



Let's Go drying out in Ryde with only one of its legs

Quarr Abbey is a just a short walk from Wootton's Royal Victoria Yacht Club



Picturesque Ashlett Creek was a steal at only £15 per night with water and power



## LET'S GO MUDLARKING

*Gilbert Park gets his legs out for a mud-jumping session in the eastern Solent*

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hen I bought my Mitchell 28, *Let's Go*, it was specifically to take the ground on the mooring by the house and to explore drying-out areas. But since she has twin engines and

stern gear, legs are essential to stop it heeling over and damaging the props and rudders. So I trawled various internet sites, sourced a second-hand set of legs and fitted a new set of sockets to the boat. Time to go mud jumping!

### RYDE

Ryde is a lovely harbour with floating pontoons that dry to hard sand. I thought *Let's Go* would rest neatly against a wall or pontoon on the port side so I only put out the starboard leg, but when the pontoon dried out and the ropes slackened off, she leant into the pontoon at a 20° angle, so from then on, I decided both legs were best! As for Ryde itself, it has a wonderful seaside atmosphere. However, I'd been here before, so in light of the freedom that legs provide, I hunted out some more drying harbours with easy shore access and nearby restaurants...

### WOOTTON

After a quick call to the Royal Victoria Yacht Club to book a space, I embarked on the three-mile trip to Wootton. Just as Ryde has the hovercraft next-door, so Wootton has the huge RoRo ferries. These are remarkably quiet and watching them glide in and out really adds to the fun of the place. Having moored up, I went to the restaurant and even though the chef had finished, they rustled up a delicious plate of scampi and chips. Nothing was too much trouble and everyone was so friendly. While there, one of the club members recommended the 15-minute walk to Quarr Abbey, an active Benedictine monastery with beautifully maintained gardens and a lovely café for lunch.

### NEWPORT

Late the following afternoon, I left for Newport at the head of the River Medina. I enjoy the navigation just past the Folly Inn. You have to pay attention to the buoys and depth finder as well as the leading lights so as not to run aground. With my draft of 0.9m I was able to get in 2.5h before HW, and although it was a neap tide, I still put both legs out just in case.

The Bargeman pub overlooks the harbour, but alternative eating places are plentiful. In the morning, I took advantage of the pontoon water and electricity to wash and tidy up the boat before heading on to my final stop...

### ASHLETT CREEK

As a one-time hub for unloading barges, Ashlett Creek played a key role in the construction of nearby Fawley refinery. I just made it in, an hour or so before HW, and then it was off to the Jolly Sailor for a pizza and a pint of Doom Bar. When I got back to the boat, I plugged in the electricity, filled the water tank and went for a shower. I didn't actually feel the boat dry out that night but mud on the legs proved that we did. And as I set off home after my first weekend of mud jumping, I was a very happy man. I'd take Ryde for atmosphere, Wootton for helpful people, Newport for facilities and Ashlett for value. At just £15 for the night with water, electricity, a shower and a pizza, it's truly amazing. In fact, given how much fun I had and how little I had to spend, I would say that my new legs haven't just opened up a range of new destinations. They've opened up a new level of affordability too.