

The joys of pottering in Poole

Olly Perkins and family head west out of the Solent for the first time and have a fun week exploring the creeks of Poole Harbour.

We had never before left the relative calm of the Solent and gone through the treacherous Hurst Narrows. This year, however, the weather was perfect to visit Poole. My parents, my younger brother and I had a week to sail in our Beneteau Oceanis 361, *Rhùm*. We slipped the mooring from Bosham in Chichester Harbour and embarked on our longest sail yet. After motoring for a couple of minutes an alarm sounded – our engine had overheated. We hastily tied up to a nearby mooring and, after an hour trying to fix the problem, we realised that we couldn't make it to Poole before the tide turned against us. Having resolved the issue, we instead caught the tide as far as Newtown Creek.

The next day we weighed anchor at 0600, a horribly early start, which was rewarded, I understand from my parents, by a beautiful sunrise. I was, however, still tucked up down below!

I got up just as we reached



A calm passage was a good opportunity to practice with the sextant

the Hurst Narrows to witness the anticipated drama. I stepped up on deck and was pleasantly surprised by the tranquil waters and complete

'Using the old leadline we proceeded at snail's pace'

lack of wind. We had four knots of tide going with us so we were quickly through. The Narrows didn't quite live up to its menacing reputation, but I know it can be a good deal worse. As the air warmed the wind slowly filled in on our port beam and we hoisted up our patriotic red, white and blue cruising chute. The conditions were perfect for a relaxing sail with clear skies and light airs. As the wind had

although it wasn't as eventful as I had hoped and we were through the waves in a moment. The rest of the passage was largely uneventful but it was great to have the cruising chute up and it was the perfect opportunity to practice position fixing.

We had a few hours in Studland Bay as we waited for the tide at Poole entrance. We used the time to visit Old Harry Rocks with our tender and paddleboard. It was really interesting seeing the size of Old Harry close up. As

been from the north for a few days there were no waves.

About a mile from Hurst Castle we saw some disturbance in the water ahead of us. We were concerned that it might be rougher than we expected once we were out of the lee of the Isle of Wight. This concern was quickly put aside as we drew closer to the disturbance and noticed that it was a thin strip of substantial waves not moving an inch, yet foaming and roaring. We put the motor on to help us drive through the standing waves and secured loose items in the cockpit. We approached the menacing turbulence with caution. The boat tossed and turned through the waves

I paddleboarded round to the other side of Old Harry I noticed that a small swell had built up, and whilst posing for a photo, I fell fully clothed into the surprisingly warm water.

Going with the tide

Before long the tide had turned and we sailed to Blood Alley, where we were to spend the best part of the week. Blood Alley is situated south of Brownsea Island and there is a pool large enough to fit a few deep-keeled boats. We had done our homework on navigating the shallow channel leading up to it and knew we could just make it through. We followed the channel and the depth readings got lower and lower until our echosounder



ABOVE: Olly with dad, Chris and brother, Ben in Poole

was reporting zero below the keel. This called for the old leadline and we proceeded at snail's pace. The channel was clearly not perfect for our deep-keeled boat as we could see the bottom. All the other boats here were catamarans or bilge keelers. Once safely anchored in the pool, however, we could relax and admire the stunning surroundings.

The next day we went for a pre-breakfast walk on Brownsea Island. We rigged a dinghy outhaul on the beach and walked up into the forest on the island. The island was covered in a blanket of mist and there was no one about as the ferries to the island hadn't arrived yet. On our walk, we saw peacocks, red squirrels and we even got within metres of a sika deer.

An interruption

After spending a few days in Blood Alley we had to go and top up our water tanks and get more food. This was the worst part of the trip; it was a lovely sunny morning but rather than enjoying the tranquillity of Brownsea we had to visit Poole town. We motored up and moored in the town marina. After restocking and visiting chandleries we hurried back out.

