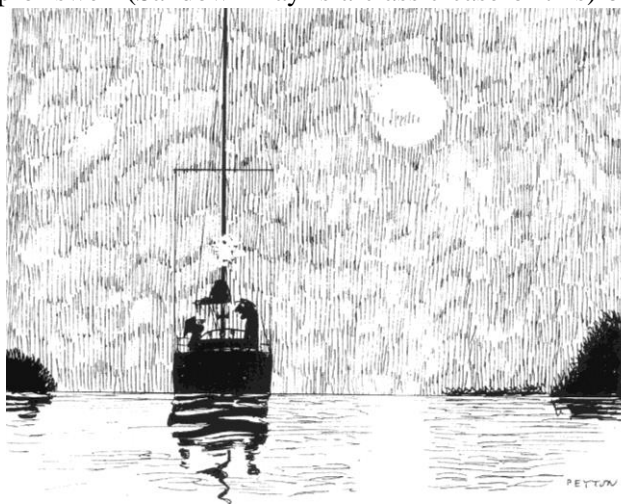


[Anchorage between Selsey and Portland](http://www.psyc.uk.com) Tony Firth – Port Solent YC www.psyc.uk.com (Updated September 2021)

This list is far from exhaustive and is only intended to indicate some places that I or friends have found useful or enjoyable. Where an anchorage is mentioned but I haven't tried it, I have said so.

In principle we can anchor anywhere where it isn't actually prohibited – we aren't restricted to areas with an anchor symbol on the chart. However, common sense will suggest that anchoring in prohibited areas or channels, among swinging moorings, near charted submarine cables or in locations with strong tidal streams is not a good idea. Under the ColRegs vessels of under 50m LOA are obliged to show a black ball on the forward part of the boat in daylight, and an all-round white light in a similar position at night. I'm assuming a suitable type and weight of anchor and enough cable (to anchor with confidence in depths up to 10m requires 40-50 m of cable of which at least 20 m should be chain) and that the cable is laid out properly rather than dropped in a heap. An anchorage that is OK in a slight roll for a heavy sailing cruiser is much less acceptable in boats with less ballast and flatter bottoms and especially for fast motor cruisers. Comfort at anchor can often be improved by:

- Reducing snubbing by bending a strong nylon warp to the chain with a rolling hitch, paying out a few more metres of chain and warp, making the warp off to a strong fore-deck cleat and easing the chain until the load is taken by the more elastic warp
- Bringing the bows to face a side-on chop or swell (Sandown Bay is a classic case of this) by means of a longer relieving line taken to a cockpit winch or aft cleat
- Encouraging the boat to lie bow to wind by setting a mizzen, or by setting a small sail (a small storm jib or a home-made item) on the backstay, sheeted in to the centre
- Giving up and going somewhere more sheltered



'We're not here because it's romantic but because the holding is good and it's sheltered from the sixes and sevens forecast.'

For most anchorages I have given a latitude-longitude position that lies at about the middle. However, these coordinates are only intended to assist finding the right general area on the chart; they should **not** be taken as "X marks the spot" for anchoring. Decisions on where to drop the hook will always require a combination of chart work, bearings or transits, tidal information and depth sounding, combined with an awareness of any likely changes in wind strength and direction.

[Chichester Harbour](#)

This branching harbour is sheltered and suitable for any type of boat to anchor, but available places are more restricted than you may expect, largely because most of the anchoring space has been filled with swinging moorings and much of the rest turns to mud at LW. If the Harbourmaster's boat turns up you are likely to have to pay Harbour Dues).

- Nearly everybody knows **East Head** anchorage (50, 27.33 N; 000, 54.60 W), where the channel passes close to the sandy beach of the Head. The beach is steep-to so you can get in quite close. Holding is moderate but shelter from most wind directions is excellent (though not

a good place in a fresh breeze between N and E). When it's crowded, you may find yourself exposed to strong tidal streams if you anchor on the edge of the channel.

