

## **So where do I start!**

I've got the boat, the safety equipment, the instruments, the keys, the crew the charts the Fuel but do I have the knowledge?

Yes is the answer all is possible with a little homework from the right books and a passage plan, remember everyone has been there done that and still we sometimes get it wrong!

Routine maintenance is just like a car but without tyres. Fuel is ok, batteries turned on and correct, engine belts correct, raw water strainers have been cleaned, oil levels right and safety equipment is easily accessible. The Crews anticipation rises, start the engine or engines to warm them up and then perhaps ask for a Radio check either with the marina on channel 80 another boat or the Coastguard on channel 16. Remember to unplug the shore power lead check all is working correctly look around for other boats departing then slip those lines. Don't forget to tell the crew after all they need to be prepared. Once under way remove those fenders, lines and stow them well.(After all you don't want to run dirty on your first trip)

So is the bridge needed, if not why go and clutter up the fairway, its nice to look and dream but there will always be someone bigger and faster than you and they may need that space your in. This is it we are away free to do just **6 knots**, the boat weaves, yes we all do it it's a problem with planning hulled boats at low speed not the skipper! past the Stakes buoy, we can now push to that **10 knots**, remembering to pass vessels Port to Port (Left to Left). An easy way to remember the rules of the watery road is to treat it all like a roundabout, give way to vessels from the right, at night this would mean all you see is a red light so give way or stop would seem to be in order it means danger! The same is said of vessels to your left (Port) they should stop as they see your red light which means danger for them. But not everyone knows so be prepared and don't forget sails rule. However sails and engine mean we are the same but I think some yachtsmen forget that bit! Even the Balfluer fails to display the correct signalling by day but it is bigger than us! We wont make a fuss.

So with the Condor Express to get in the way, other boats and the many dinghy races now taking part in the harbour. Keep a lookout make your intentions clear to all and don't forget look behind you.

**The charts AC 5601,2175, 2611; Imray C4, Y23; Stanfords 7,12,(Tear resistant)** will have given you an over view of the whole area, showing relevant marks and channels, other information that is a must is the tide after all who wants a bill for new props even if they may be insured, that engine that is the heart of your pride and joy needs water not mud to cool it!

Within the Harbour there are many channels and superb anchorages, which we will cover later on. (*Motor Boat Monthly recently did an article on Poole Harbour*)

So we approach the chain ferry bound outside of the calm of the harbour, the weather said it was only moderate, so why is there a huge swell in the Swash Channel, those tides again! And that South wind! Moderate means a big swell! All of these factors affect the sea, it is far better to have wind with tide or a wind that is light and in a direction that suits our travel plans. (**Passage Plan to the fore here!**)

We have looked, our homework was right we have already decided to turn left (Port) down the narrow channel towards and past Sandbanks. Yes its flat, off we go but not before leaving the harbour speed limit area, (**A hefty fine could be yours if the throttle is hit to early**) that last look over your shoulder was important but lets look forward, gauges, outdrive trim, throttles and boat trim tabs are all in play but remember look out for those pots there everywhere! Up on the plain we are away so where do we go from here!

## **How do we plan our passage?**

Every trip has the same result therefore points to consider are always the same? Chart area, tide times, wind direction and speed, sea conditions. Once these have been looked up a suggestion would be to look at where and at what time is the place not to be. Then just avoid this time and area and work back to give the best time to be there. An example would be on a race (We have several around here) we do not want to be on a fast flowing tide over these areas with the wind against, this makes the waves and troughs higher. Work back from this to get the best time at the worst point and there is your passage plan! Compass directions and waypoints from the many books assist to put that line on that paper chart, keep the information and just keep adding to it! If you use a Pc to print off information remember most of the inks run when wet so put them in a pouch! (I Forgot)

## **So Yarmouth here we come!**

### **Yarmouth Charts AC 2037,2021,5600; Imray C15,C3; Stanfords 25,24,115.**

This is the easiest of routes and passages to take, as the harbour is only about 22 Nautical miles from harbour Entrance to entrance on what is known as the inner route. We could of course follow the coast round, but be aware Christchurch has a huge ledge of rocks which extend for a long way, many a boat has lost its props here but the charts showed all that. This ledge in the wrong conditions can be rough and many people fall fowl of those dreaded lobster pots, black buoys and that deep green sea mean a must for pot lookout duty, to close and it hurts, both pride and wallet.

