



PBO Local knowledge

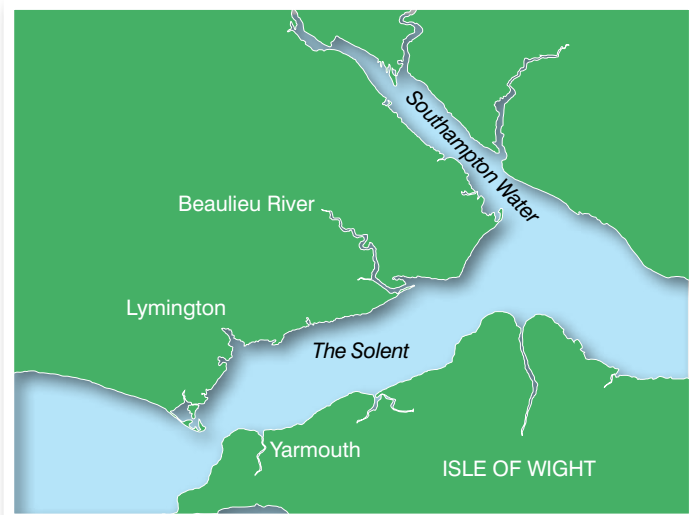
Beaulieu River

The entrance to the Beaulieu River is very narrow at little more than 80m wide, but for visiting yachtsmen the river can make an interesting and nostalgic change from the wall-to-wall marinas found elsewhere in the Solent.

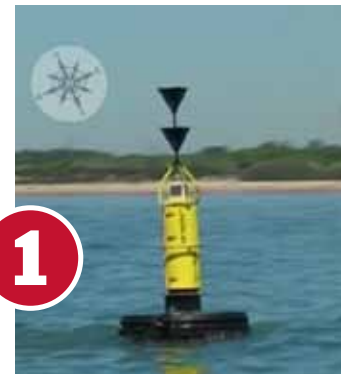
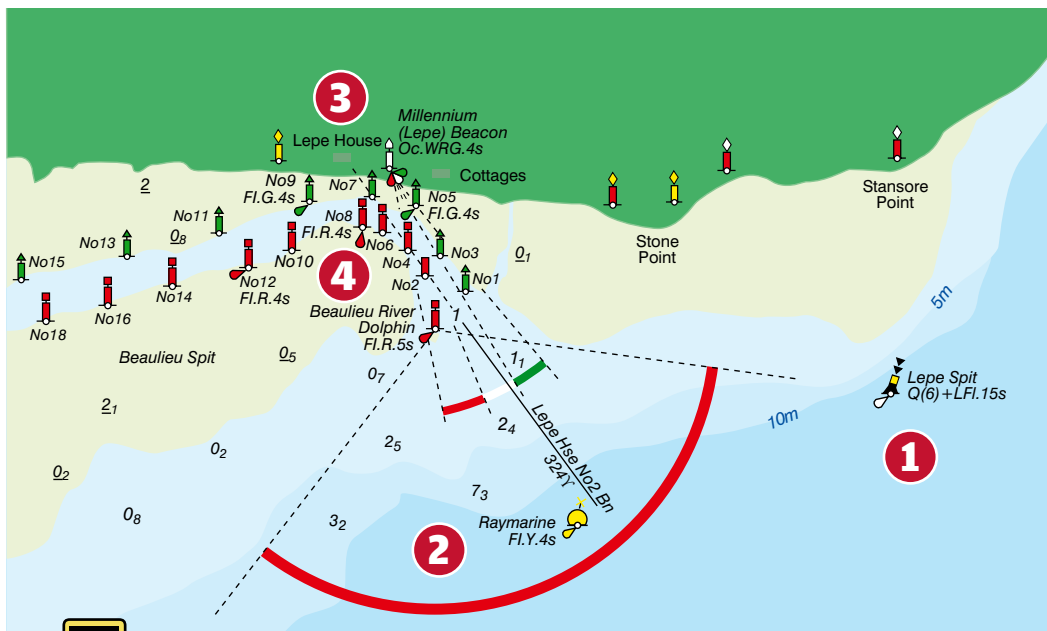
Cameron Snell guides us in...