- Nearby and quieter is **Pilsey Island** anchorage (50, 48.08 N; 000, 54.20 W) at the west side of the lower end of Thorney Channel. Don't try to land on Pilsey Island in spring or summer – the rare birds that nest there won't like it.
- Another useful spot, within dinghy reach of the pub at Itchenor, is to fetch up where the channel widens clear of the down-harbour end of the moorings on the Itchenor side (50, 48.50 N; 000, 52.60 W). Holding is good in mud.
- There are a quite a few spots along the margins of the deep water in Emsworth Channel that are perfectly satisfactory.
- Ingenious use of a Chichester Harbour chart will allow you to find a few small, holes in side-channels where you can lie afloat at LW. I won't spoil the fun by giving lat and long.

[Spithead](#)

This stretch to the E of Portsmouth entrance has little to offer on the mainland side apart from its abundant shoals which can save an unnecessary Pan-Pan call if the engine fails in a dead calm and the boat is drifting on the tide. The Island side, however, has several good possibilities between Culver Cliff and Ryde:

Whitecliff Bay (50, 40.20 N; 001, 05.50 W) is a very small anchorage tucked behind the N end of the prominent white nose of Culver Cliff.



Holding is only fair but it is well sheltered from anything between S and W. Swell tends to creep round into it, so it can have quite a roll unless the sea is flattish. I've been in to have a look but haven't tested it overnight yet – I probably won't do so as, if the anchor dragged, you could be in a lot of trouble very fast.

There are several minor anchorages in the approaches to **Bembridge Harbour**. Inspection of the chart will show possibilities outside the drying area NW of St Helen's Fort, but bear in mind that the banks shift about and the depth gauge is more important than the charted soundings. Shelter is good from W through S to SE and holding is pretty good too.

It is possible to anchor almost anywhere with adequate depth in **Priory Bay** (50, 42.7 N; 001, 05.1 W) and off **Seaview** (40, 43.5 N; 001, 06.5 W). Local moorings take some space off Seaview (there are also a few visitors' moorings from which the Seaview RIB will collect you for a shore run), but Priory Bay has few obstructions beyond the odd lobster pot. These are peaceful and attractive places, well sheltered from W to S and with a grandstand view of the big ships coming and going from Southampton and Portsmouth. The only disadvantage is that the ferries tend to create a bit of wash from time to time.

[The Eastern Solent](#)



The area of Ryde Sands is generally so shallow that any anchorage tenable at LW would be miles offshore at HW. However, there are plenty of opportunities for lunch stops around HW if you feel mildly adventurous. Much the same is true to the west of Wootton Creek as far as Barton Point. However, the best-known (for many, the only) anchorage on the island side between Wootton and Cowes is **Osborne Bay** (50, 45.4 N; 001, 15.1 W). This gives good shelter in anything with any south in it and is also reasonable in westerlies. The main problem is the number of other boats at lunchtimes and afternoons, though there is always room for a few more round the edge. However, it is excellent as an overnight stop, with good holding in mud, sand and shells in most places (the few rocky patches are obvious from the chart). Tidal streams are relatively weak and there is an excellent view of the big ships rounding Brambles Bank. The shoreline is attractive, but it all lies within the grounds of Osborne House and no landing is allowed. If approaching at night, cross the line of the port-hand buoys on the south side of the main channel and head for the central part of the back of the bay until you are in your chosen depth. Stay outside the buoyed-off area

Queen's Harbour Master only permits pleasure boats to anchor in and around Portsmouth Harbour in an emergency. However, I have seen yachts anchored close inshore to the east of Gilkicker point between the inner swashway and Fort Monckton. However, the proximity of the heavily used swashway and a high-security military establishment make this an unwise place to spend the night.



The best-known possibility on the mainland side is **Stokes Bay** (50, 46.8 N; 001, 09.7 W), lying to the W of Gilkicker Point. This is very useful in any wind with north in it. The classic sailing-school approach is to follow the transit of the sailing club flagpole with the square tower of Alverstoke church until you are in your required depth.



Done carefully, this leads to lots of boats anchoring on top of each other. However, it is all totally unnecessary; anchoring (in sand) is fine anywhere about a cable off the beach. The main thing is to avoid anchoring where you will interfere with dinghy racing. There aren't any swinging moorings here, so if you pick one up it is probably one of the marker buoys for the day's course.

