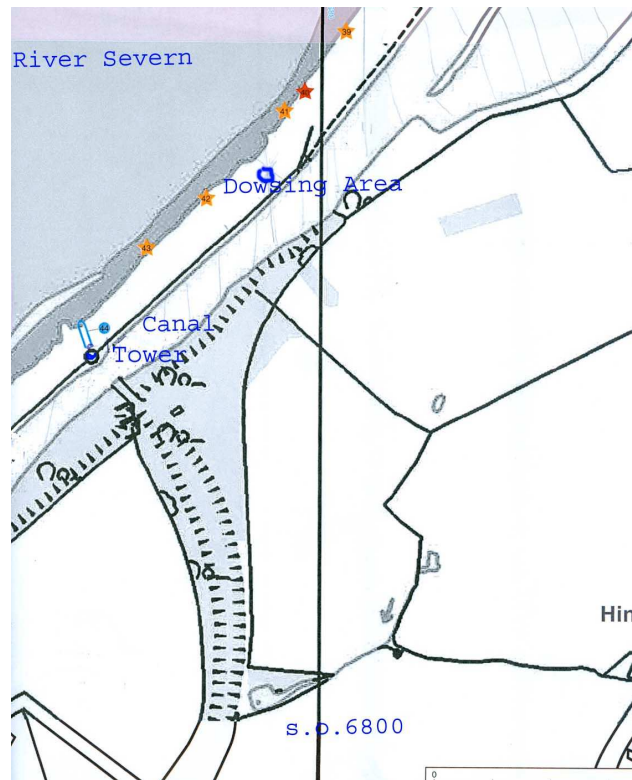


Dowsing at Purton, Gloucestershire for buried vessels



On the eastern bank of the River Sever at Purton, over 80 barges, boats and ships have been beached since 1909 to reinforce the eroding bank. The Sharpness to Gloucester canal runs adjacent to the river in this area. A voluntary organisation called the Friends of Purton (www.friendsofpurton.org.uk) is identifying, recording and documenting the remains of these vessels from observation, records and old photographs. A number of these hulks, as they are called, have been excavated and identified.

The Slimbridge Dowsing Group (S.D.G.) was asked by Mr. Paul Barnett, maritime historian and founder of the Friends of Purton organisation in 2008, if members could assist in locating hulks, buried by silt from the strong tides. Members visited the site on 19th September 2009 and were Peter Golding, Peter Gibson, Mike Townsend, Jon Martin, Denise van Raalte, Trish Mills and Jim Greatrix. Paul Barnett suggested that we dowsed for hidden hulks at the far end of the length of river near to the tower which is at the entrance to the ill-fated railway bridge. Dowsing indicated many hidden vessels and an area was selected in a clearing on the present bank, free from 12 ft. high reeds. The forward part of a vessel was

dowsed at a point with a g.p.s. reading of s.o.67937,03561, and this became the site reference. (Note: the accuracy of the g.p.s receiver readings was approx. 3metres).

This vessel dowsed as being a timber ship with three masts, with the stern towards the river and in the reeds in lower ground. Further dowsing in the reeds showed two other timber ships and two concrete barges in the group. One timber ship appears to be under one of the concrete barges. On the bank a small timber boat was dowsed and appears to be a rowing boat, of the cutter type.

Details of these vessels are shown in the following pages with photographs.

Peter Gibson. September 2009

Purton Hulks

Vessel A Wooden ship, 3 masted, 15.5m length, 3.5m wide at stern, built 1750, beached 1954, 2.7m below present ground level.

Bearing from stern 350 deg. m

Vessel B Concrete construction, 16m long, 4m wide at stern, built 1915, beached 1930. Bearing from stern approx. 45deg. m

Vessel C Timber ship, 3 masted, 17m long, 3.9m.wide at the stern, built 1625, beached 1780. Bearing from stern approx. 45 deg. m

Vessel D Timber ship, 3 masted, 17m long, 3.6m wide at the stern, built in 1903, beached in 1943. Bearing from stern 240 deg. m

Vessel E Concrete construction, 18.2m long, 3.4m wide at the stern, built in 1907, beached in 1950. Bearing stern 330 deg. m

Vessel F Timber construction, 8 seats, 11m long, 2.5m wide, built in 1749, beached in 1880. Bearing from stern 25 deg. m

Notes: Dowsing took place on the 19th September 2009 on the eastern bank of the River Severn on behalf of The Friends of Purton (www.friendsofpurton.org.uk) and at the request of Mr Paul Barnett. The drawing is not to scale, nor are the descriptions of the vessels necessarily accurate as the results shown are as indicated by dowsing.

Peter Gibson 24 Sept. 2009