In the clear now straight on course for North Head Buoy round we go Hurst Castle is upon us through the spit the chart seems clear now, we have made the Solent just watch for boats, pots and mind those shallows, but we have seen all that and our preparation was right. The pier is in view and yes there is a ferry here, line up and slow as you go, the crew are poised the fenders and lines stored in place. Only that strange Harbour to moor in! We use the Radio to speak to the harbour master, we have a space starboard side too, Yes you guest it I only moor Port side too at Cobbs, the challenge is here, look at the wind, the tide the space, tell the crew your intentions, they do need to know and slowly and smoothly we move in, everyone is watching its just not going to work, but remember a lot of power now will push the back harder away the turning circle gets bigger not smaller. Start again just do it gently that way there is no hard hitting and the sound of cracking fibreglass. Relax you have made it PHEW!.

Just remember to depart on time for the right tide and keep your eye on the conditions it can sometimes get worse. Return the same way at the best time and in favourable tidal conditions. Mission completed and in one piece lets do it again say the crew !!

### **Studland (Fibre glass cove)**

#### **Charts AC 2172, 2175. Stanford 12**

The most popular trip for a lazy sun drenched day is of course Studland. Each year the wall of fibreglass grows and grows, as indeed do the casualties to tidal error.

Our homework has been done this is a trip we see many make week after week, but do I know the way!

The perils are harsh if you are wrong and the training bank should be given the respect it deserves, clearly marked by stakes for its entire length and submerged at high water. Many a boat prop and hull have been damaged by those that risk all. Our trips out are well grooved now to the chain ferry and are around the 30 minute mark from bridge. Up the swash channel we go still at 10knots until we reach buoy 12, then up and away, the crew bathed in sunshine eager to get to the beaches. The skippers eyes watching for those washes and objects whilst on the way. Past the end of the training bank starboard we turn heading over towards the cliff and buoys.

The Yellow buoys are again present and represent the speed limit when inside, these extend all the way along the beach and on the sandbanks side too.

Were in luck we drop off the plane in plenty of time as not to rock to many boats and there is a buoy, now our skills are really put to the test and there are plenty watching! Stern to would make it easy for the crew but then that puts my props near that dreaded enemy rope! Is there an easier way, of course there is? Look at the direction of those other moored vessels and access the direction of tide, look at the yachts mast to see the wind direction indicators after all yachtsmen know that the wind is free. Tell the crew (Head cook and bottle washer) that you intend to approach slowly and bow on to the buoy.

The crew are on the bow and have a looped line from bow cleat to bow cleat, the line can then be dropped over the buoy as you approach at dead speed, the direction and distance relayed to you by the crew member on the bow, once hitched over you can just go a stern a little to take up the slack and then drift back with the captured buoy. If the buoy is of any size then you could leave it like that, believe it or not it will be quite safe so long as the line you use does not chafe. However once looped you can then take over, and tie on properly in the eye of the buoy and allow the crew to enjoy that sun. The other alternative is of course the anchor and your technique here should be similar and remember to leave enough chain out or she will just drag.

Or ring a friend as Chris Tarrent would say! And along side we go!

One note of caution is the depth and for those that cannot remember the stake that used to mark the Redend rocks! Yes it now has a buoy on the spot and I have seen a few tie up on the only available buoy in Studland 20metres off shore idyllic not a sole near it. The faded writing of Rock on this buoy is amusing to say the least but we looked at a chart just to check so we won't be having a problem so I am not the sport for others to watch!

The conditions were perfect the water clear and warm, we are lucky to be in such a place only the sun and other boats to watch, with a small sherbet for company while the crew adorn the bow sun cream and sunglasses the dress of the day.

The return is the opposite the only consideration should be a warm engine on departure so as not to stall and the crew and skipper nicely toasted and not overdone. The return departure to coincide with the bridge lift if it is required.