West of Stokes Bay, the shallow area on the mainland side of the big ship channel is bisected by the North Channel, used by ships of lesser draft to avoid the precautionary area round Brambles Bank and Calshot Spit. The whole area between the North Channel and the low-lying mainland shore offers endless possibilities for open-water anchorage in quiet conditions or wind with some north in it. Everywhere is shallow but a moderate-draft yacht can only go aground by getting too close to the beach. A convenient place in this area to drop the hook on good, sandy holding is about 2.5 cables SW of the entrance to the tiny, drying harbour of [Hill Head](#).



In quiet conditions a shore run in the tender could provide beer and other basics. Tidal streams are slight in this whole area, and the North Channel and its surroundings provide an excellent route for minimising the effect of a foul tide.

[Southampton Water](#)

This wide, straight expanse has limited anchorages off the main areas of small boat moorings, together with some chances to "borrow" a swinging mooring. The main disadvantage is that, anywhere south of Town Quay, there is heavy wash from the Southampton-Cowes ferries from very early morning until late evening.

On the west side, the best options are around [Hythe](#).



There is a large collection of swinging moorings off the boat yard south of Hythe Pier, providing fine views of the tugs dancing elegantly round incoming freighters to pick up their towing warps.



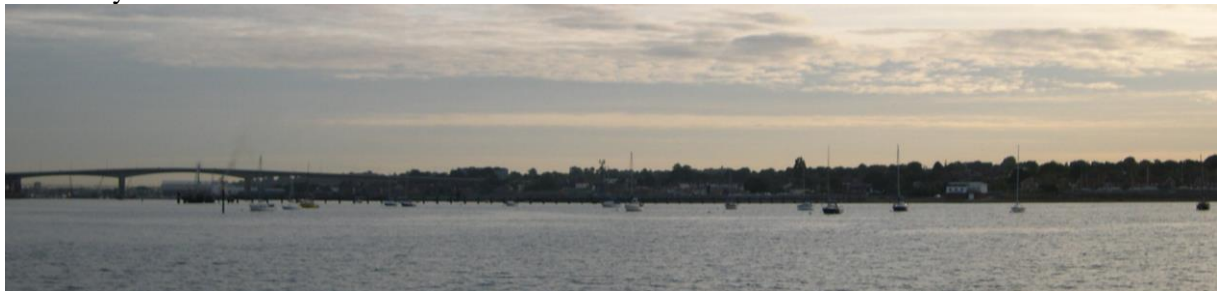
The outermost moorings have enough depth for any tide. Anchoring in mud is perfectly possible off these moorings within the yellow buoys marking the mooring area, though there are some ground chains about, so a tripping line is recommended. Just north of these moorings is a large bay with a few

(currently about 4) moorings. These normally have tenants but there would appear to be plenty of room to anchor. Wherever you anchor in this area, don't get in the way of the ferries between Town Quay and Hythe Pier. Well to the north of Hythe Pier there are some moorings near **Gimp Elbow G buoy** that carry 4.0m at LAT and are designated as "for larger yachts". Before picking up one of these it is necessary to contact Southampton HM. Right up the Test, towards Eling, yachts have been known to anchor in the NW part of the **Old Swinging Ground** opposite the container port. Dramatic though industrial surroundings, but probably best suited to a lunch hook with a tripping line rather than a prolonged stay.

On the east side of Southampton Water, there is room to anchor outside the local moorings associated with the **Weston** and **Netley** clubs but inside any yellow buoys marking the mooring area.



Further north, the south side of the mouth of the **Itchen** has a collection of moorings just outside the channel (facing the dock for car transporters), the outermost of which carry a reasonable depth. There isn't really room to anchor here.



In the Hamble every possible anchorage was gobbled up by marinas and swinging moorings long ago. The quiet beauty of Ashlett Creek, improbably placed between Calshot power station and the Fawley oil refinery, is denied to us for anchoring purposes because most of it dries below half tide, and even at HW you are either in the channel or aground. However, it is well worth a visit for boats with shallow draught for a lunchtime pint during the stand on HW springs – moor to the piles on the (often slightly submerged) concrete quay and visit the Jolly Sailor, but clear out before the ebb starts unless you plan to dry out against the quay overnight.

Cowes and the Medina River are hopeless for anchoring, the problem in the Medina being the usual one of moorings everywhere, plus the risk of old junk on the bottom that could spoil your day.