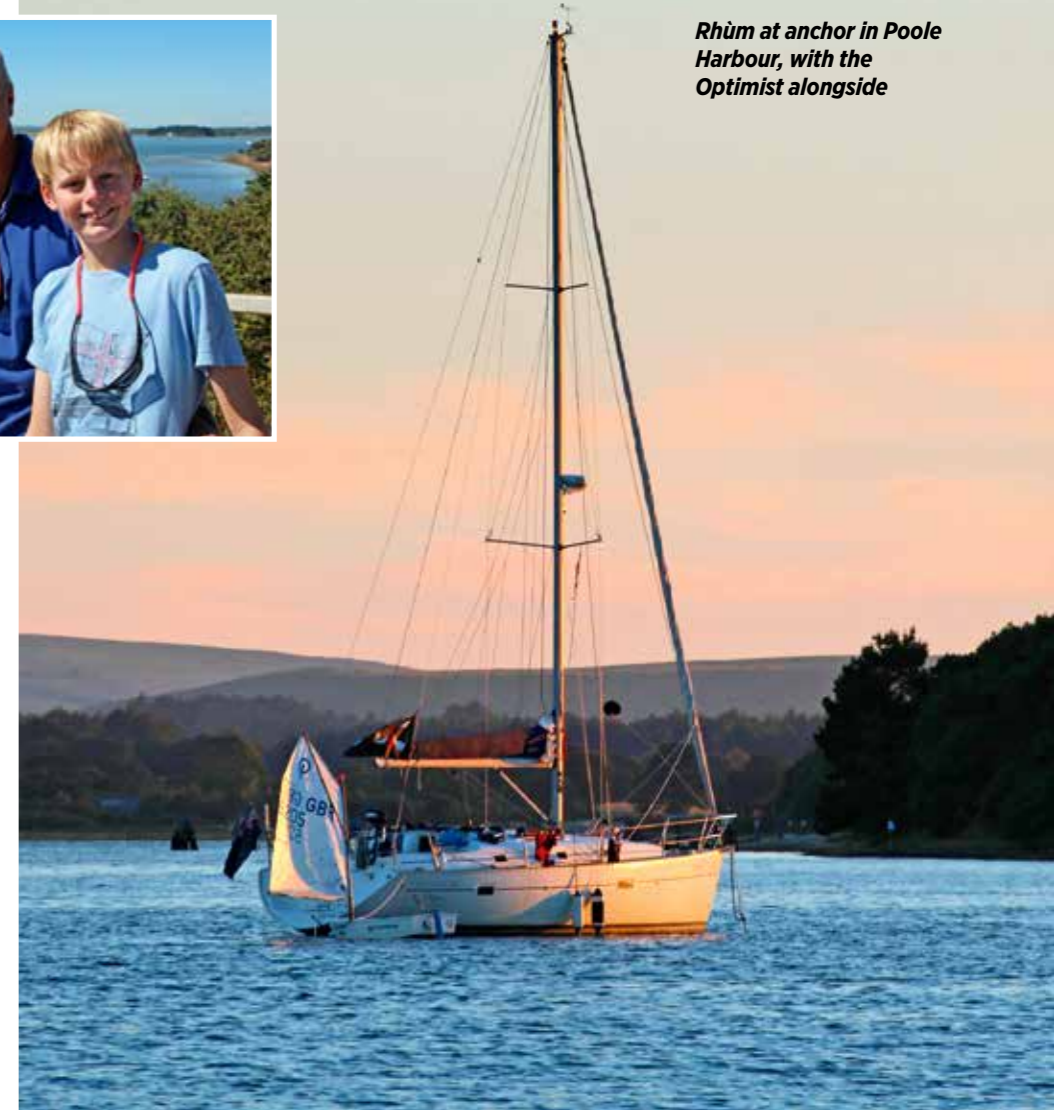
The next anchorage in Poole Harbour was Goathorn Point in South Deep. We anchored north-west of the peninsula where there were a few more boats but a surprisingly empty beach. After we landed we realised why there was no-one ashore. It was the site of a hidden oil rig and everywhere above the high

water line was private. We still enjoyed a lazy walk along the beach and stayed a couple of days there and we did lots of reading, windsurfing, Optimist sailing, paddleboarding and swimming.

Sadly after a week in Poole, it was time to head back. We left the harbour through East Looe Channel, a shallow shortcut leading east. We fetched to Hurst Castle in a moderate south-easterly breeze. It was a fairly lumpy passage and my brother was feeling a little bit queasy. We had to tack to make it through Hurst Narrows but with a strong tide we were powering through at over ten knots.

Our last stop was Newtown Creek for a night and some Optimist creek crawling. We returned to Bosham in a fresh southerly breeze. It was a great trip and perfect for families and new skippers to leave the shelter of the Solent. ▲

Rhùm at anchor in Poole Harbour, with the Optimist alongside



PHOTOS: COURTESY OLLY PERKINS



Olly acts as safety boat while Ben sails and his mum Hilary paddles

Olly Perkins

Olly Perkins, 15, has sailed with his family on their Cornish Crabber and now on *Rhùm*, their Beneteau Oceanis 361, from Bosham. He races Optimists and Firefly dinghies with his school, and plans to sail with the Royal Navy Cadets, and to cruise more extensively when he is older.

RIGHT: Olly paddleboarding just before falling in

