

Many years ago (at least 50) our family had a beach hut at Hamworthy Park, on the north shore of Poole Harbour. As teenagers, my brother Tony and I used to paddle and sail an ex-Royal Marine 2-man canoe off the beach. Well, in those days to explore the creeks and backwaters of Poole Harbour was something of a great adventure. One such trip took us up the Corfe River towards the village of Corfe Castle. I remember that as the river narrowed we unintentionally disturbed poachers, who had their nets across the river. There must have been plenty of fish around in those days.

In the first week of last October we were expecting very high spring tides. I happened to be talking to Jim and Howard, owners of *Cheemaun* (33) when we hit on the idea of repeating my trip up the Corfe River, but in our Shrimpers. So, on 8th October 2002, *Cheemaun* and *Gem* set off from North Haven Yacht Club, Sandbanks, each towing a small dinghy. Jim and Howard had embarked Mike Stacey (*Winterlin* 318) as crew and I brought along John Snelling and George Grantham.

According to the Met Office, we had the highest tides for 40 years, as we set off at 0900 with a stiff south-easterly breeze on our starboard stern. We took a course behind Brownsea Island and through the gap between Green Island and Furzey Island. Then with 6 knots showing on the log, we reached across the harbour and through the gap between Round Island and Fitzworth Point. We were then well placed to find the passage up the Wych Lake channel to the Corfe River. After about a mile, we passed North Point and took the starboard channel up the Corfe River itself.

We then came across a small farmhouse nestling on the left hand bank. On *Gem* we were by now concentrating hard on the echo sounder and checking the centre plate for depth, as we were in some really shallow water. Suddenly, to our amazement, the boat stopped dead in the water. It was shallow, yes, but not that shallow. It took several seconds to realise that we still had enough depth and were not on the bottom. When our masthead light then plopped in the water alongside I naturally looked upwards. To my horror we had fetched up on an overhead power cable.

Thank goodness the engine started first pull. We did an immediate about turn, whilst quick thinking George leapt into the dinghy to retrieve the masthead light, still floating up river on the tide. We

decided to drop anchor back down the creek a little, alongside *Cheemaun*. Jim and the lads were already preparing their dinghy with an outboard motor and kindly offered to tow us in our dinghy. So on we continued up the river for at least another mile towards Corfe, finding ourselves in fantastic scenery. We were by now reduced to rowing across the top of a vast expanse of reeds, which have taken over the upper reaches of the river. An amazing area with miles of reeds, open water and wild life in abundance.

We at last saw Corfe Castle through the trees, but the tide was now on the turn. It was time to head back to the Shrimpers, weigh anchor and head for Long Island for lunch. On the way we spotted a couple of seals swimming close to the Arne shore. After lunch we went ashore on Long Island to explore and stretch our legs. Then it was back to the Shrimpers and an exhilarating beat across the harbour and down Blood Alley Lake to North Haven.

This certainly was a day to remember. There are not many places left that are quite so tranquil as the backwaters of Poole Harbour. Finally, just a tip. Don't go exploring using old charts. Mine dated from 1964 and no power cable was shown. However, a later enquiry with Southern Electricity revealed that all overhead cables over water are insulated. Stroke of luck for us, eh !

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Gem (316)

***If you are attending National Shrimper
Week in Poole a good website to visit is***

www.dorsetlife.co.uk

***This contains an article on Poole Harbour
and the surrounding areas.***