[The Western Solent](#)

This stretch between Cowes and Hurst Narrows is much better news. On the island side, a succession of bays leads westward towards Yarmouth:

The first, Gurnard Bay, is a picturesque spot but the presence of Gurnard Ledge makes it distinctly chancy to look for an anchorage there without some local knowledge. Having bounced a long-keeler off the top of the ledge, I can confirm that it is steep-to and very hard. Anyway, the chart shows this section of the West Solent as a no-anchoring zone.

The next one, **Thorness Bay**, is unaccountably neglected by yotties, though its outer part is much used by LPG tankers waiting for the tide. There are a few well-charted dangers, but there is plenty of water of sensible depth and comfortably out of the tide. Thorness provides good shelter from the south and, unusually for Solent anchorages, from the east. However, check the chart to make sure that you are not in the no-anchoring area in the eastern part of the bay. Holding is generally OK apart from a few rocky patches. There is nothing much there, but the whole place is peaceful and picturesque in a slightly rugged way.

Probably the top Solent anchorage is **Newtown River**. It has quiet beauty, is surrounded by nature reserves, offers near-perfect shelter from all directions, has moderately good holding and boasts an adjacent sandy beach for BBQs (just outside the entrance on the W side). To top it all, a pleasant run in the tender to Shalfleet and a ten-minute walk take you to the New Inn, famous for its good ale and generally respectable seafood. Landing or departure at Shalfleet is only possible in the top half of the tide, but six hours' drinking should be enough for anybody. Entry in daylight is quite simple at any state of tide; coloured reflectors on most of the navigation marks make a night entry practicable though slightly stressful. Approach from the North keeping on the correct side of a small, (sometimes) lit W Cardinal Buoy (don't cut the corner if coming from the east) and line up on the leading beacons on 130T; the front one has a ball and the back one a Y, so they align gunsight-fashion. Before you ram the outer mark, turn to starboard towards the entrance which is much deeper than the approaches. Once in, the fairly well marked channel bends to port, then you can choose between going east into Clamerkin Lake (5 W visitors' moorings and lots of anchoring space) or north up the Shalfleet Channel (20 W visitors' moorings of which those below the jetty on the west side have the best depth of water) but nowhere to anchor. R moorings are private so check with the Harbourmaster before picking one up. It is debatable whether it is better to arrive at HW (allowing more manoeuvring room and a chance to sound out where there is enough depth) or at LW when many of the worst bits are dry. I prefer the former, but the most important thing is to get there before the place is full up. If conditions are light, you can double up with a friend on a single mooring.



The best times are mid-week and out of high season. Don't go beyond the notices marking the limit of navigation; apart from the risk of grounding, your anchor or your keel will be smashing up someone's carefully preserved oysters and you will be deeply unpopular. There is a charge for the swinging moorings; anchoring is free but a donation of a few quid to the National Trust always goes down well.



If the creeks themselves are excessively crowded, there is an excellent anchorage outside in the lee of the NE side of **Hamstead Point**. Sound into a suitable depth west of the WC buoy but without impeding the approach of vessels going into Newtown. The holding is excellent – it normally takes 20 minutes’ hard work to scrub the clay off the anchor. Sound the depth carefully and allow for sufficient fall of tide, particularly at Springs.



There are potential anchorages for appropriate conditions between Hamstead Ledge and Yarmouth, though there are also a few rock ledges and other inshore dangers so caution and a good chart are both needed. **Yarmouth** itself has limited opportunities for anchoring inside or outside the excellent but expensive swinging

moorings to the north of the harbour wall. It isn’t exactly splendid isolation, but it is peaceful enough after the pubs have closed and the last water-taxi has gone home.

The mainland shore of the western Solent has only three satisfactory anchorage/mooring areas. The most easterly is **Stanswood Bay** between Calshot Spit and Stansore Point. The western end is steeper-to but is more exposed to westerlies. The second option is the first reach of the Beaulieu River to the north of **Gull Island**. Night entry is possible thanks to the sectored light in front of the pine trees, though care is needed because of numerous unlit port and starboard beacons in the channel. Anchoring is permitted (2021) at £10 per night to the area on the south side, between beacons 20 and 22. The situation is wonderful, with perfect shelter between the salt marshes to the north and the shingle bank



of Gull Island (don't land – another important bird breeding site as well as a good place to watch for short-eared owls), and great views of the Solent appear across the island with the rise of tide. Just follow the channel until the red beacons define a shallow bay outside the main channel. On the bend itself, off the sailing club building there are about 13 buoys with white pick-ups marked with a black V. The

mooring charge is also £10, but this, like the £10 anchorage charge, gives no right of access to the toilet and shower facilities upstream at Bucklers Hard. Moorings with orange pick-ups showing a black V are more than twice as expensive but allow use of the Bucklers Hard facilities.