Another trip navigated successfully our return will be immanent just the weather to arrange now.

So the crew are more confident and so is the skipper, the demand for more quiet waters is now the call, our charts reveal Swanage bay where more facilities are available and we will feel like true holiday makers.

The well drilled skipper and crew are happy with any trip to exit the harbour now and our visits to Studland have taken us half way, so there is not to much to do to get that little bit further.

### **Swanage Bay AC 5601,2172,2610,2175 Imray C4, Stanfords 7,12,15.**

Buoy 12 approaches up on the plane we go with that last look over our shoulder. We head directly down the swash looking for Poole Bar buoy No1. We can see Old Harry to Starboard and we head over at cruising speed, our passage plan showed that on tidal changes there will be a race on the headland so we are not tight in due to depth and have been able to see a clear path, through those dreaded pots. Once through be aware of dive boats which will ward you off if they see you heading for them, give them a wide berth as indeed those orange marker buoys that say Diver you know those tall ones that blow over in the wind. (These are normally with the divers who have not got a support vessel) If you can read them you a far to close!

Around Handfast point admiring the cliffs and those small match stick people on the coastal walk, keep a lookout for those pots.

Most boats tend to go in the Western corner just beyond the pier, it can be both tight to moor here and the depth can be a problem so think about the tide and the position before dropping that hook. The chart warns of offshore winds and the swell which has caught me out. An offshore wind, the front canopy up a tender ride for lunch and then panic the tide was on the way out the anchor had dragged (More chain required) the boat off to France with the wind in the canopy. I only now wonder what had happened if I had been in a Restaurant and not sat on the beach having a picnic. The boat was off and if the man who ran the pleasure speedboats was not there I feel I would still be rowing now Cherbourg bound! Lesson learned do your homework! Leave out the chain there is never too much.

The return well, your now in the development stage of ships master so you know how!

Just keep doing the same things to perfect those skills.

So Swanage conquered, the demands of boating now require that tranquil quit and undeveloped areas be added to our cruising list and itinerary. Onward urge the crew further we should go? So where else!!

### **Chapmans Pool, Worbarrow Bay, Lulwoth Cove.**

#### **Chapmans Pool AC 2172**

This is first on our list, our timed passage through the races decided Peveril Point, Durlston Head and Anvil Point now added to the homework preparation trail. The tide and wind were right the Durlston Bay cliffs and those ant like people clambering over the rock face much to the amusement of the crew. Pot watch and diving markers are always a worry but the blue sea and sun spurn us on. The Ranges are closed (Remember to look, Preparation homework again! After all we don't want a range boat heading towards us at ramming speed to unsettle the crew). We sweep in close under the castle, the charts have shown deep water here, past Tilly Whim caves on to Anvil Point light house, there before us is the race. If timings are wrong you could be in a frightening sea, you need to be in real close, you will miss most even if it is running. Try to get it right here if your timings are out you will see why! Remember speed and crew safety are imperative your boat will always handle the conditions,

should the need arise your control of the boat will determine the ride remember it always does what you ask it to do! Around the corner the cliffs run away and Chapmans pool is visible in the corner. Quiet it is, and clear water too, our approach measured and the chart as usual always at hand, we are there anchored up just rising up and down that small swell from all the boats that are passing forgetting this first jewel in our coastline. No facilities here just you and a few others moored enjoying the unpopulated beach while time passes you by.

### **Worbarrow Bay AC 2172**

So we decided as it is a great day to push on confident in our timings, remembering that to cut in close to the cliff here could spell disaster, our chart shows little outcrops of rocks just below the surface, but we have done all our homework so onward we push enjoying the ride in a flat well timed sea tide running with us. This bay is well defined and does not pose to many dangers on its approach, the charts are clear, we know where to go but remember there is no landing at the “V” shaped gap called Arish Mell. The main danger lies on the western side at Mupe Rocks, the chart testimony to the wrecks. But we have seen that so we know where not to be! I always prefer the NE side as there are fewer dangers should you drag anchor, which keeps you more relaxed, after all even the skipper needs some down time for R&R.

