

A1 Report 2010

By Martin Davies

Overview

It is fair to say that the year has been good for diving in general. Though this has not helped any diving on the site of A1, conditions on the site over the year have been mixed and visibility ranging from 1 to 4metres maximum. The site remains the same with little evidence of any major decay. Marine life remains the same with many of the usual fish in regular places on the wreck.

General condition

The wreck remains in a stable condition and can still be considered a robust site which can be visited by divers with minimal impact on the site. There is no evidence of any structural failure or tampering with the wreck by unlicensed divers.

Diving

The site has been visited by many divers this year and its popularity seems to have grown more than ever. The diving dates that the wreck has been visited are listed below.

Dive on 19.5.2010
Dive on 24.6.2010
Dive on 5.7.2010
Dive on 10.7.2010
Dive on 20.7.2010
Dive on 23.7.2010
Dive on 31.7.2010
Dive on 26.8.2010

Marine life

The wreck is a great area for marine life; the wreck is to this day one of the few places where large areas of ampelisca beds can be seen on the surrounding seabed. Crabs and lobsters are in many cracks and crevices. Tom Pot Blennies are in abundance and this year has seen 4 lobsters take up residence in different parts of the wreck. I have maintained a look but not touch or take policy on the wreck which has kept the wreck in the most natural of states and maintained a unique habitat for marine life.

Threats

The site is still vulnerable to damage by commercial fishing boats and this year has been no exception on the dive on the 24th June a commercial fishing boat was spotted in the area of A1 laying pots very close to A1. The Skipper of the vessel was informed that he was illegally fishing within the 300metre protected limit of the Historic wreck site. The pots were soon recovered and the fisherman went on his way.

The photographs taken below are evidence of illegal fishing and the incident was reported to English Heritage on the 29th of June and to date English Heritage who has not reported back to me with regard to a prosecution or whatever action they have taken.

Photograph below shows fishing boat on site at A1 and in close proximity to dive RIB, vessel name is TIA MARIA



Photograph below show fishing vessel identified as L1570



Image below shows yellow pot marker to the right of the diving shot line (large white buoy)



Image below shows boat name on yellow buoy attached to single lobster pot on seabed



Image below is the single lobster pot on the seabed positioned close to A1.



Research

This year has seen more research into the sinking of A1 and documents from National Archives have been studied in order to gain more knowledge about the submarine, the initial sinking with the Berwick Castle and how it came to its final resting place.

Concerns

Having been involved with diving on Holland V this year, it is disturbing to learn about the loss of the torpedo hatch and that there may be trophy hunters at large who are prepared to dive to 35m to steal valuable items from Historic Protected wrecks. The wreck of A1 is particularly accessible and in shallow waters and could easily be the target of a similar act.

Conclusions

A1 remains a stable wreck preserved by a combination of Solent sediment and concretion, whilst there are areas where cracks are visible, mainly in the conning tower area these cracks do not appear to be getting worse and if they are it is by very small amounts. The main threat to the wreck is from commercial fishing vessels and their tackle snagging the wreck. Their powerful winches and engines could do some severe damage if they attempted recovery of tackle after snagging. It is this threat that I believe English Heritage should be concentrating on but appear to be doing very little.

Martin Davies