The approaches to Beaulieu River from seaward require a good offing, as there are many shallows and drying areas that extend southward from the shore. The inconspicuous entrance has a bar with less than 1m clearance at low water springs, and a sufficient rise of tide is essential to clear it. Any approach to the entrance requires a northerly heading from a distance off to avoid the shallow areas on either side. Beaulieu River should not be approached within two hours either side of low water springs, particularly if any swell is running.

In most other rivers of the British Isles the riverbed and foreshore to the high water mark are Crown property, but not so at Beaulieu. In the 13th century Beaulieu was given away by King John to monks who originally founded Beaulieu Abbey, and since 1921 the river has been owned by Lord Montagu. In this respect he is virtually unique: the Montagu Estate owns everything including the riverbed, the foreshore and much of the surrounding countryside.



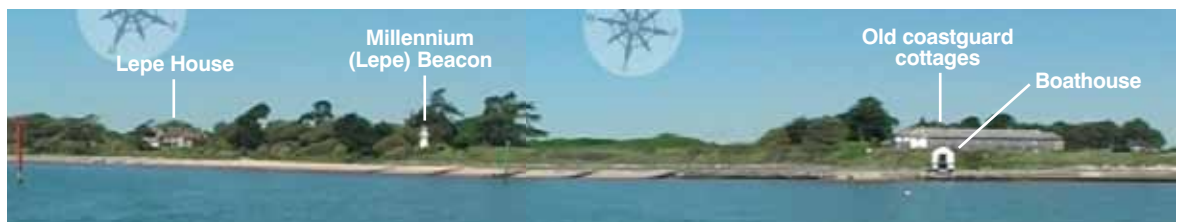
Beaulieu River approaches



1

Approaching from the east, stay well south of the Lepe Spit south cardinal marker. This will ensure you avoid the shallows that extend south-west from Stansore Point and Stone Point.

From the distance, the entrance can be identified by the line of old coastguard cottages to the east and the small white boathouse just below them, on the shore.





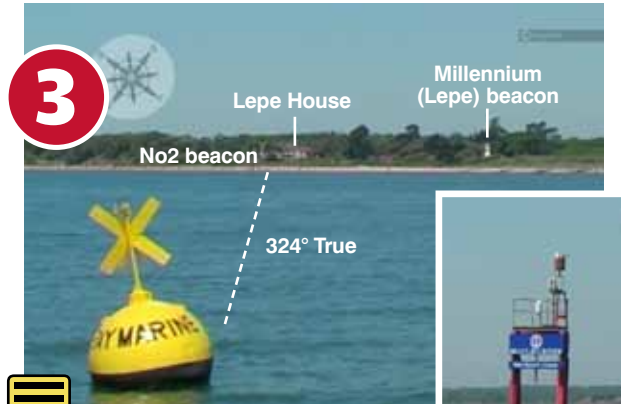
PPPA/Patrick Roach



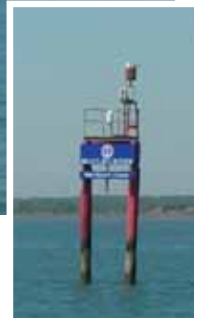
2

Once past the Lepe Spit south cardinal marker, look to the west for a spherical yellow racing buoy which lies about half a mile south of the entrance. It is a seasonal racing buoy (March-October), currently named Raymarine. Keep well to seaward of this buoy and do not turn toward the shore before you reach it, as drying patches and shallow water radiate southwards from Beaulieu Spit. The same precautions are required when approaching from the west. On this side there are two similar yellow racing buoys, about 0.75 miles apart. Leaving these to port will enable you to skirt around the shallower bulge of the Middle Lepe Bank, which extends nearly a mile from the northern shore. Depths along its outer edge of 4.5m at chart datum soon reduce inshore to less than 2m. Continue east, staying outside the 5m datum line until you reach the Raymarine yellow buoy. (In winter, use the chart co-ordinates to create a waypoint where the buoy is marked.)