The Lymington area offers open anchorage on the mudflats on either side of the main channel but has little attraction. The main interest remaining is **Keyhaven**, tucked in behind the shingle bank of Hurst spit. The entrance is straightforward except at the bottom part of the tide, guidance being provided by a pair of cross-topped transit posts (on 283T) on the marsh and a port hand buoy covering a sand-spit extending from North Point. Once in the first part of the haven, use your depth sounder and tidal calculations to find a comfortable depth for anchorage; up to 2 m are available at LAT in a few places, but take care not to anchor obstructing the deep-water channel. It's probably wiser to pick up a mooring on the first reach. Above tis first reach, local moorings occupy most of the territory and it mainly dries at LAT anyway. Keyhaven is different – it doesn't offer great protection from the wind but is perfectly sheltered from the sea state. Holding is reasonable, and a pleasant dinghy trip up the channel brings you to a small quay giving access to fascinating walks across the salt marsh and, even more importantly, rapid access to The Gun, one of the Solent's nicer pubs. If the first reach is full, or if you just want a peaceful anchorage with good views, an excellent alternative is to anchor in **Hurst Roads**. This is the stretch outside the beach running from the haven entrance towards Hurst Castle. It feels open but actually offers good shelter from the swell in light or westerly conditions. The southern end of it can develop mild overfalls on the flood tide at springs.

[The South Side of the Island](#)

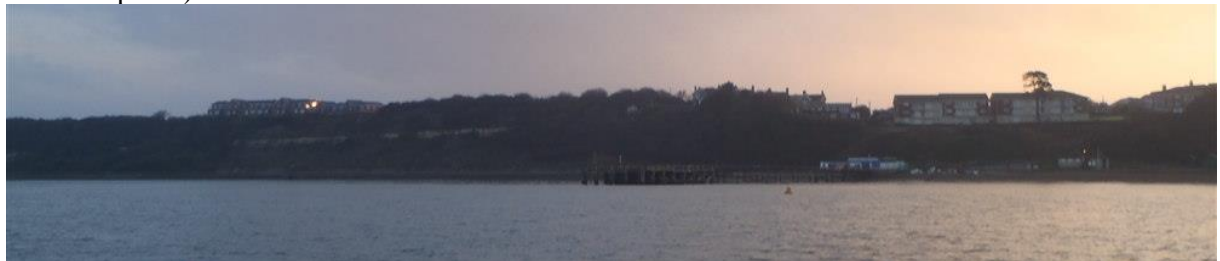
The small minority of Solent sailors who use the back of the Wight tend to do it in the day rather than anchoring. None of the anchorages from Bembridge Ledge to the Needles are sheltered from the south, but **Sandown Bay** (50, 38.5N; 001, 09.2W) offers reasonable protection from the SW and is well sheltered in anything between W and N. The only natural hazards are the clearly charted inshore rocks at the Culver Cliff and Shanklin ends of the bay. A charted pipeline runs SE for a mile from the shore at Yaverland, but the area off Sandown itself is clear apart from the inevitable few pots in the approaches. I've found Sandown a useful stopover in suitable conditions when returning cross-Channel and feeling too tired to muster the concentration needed to negotiate Spithead and Portsmouth Harbour in darkness. A confidence-inspiring approach at night is to pick up the 2 vertical fixed reds on Sandown pier head and approach keeping these on about 330T. This gives a good sense of where you are because the track crosses a bank carrying 7-8m at LAT, then deepens inshore of this to 11m or so, thereafter gradually shoaling towards the beach. A good place to anchor is a few cables SSW of the pier lights in about 4m at LAT. Holding in sand seems good and the tidal streams are weak. Speed

must be kept below 10 kt in the recreational area within 400 m of the beach between 0900 and 1800 – this area is marked in summer by yellow buoys.

