



Pooled resources

At the end of Poole's revamped and distinctly upmarket quay, the town's charter skippers provide a daily fanfare for the common man, ensuring that he enjoys rich pickings of his own, all the way from Poole's vast 'back yard' to the Channel Islands

Photographs by Lloyd Rogers Words by Jeff Pratt

IT IS THE mock-Tudor of the new millennium. Find an agreeable junction of land and water, build a marina, nod through any planning application containing the words 'bistro' or 'wine bar' and wait for the BMW brigade to roll into town.

Visually at least, it's a strategy that rarely fails.

Maybe Dorset Marxists could wax long and lyrical about how gentrifying Poole's waterfront has alienated the masses but it would be a stone-hearted individual who wandered along the ritzy quayside development without feeling at least a tremor of aesthetic approval.

Rubbing shoulders with opulence now and again does us all some good, like a sun-lamp for the soul. So what if those fat-hulled cruisers parked outside the Sunseeker boatyard are impossibly out of your reach? Costs nothing to dream does it?

Inevitably transforming the character of an area produces certain tensions among those anxious not to see the baby thrown out with the bath water.

"Times move on and we have to develop," says local skipper Steve Porter, "but we shouldn't have to struggle for things we've enjoyed for years, like rights

of way to get to our workplace.

"Something as simple as crab fishing on the quay is one of the big draws for this town. Nothing brings a smile to the face of a kid from the midlands like catching a crab. They have fun all day and for skippers it's like watching our future customers. I think the local tourism department would sweep all that aside if it had the chance, though."

Whatever the politics, Poole's new look makes the start and finish of a day's boat fishing undeniably more glamorous than the norm.

No bleak pontoons and grimy harbour walls here. No rancid tang of lobster pots sat too long in the sun. Against a backdrop of plush apartments and offices heavy on the glass, your boat chugs down a millionaires' row of yachts and cruisers the size of

a motel before edging out into a natural harbour that may or may not be the second largest in the world.

Sydney indisputably takes the prize in this department but Poole features in an ongoing debate with Falmouth, Cork, Halifax in Canada and Rio de Janeiro for the runners-up slot.

It's a world away from the tidal constraints of Christchurch harbour that limited Andy Adams' sailing times when he first began as a charter skipper. ■



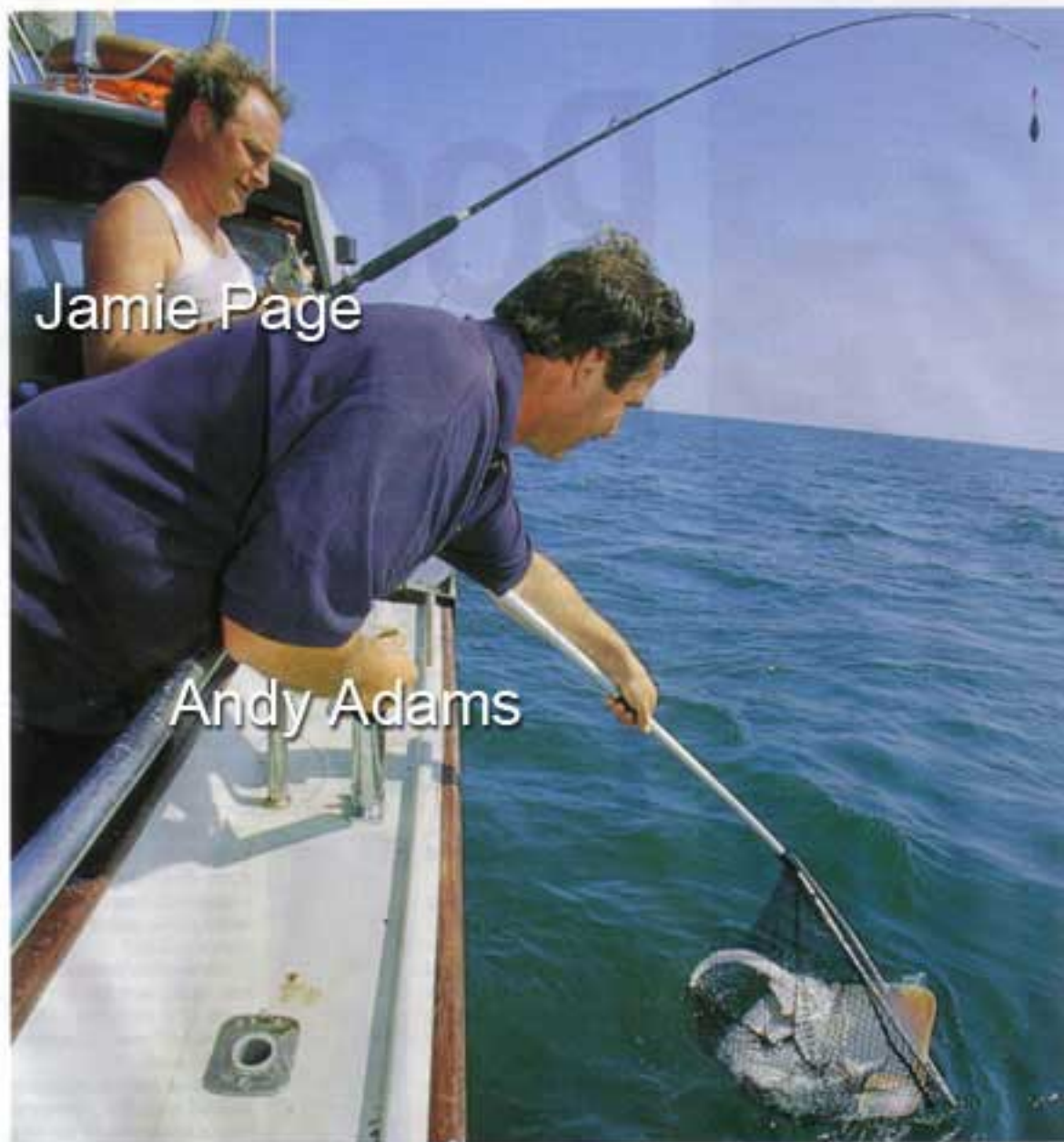
Jumping ship: as one trip ends, another begins



