4th August 1914, even if locations are unknown and all military vessels and aircraft lost in service less than 200 years old.

- **The Protection of Wrecks Act 1973**

Enables the Government to designate the wreck of a vessel which it considers should be protected from unauthorised interference because of its historical, archaeological or artistic importance; 47 sites in UK waters are currently designated. There are no such wrecks designated off the East Riding coast.



The Sound Mirror, Kilnsea



There are also two significant voluntary codes of practice.

- **Code of Practice for Seabed Developers**

The Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee, in conjunction with other interested parties, has drawn up this non-statutory code. It aims to ensure that an archaeological assessment and evaluation is carried out prior to development, so that archaeological sites can be protected or excavated.

- **ICOMOS Charter**

The International Council on Monuments and Sites, has drawn up a charter for the *Protection and management of the Underwater Cultural Heritage* (1996) This aims to ensure the protection of underwater cultural sites, or their proper excavation, recording, conservation of the finds and publication. The UK is a member of ICOMOS.

8.12 The potential damage to archaeological sites by coastal erosion is mostly graphically illustrated by sites such as Fort Godwin; however, many more are being lost annually, and often without record, unless there has been a chance observation of material falling out of the cliff. Iron Age roundhouses have been observed being washed out of the cliff at Barmston and Ulrome, whilst several Bronze Age barrows and a number of Roman occupation sites have been completely eroded by successive inundations at Easington in the last 100 years.

8.13 Development of the intertidal and marine areas has the potential to damage archaeological sites. Recently there have been moves to ensure the survival of archaeological sites, without seriously hampering necessary development. The Government's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 20: Coastal Planning* recognises the need to protect and enhance the archaeological coastal heritage. The voluntary *JNAPC Code of Practice for Seabed Developers* described above is recognised by the main groups of potential developers, including the Oil and Aggregates industry. Both *PPG 20* and the *JNAPC Code of Practice* recognise the need for an archaeological assessment of an area prior to development.

8.14 Records of archaeological sites and finds are kept in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) maintained by the Humber Archaeology Partnership. The former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (now part of the English Heritage Archaeology and Survey Branch) maintains the National Inventory of Maritime Archaeology for England: this was established in the early 1990s, and is subject to periodic enhancement.

- 8.15 Early coast defence and land reclamation works are poorly recorded, and can be readily damaged by agricultural work and new coastal defence works. New coast defence works can also significantly affect any archaeological site through direct damage or by affecting the local pattern of erosion and deposition on the seabed. An Environmental Impact Assessment is required for any defence works and this should include archaeology. Coastal archaeology has the potential to assist coast protection by providing evidence of the nature, scale and pace of coastal change over long timescales.
- 8.16 Anglers are often attracted to wrecks because of the rich wildlife, though they rarely affect the wreck in any way. Divers, too, make extensive use of wrecks, and there are a large number of known wrecks that are important dive sites. Divers have a major role to play in discovering new wrecks, and the exploration and study of known ones, though sadly they can sometimes cause damage by removing material from them.
- 8.17 Archaeological sites and historic buildings, such as those found at military defence sites, sometimes have the potential to become tourist attractions. It is unlikely that maritime sites will ever have this general appeal owing to the difficulty of access. However notable maritime finds can add to the tourist potential of museum collections and visitor centres.



Spurn

8.18 POLICY AIMS:

- AR1. To ensure a co-ordinated approach to archaeological recording and work on the coast**
- AR2. To work with sub-aqua clubs etc to ensure the protection of marine archaeology, while making use of their activities to record marine archaeology**
- AR3. To ensure the archaeological resource is recorded effectively, and the information disseminated**
- AR4. To continue to ensure that protection of the archaeological resource is fully taken into account in strategic planning and development control**
- AR5. To ensure that recreational or commercial fishing activity has minimal impact on the marine archaeological resource, and that there is a mechanism for the two way flow of information**
- AR6. To ensure, through interpretation and education, a wide appreciation of the marine and terrestrial archaeological resource**
- AR7. To investigate the potential for public access to archaeological sites where appropriate**