

### Shipwrecks as habitats

Marine life in the waters around the Isle of Wight is abundant. A shipwreck provides an excellent habitat for marine life. Almost immediately as a ship comes to rest on the seabed an ecosystem will start to establish itself. This ecosystem will eventually become varied and prolific, with an astounding number of different species often inhabiting a very small area. The wreck acts as a reef that will provide shelter for numerous species of fish and crustaceans, and the fact that they are usually raised from the sea bed makes ideal habitats for sea anemones, coral and fan worms, which feed by filtering the sea water as it flows by.

### Seabed deposits

To the west of the Isle of Wight the seabed is predominately sand and gravel. After the last Ice Age (around 10,000 years ago) large amounts of gravel were deposited as the ice retreated.

The sands and gravel are constantly being supplied to the area via a dynamic tide and wave system from the south-west known as longshore drift. The area is an important resource for the aggregate industry.

# OASIS

Offshore Aggregates & Species  
Inhabiting historic Shipwrecks

The marine areas around the Isle of Wight are among some of the most important sand and gravel extraction areas in UK waters. Annually approximately 5 million tonnes of aggregate are extracted from the seabed in this region. Alongside, on and within these natural resources exist the traces of human cultural heritage. Sand and gravel deposits can hold evidence of the early human occupation of Britain when sea levels were lower and areas of today's seabed were dry land. More visible evidence of humans comes in the form of shipwrecks; many of these now form reefs which are teeming with marine life.

The OASIS project aims to investigate 'Offshore Aggregates and Species Inhabiting historic Shipwrecks'. Our aim is to demonstrate the importance of the marine environment as a whole and in particular highlight the inter-dependence of seabed deposits, marine life and historic shipwrecks.