The rest of this attractive and peaceful coast offers lots of possibilities for lunch and even overnight stops in quiet or northerly conditions if you keep away from the charted bricks and tuck into bays to get out of the tide. **Freshwater Bay** is an obvious place to anchor, rest and regroup if you are too early for the tide at Hurst Narrows. There was much talk in 2003-4 of developments for yachtsmen in Ventnor. When I last checked there were four moorings, of which the outer pair carried enough depth for my boat (draft 1.8 m) but the inner pair would be too shallow except at dead neaps. Reeds Almanac (2020) reports 8 seasonal mooring buoys, though the whole area is very exposed and would require a quiet night. Maybe it's just as well – the lack of shelter and facilities is what keeps the back of the Island quiet and unspoiled.

West of the Solent

Between Hurst Narrows and the Needles are three bays. Colwell Bay is well supplied with rocks and is best left to those with local knowledge. **Totland Bay** (50, 41.2N; 001, 33.0W) has good holding and is very atmospheric after dark – anchor clear of the local moorings off the small jetty (dark structure near centre of photo).



Alum Bay (50, 39.9N; 001, 34.6W) is safe and very impressive; make sure you are well south of the axis of the jetty (upper photo) to avoid lines and buoys used by the tourist boats but are clear of the well-charted rock in the inner part of the bay (near the pinkish buoy in the second photo).





Both bays are well sheltered from the S and E.

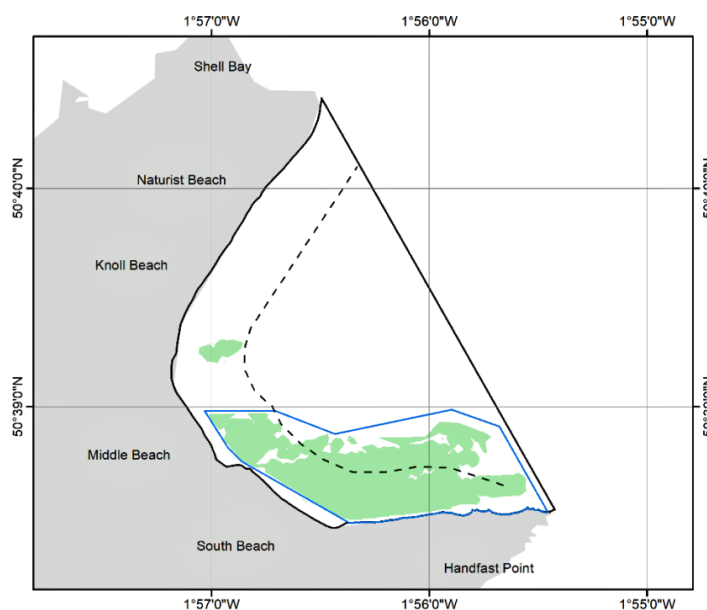
Scratchell's Bay, under the imposing chalk cliff SE of the Needles, can be used as a lunch stop under calm conditions. However, the exposed situation and a charted rock just off the centre of the bay have discouraged me from using it when there are many more sensible places close by.

Christchurch Harbour is attractive, but only for small motor-cruisers or sailboats with bilge or lifting keels – it is impossibly shallow for all but the most modest keelboats (maximum draught a tad more than 1m), and all reasonable anchorages are full of local moorings.

Poole Harbour



The harbour and its surroundings provide a range of possibilities. Outside the harbour, **Studland Bay** (50, 38.9N; 001, 56.4W) attracts large numbers of local lunch-hook visitors, but most of these retreat in the afternoon. The anchorage is well sheltered unless there is any east in the wind, and there are refreshment possibilities ashore.



Note that Studland Bay is now a Marine Conservation Zone. A voluntary anchorage ban to protect the fragile habitat of sea-grass beds in Studland Bay (home and breeding ground of the rare Spiny Sea-Horse) is being introduced in two stages. From 17th December 2021 to 31st May 2022, this includes the areas off Middle Beach and South Beach, within the blue-bounded area inshore of the broken black line on the chartlet. From 1st June 2022, the anchorage ban will include the entire area within the blue-bounded line.