The Raymarine yellow buoy is slightly to the west of the transit line which is Lepe House and the red No2 beacon lining up on 324° True. Following this transit will bring you to the Beaulieu River dolphin, a three-legged red wooden structure. This needs to be left well to port. At this point, alter your course 334° True and aim for the Millennium (Lepe) beacon. At night, the Millennium beacon displays a sectored leading light: the white sector will guide you between the beacons.



3



The Beaulieu River dolphin

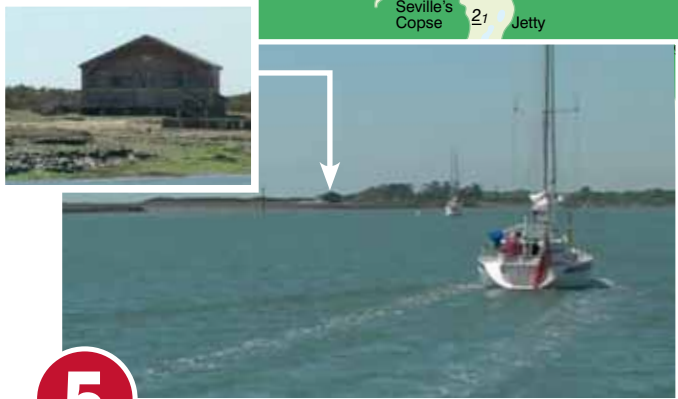


4

At the No6 red beacon, you can begin to swing to the west. The channel is clearly defined on both sides by red and green beacons: some are lit as far as the green No19 beacon. After that, a very bright moon is required to work your way through the moorings. The beacons have even numbers to port and odd numbers to starboard.



Further along the river



5

Follow the red and green numbered beacons until you see the Beaulieu River Sailing Club, a distinctive wooden building on your port side. Opposite this on the starboard bank is the final numbered green beacon, No19: turn to starboard here and leave the small craft moorings on your port side.



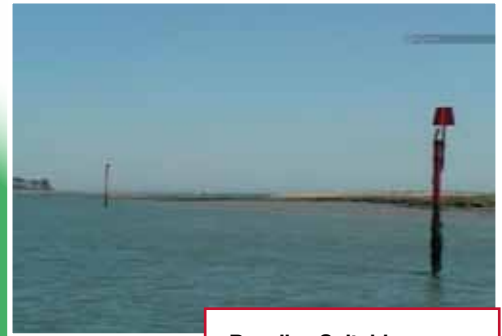
6

From here the channel markers are a little less conspicuous as they become green and red sticks or withies rather than piles. On a high spring tide, only the tip may be revealed. Keep the small craft moorings to port and the green withies to starboard.



7

As you follow the course of the river and turn to starboard, look out for the visitors' pontoon moorings. Leave these to starboard, unless of course you wish to stay.



Beaulieu Spit dries up to 2.4m at chart datum: the saltings that form Gull Island are only just awash at very high spring tides. Gull Island is a bird sanctuary, and although landing is not prohibited, it is definitely not encouraged.



8

Continue upstream, passing the private homes and private landing stages. There are no channel markers along this reach, though the channel is quite evident from the moorings on either side. At the end of this long wooded reach opposite Gilbury Hard, the river turns to the west. A long jetty projects from the eastern shore: turn sharply to port here and follow the red painted withies indicating the port side of the channel. Do not be tempted to cut inside these, even on a high tide. Bucklers Hard and Bucklers Hard Yacht Harbour will come into view. Be aware that from here the navigation marks can become easily obscured by other traffic, although the small craft moorings on either side, withies, beacons and the occasional buoy should ensure that you stay in the deeper water.

Facilities on the Beaulieu River

Information

For up-to-date information on tides, weather and mooring availability contact the harbour master at Buckler's Hard Yacht Harbour.

■ Tel: 01590 616200

■ www.beaulieuriver.com

Visitors' moorings

All vessels arriving inside the limits of the river are expected to report to the harbour master within 24 hours. At most times during the season you'll probably encounter one of the very helpful and efficient harbour patrols.