The transformation of Poole's waterfront is an ongoing process



You don't have to go far to be among the fish



Jamie Page

Andy Adams

Random Harvest



Random Harvest, with skipper Andy Adams at stern in the dark shirt

As an alternative...

Some not-to-be-missed elements of the Dorset experience, as recommended by Poole skippers:

1. Poole's award-winning beaches. (<http://www.crowwood.freserve.co.uk/poole/beach/beach.htm>).
2. The Fisherman's Café, High St, Poole.
3. Heading south past Swanage and towards Kimmeridge on a neap tide, enjoying the countryside as well as the fishing.
4. Jurassic Coast (<http://www.jurassiccoast.com/>).
5. Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour for its red squirrels and peacocks.
6. Nearby Bournemouth for nightlife.
7. Poole harbour generally, for its sightseeing boat trips and birdwatching (<http://www.crowwood.freserve.co.uk/poole/infboat.htm>).
8. Shore fishing or surfing at Kimmeridge. The "undiscovered" alternative to Lulworth Cove and with enough rock pools to keep the kids quiet.

That hastened his move to Poole two years ago and he's never looked back. Skipper of Random Harvest, the former marine engineer who retired because of "too much aggravation", now finds himself working harder than ever, in a port he says caters for just about every boat angler there is.

"There are something like 20 charter boats here now and between us, we'll cater for whatever you want, inshore trips, all-dayers or evenings," he explains.

Being situated in a popular holidaymaking area ensures a regular mix of hardened regulars and tourists' for Poole's skippers, so there is no lack of expertise when it comes to dealing with less experienced anglers.

No novice himself, Fraser Stambidge-Smith (pictured right) loves fishing here so much, he regularly skips the delights of his home patch in Salcombe, Devon and makes the 240 mile round trip into Dorset.

Now a plumber, his former trade as a gilt painter of portrait frames saw him in such demand in stately homes and museums that his employers were set to let him travel the world, only for their plans to be kiboshed by his fear of flying.

Who needs Rio or Sydney, though, when you have Poole, even if he admits the marina lifestyle of its regenerated waterfront has made it a more expensive proposition than it used to be.

In terms of fishing variety you certainly get your money's worth and you needn't go far to find it.

As well as harbour fishing (see separate panel), wrecks can be found inshore as well as further out, with the former being good for tope and conger. Just south of the harbour, there

Baycatch

Andy Adams's crewman, Jamie Page is as much at home fishing within Poole Harbour as he is in the open sea.

"I've had freshwater eel there and I'm trying for a conger," he explains. "There are also wrasse, mackerel, plaice and smoothhound."

Bass and pollack are found at the harbour entrance and between Brownsea and the quay can be drift fished for flounder and plaice.

The water west of a line through Jerry's Point, Brownsea and Salterns pier is a bass nursery. Bass must not be targeted (the use of live sandeels is prohibited) and any bass caught must be returned. You can fish from the quay and catch mackerel, scad and some small bass.

"In terms of fishing variety you certainly get your money's worth and you needn't go far to find it"