Poole Channel can be an ordeal at summer weekends but, once through the entrance, following the channels takes you to beautiful and

peaceful anchorages such as **Goathorn Point** (50, 40.6N; 001, 58.5W), **South Deep** (various places, but most obviously around 50, 40.7N; 001, 59.0W), **Pottery Pier** (50,41.55N; 001, 59.3W) and **Shipstal Point** (50, 41.6N; 002, 01.35W). Other possibilities will suggest themselves on careful inspection of the chart. The depth or lack of it often seems intimidating, but the small tidal range inside the harbour is very comforting. Shipstal needs a little care as the tide may limit arrival and departure time, though a moderate keelboat can remain afloat in the deep bit at all states of the tide. It is easy to take the dinghy up to Poole town, but who would want to?

Studland to Portland

Swanage Bay (50, 36.7N; 001, 57.0W) provides a useful anchoring prospect in suitable winds. Keep well clear of the pier; I usually anchor behind the main area of moorings. A dinghy ride gives you access to the town for shopping. It is followed by the anchorages under the Purbeck hills leading to Weymouth.

Chapman's Pool (50, 35.3N; 002, 04.0W), tucked behind St Alban's Head offers a great atmosphere



of sheltered isolation. Approaching it from the E, keep 1 to 2 cables off the west side of St Alban's Head and watch the depth sounder. Look out for a rocky patch to starboard as you enter the pool itself. The surroundings are impressive, the water is clear over a sandy bottom and a surprising number of boats can fit in. This is an excellent place for a swim and some lunch or for a very peaceful overnight anchorage if the breeze is light or offshore

Worbarrow Bay (50, 37.1N; 002, 11.6W) is spacious and well sheltered from W through N to E, but avoid being directly in line with the conspicuous valley mouth (Arish Mell) in quiet summer weather unless you want to experience the katabatic winds that often roll down it during the night. The eastern end of the bay is better sheltered under such conditions.



At the west end of Worbarrow is **Mupe Bay** where a very impressive reef shelters a sandy beach.



Sound in from the Worbarrow end; this place gets busy at summer weekends.

Lulworth Cove (50, 37.1N; 002, 14.7W) looks sheltered, not to mention enclosed, but doesn't offer much room, has fairly poor holding and has a reputation for being evil and inescapable if a swell gets up during the night.



Man o'War Cove guarded by the massive arch of Durdle Door (next page), **Ringstead Bay** and **Church Ope Cove** offer interesting lunch-hook possibilities in quiet weather but none look advisable overnight.



An interesting book by Peter Bruce called *Inshore along the Dorset Coast* gives detail on these and other even more improbable-looking spots for the adventurous.

Weymouth and Portland

Weymouth Bay, northwards from Weymouth North Pier has better shelter from south-westerly wind than the more easterly bays. Keep well clear of the harbour entrance and expect wash from traffic entering or leaving the harbour.

Portland Harbour is a somewhat bleak place even in quiet weather. Although it is almost completely enclosed, its size and the mainly low-lying shore mean that it can generate a steep chop in strong wind.



In westerly wind a suitable spot on the W side off the Sailing Club moorings or in Church Ope Cove is relatively attractive and offers good shelter. This area is a really useful passage anchorage when heading west, allowing a well-timed exit to round Portland Bill.

Wherever you go, have a great time, and remember the golden rules.

- Once your boat has settled to anchor, improvise a couple of transits that will tell you if you have shifted position
- If you are unsure about the holding, don't leave the boat unattended and keep an anchor watch
- If you look like fouling someone who anchored before you, it is up to you to move
- If you are worried about the possibility of fouling your anchor, play safe and use a tripping line
- I have only fouled my anchor once in over 30 years of anchoring but, if your anchor does get stuck, you have two options. You may decide to cut it loose buoyed to a fender. Make sure that the bitter end of the cable is secured with light cord that can easily be cut by someone on the foredeck. If you shackle the chain to a deadeye, a little corrosion will make it immovable and then you will be stuck there forever! Buoyed anchors tend to be "rescued" by locals and recycled fairly quickly, so consider the cost of a new anchor and cable (probably over £1000 for 60 m of cable and a decent 20 kg anchor) compared with a diver's fee.