It is acceptable to take any vacant buoy, but until you have confirmation from the harbour patrol it is best to assume that the owner may return and require you to vacate his mooring. You should not leave your vessel unattended, and rafting is not permitted. The harbour patrol will advise how soon the mooring is likely to be required, or point you in the direction of a more suitable one.

Visitors' swinging moorings and pontoons cost from £11 for boats up to 20ft (6m), ranging up to £32 for a 60ft (18m) vessel. There are pontoon moorings at Exbury Point and on the port side just before you reach Bucklers Hard. Slightly upstream of the yacht harbour are some more pontoon visitors' moorings that can accommodate about 100 visiting craft, rafted seven to eight boats deep during busy times. There are no water or electrical connections on the pontoons, and a tender is required to reach the shore.

A tender pontoon is located slightly upstream of the passenger boat landing stages at Bucklers Hard. Visitors are welcome to enter Bucklers Hard Yacht Harbour marina at any time. The harbour master's office, found at the top of



The meandering Beaulieu River at Bucklers Hard showing the row of shipwrights' cottages and the yacht harbour

the pontoon bridge, is manned from 0800 to 2100 in the summer, 0800 to 1800 in the winter and 0900 to 1800 at weekends during the winter. Full marina facilities include toilets and showers, launderette, fuel, yacht valet service and boatbuilders. It is dredged to 1.8m below mean low water springs. The yacht harbour offers the only walk-ashore berthing facility on the river. Prices start at £20 for boats up to 20ft (6m), with short-stay prices from £7.50 (the overnight rate begins at 1530).

Anchoring is not allowed in the river as it is too tight and filled with moorings. There is a recognised anchorage in the first reach, past red post No20 and off Gull Island. There are white visitors' mooring buoys in this area, with short-stay/anchorage prices from £6.

Although it might seem exposed, Beaulieu Spit can create plenty of shelter, except at the very top of the tide.

Fuel and water

Bucklers Hard Yacht Harbour is the only place where water and fuel are available on the river. The fuel berth is located to seaward of the marina and supplies diesel, petrol and gas.

Eating out

In the lower reaches opposite Exbury Point is the Gins Clubhouse building of the Royal Southampton Yacht Club. Gins is an informal, relaxed venue with seasonal opening times. Facilities include a friendly bar and restaurant, with a jetty and pontoon available for visiting craft.

Apart from berthing in the marina, the only way to reach the shore is by berthing your tender at the tender pontoon next to the fuel berth (the sightseeing ferry landing stage at Bucklers Hard is prohibited to visiting craft). A short walk along the riverside will take you to the Hard in minutes.

At the end of the row of red brick cottages on the right you will find the Master Builder's House Hotel, which offers an enticing a la carte menu in its restaurant, or bar food at the less formal Yachtsman's Bar. In the season, breakfasts and barbecues are available for non-residents.

Such is the remarkable state of preservation of Bucklers Hard that you might be forgiven for thinking you have arrived in the middle of a period film set. One shipwright's cottage has been restored to recreate the living conditions of its

1790s occupants and forms part of the maritime museum located at the top of the hill. This covers the entire history of shipbuilding at Beaulieu and is open daily during the season.

Further upriver

There is a lot to be missed by not venturing further upstream. It is possible to navigate all the way to Beaulieu on a high spring tide, but most pilotage directions would advise using your tender.

Once clear of the mid-river visitors' pontoon, follow the line of moored boats and the occasional withie. The first turning point is Keeping Marsh: from here on, the withies become less distinguishable, with wood and paint giving way to natural twig. The safest route is to follow close to the buoyed craft. Due to the concentration of moorings in the upper parts of the river, anchoring is prohibited within one mile either side of Bucklers Hard.

At Baileys Hard any form of navigational mark stops and you will have to navigate by touch, but the natural beauty and tranquility make it a worthwhile expedition.

As an alternative to the tender, a 45-minute riverside stroll along the Solent Way will lead you to the picturesque village of Beaulieu with its pubs, cafes and views of Lord Montagu's Palace House.



The moorings officer will most likely greet you and offer you a berth

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