### **Lulworth Cove AC 2172**

We don't want to be alone, cry the crew we like the home comforts and prefer the food on terra firma, after all a Sunday lunch on board most vessels is perhaps a little ambitious. Our homework done we know that a swell is possible in South and South West winds and anchors tend to drag. East of centre is the best approach and the yellow buoy visible but its not for us, the range boat uses this and will remove you. There are several little vessels that have permanent moorings here so be warned, I witnessed a very loud shouting match only two years ago, the fisherman won! The clear water allows you to see the bottom, so you can pick a sandy spot rather than rocks, but leave enough chain out. Take that tender in and pull it up the beach by the landing stage, onwards the smell of beer beckons and of course the food. Suitably refreshed we return to sit on board soaking up those rays whilst coffee is served. Mindful of the time and remembering that tide and time waits for no man, we weight the anchor and prepare for the return, wondering why we are so lucky to have such a picturesque coastline to admire.

### **Weymouth Quay and Marina AC5601, 2610, 2255, 2268, 2172; Imray C5, C4; Stanfords 7,12.**

Well we stayed on her at Cobbs, we have progressed further and further West the crew are at ease on trips and anchoring in bays, its time I challenged them to foreign parts and another berth! Oh Dear I here you despair; we are going out of the comfort zone!

Our departure time decided, tides and conditions are with us, I now know the coast I been down here so often I can do it blind! Yes it has happened only a couple of years ago a cruise that I was part of was on its way to Weymouth, and the unthinkable happened in August on a bank holiday, bathed in sunshine thick fog arrived. Those that had not planned were caught out and some voices over the radio became higher and higher pitched, some even went 360 degrees in the wrong direction as they had not completed the homework after all we see land all the way?. The other point that is

important is that you need to have faith in your instruments and your compass! And know where to go even if it is at a much reduced speed.

Your homework preparation proved so valuable here and brought it home to many that conditions can change both for the better and worse. Even if the sea is flat fog is fog and disorientating.

Weymouth itself is quite an easy approach as the quay wall is easy to spot, there are many pots again here and don't forget that the Condor ferry is very quick to close on you at speed. We find ourselves moving down the fairway, only fishing lines to watch for, the channel well marked, the crew fendering up. Keep watch for the small rowing boat ferries that cross the channel.

Knowing the bridge is further down and the holding pontoon to the left I can see spaces on the pontoon next to the right hand wall, the radio channel was part of my homework so I call up the harbour master who informs me to moor in the space. My approach considered and at slow speed we moor up and realign the fender height for any other vessels that might raft off us overnight. Pay our harbour mooring fee and enjoy the sights of Weymouth, on our return we find several other boats rafted alongside.

Our departure the following morning to get the tide requires assistance so think ahead inform the other boats, they will help I am sure. The other option available is to use Weymouth Marina under the bridge, here both finger berths and alongside berths may be available. In peak season it may only be possible to get a rafted berth, but we are here and that was the objective. The frustrating thing I now notice is that the next morning on my way to pay my fees many berths have remained empty all night and yet we were told that no finger berths available? But did we remember to inform Cobbs Quay that we were away for the night! No, many do not tell anyone anything after all they pay for that berth for the year its mine!! I would urge you to tell your home marina of your plans, you need space somewhere as do others visiting. The pressure on Marina berths mean many people ring to find out availability only to be told there is none, but I am sure there is, after all we see some spaces empty for weeks, even the dry stack berthing boats sometimes would like a night afloat in a berth at Cobbs Quay. We all need berths somewhere so why are we so possessive of our finger when not at home!

Our departure time approaching gives us time to refuel if necessary, we need Petrol (Oh Dear none available for you here, we forgot to check the Bible the Almanac) Weymouth has only diesel and petrol is only available from the local filling station, bring your own cans!! It's a route march!

Our journey planned the tide right, wind and sea conditions as predicted homeward bound we return refreshed elated and searching for those new challenges !

So if you still feel unsure and want to cruise in company to gain that confidence then try one of our cruises where we help you to reach that goal and broaden your boating horizons.

The articles above are for a guide only and should not be used for navigational purposes. Preparation (homework) is the key and above all give the sea the respect it deserves.