

Who needs St Tropez when you have Dartmouth?

INSET: Tied up outside Weymouth Harbour Master's office



BACK ON BOARD IN BRITAIN

Having relocated from France to the UK, Gilbert Park embarks on a mission to get his boat – and his crew – back up to speed

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aving brought my Nimbus 365 back to Britain from the South of France at the start of 2022, it was clear that I needed to get the boat prepped for use in the UK. But I also had to get

my crew geared up for the south coast's tidal waters – and that included my grandchildren, my friend James and my wife Máire.

I keep my boat on the Trafalgar Dry Stack in Portchester so getting it ready was actually pretty straightforward. The rear cockpit covers had been packed away in their bags ever since we bought the boat four years ago. There had been no need for them in the warm sunny climate we had previously enjoyed but now we were back in Britain, I had a sense they would prove invaluable. I also invested in a new set of paper charts, almanacs and Navionics digital charts. I know we

live in an age of GPS plotters but a paper chart remains a great way to plan your trip, to understand a cruising area and to get excited about it. As for the crew, getting them ready would involve a proper hands-on approach.

FOUR DAYS OF FUN

Our first venture out would be a four-day trip from the dry stack in Portchester with the grandchildren – and in spite of their upbringing in the azure waters of southern France, they adapted to Solent boating really well. My grandson, Joseph, enjoyed washing down the boat and, although hats and anoraks were a new thing for him, he loved helping me anchor up too. My granddaughter, Amelia, was a huge fan of the shoreside showers in Yarmouth marina, where she made plenty of new friends. And as for my daughter and son-in-law, Osborne Bay was the clincher. We anchored up for a bacon butty and a swim – and when the ice cream boat arrived alongside, not a single soul aboard appeared to remember the South of France at all!



Looks like someone read last month's *MBY* guide to cleaning teak

BOUND FOR DARTMOUTH

Next up was a trip with James from Portchester to Lymington. This is one of my favourite towns to visit, and mooring up in the new Town Quay facility meant we were right on top of all the shops and bars. While washing up after dinner, James and I suddenly became aware of a drum beat. Looking up towards the quay, we saw Morris dancers putting on a fine performance in the evening sunshine. That's definitely not something you see in France!

The next day, after a serene passage across Christchurch Bay and a slight deviation around Atomic Buoy to stay outside of the firing range, it was into the harbour at Weymouth. We were lucky to be allocated a spot right outside the Harbour Master's Office, where a live webcam enabled us to wave to friends and family. We spent two nights here, enjoying traditional seaside entertainment. And then, early on the third day, we set off to tackle the inshore route around Portland Bill.

The weather had been warm and sunny until now but it started to change as we approached Portland Bill. James got a bit of a shock when a swell picked up our eight-tonne boat and