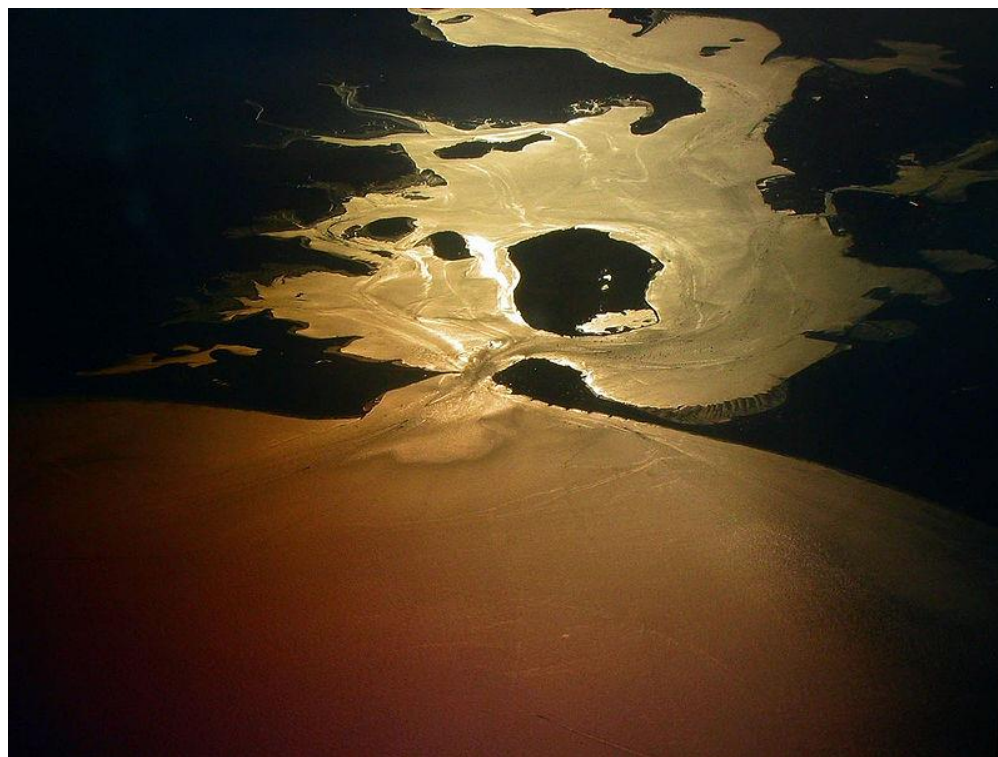


In writing this for the 'club mag' and giving it the title "I♥PH" I reckoned it was guaranteed to be published - to get on in the publishing game I'd always been told to be nice to editors and this was a pretty sure way of being on the top of the pile of stuff that had been submitted. I have also been told not to take forever to complete written pieces and in doing just that - taking far too long, we've had a change of editor and the replacing of "PH" in the title with "CM" just isn't going to work. So I'll stick with the original title and trust that writing about how much I, and I suspect lots of others in the club, like being in and around Poole Harbour will be enough. I've also given you a free 'bumper sticker' (just cut out the title) – and that's got to be the first ever giveaway with our magazine.

(... always explain time-affected jokes ! **Cheyne Marley** took over from **Peter Hobby** as editor ☺)



Chatting with other paddlers whilst out and about on the water it's pretty obvious that all of us are really aware of what a great location we use and whilst enjoying the paddling are also frequently looking around – not just for the waving arms alongside upturned hulls - or the fact that the number of

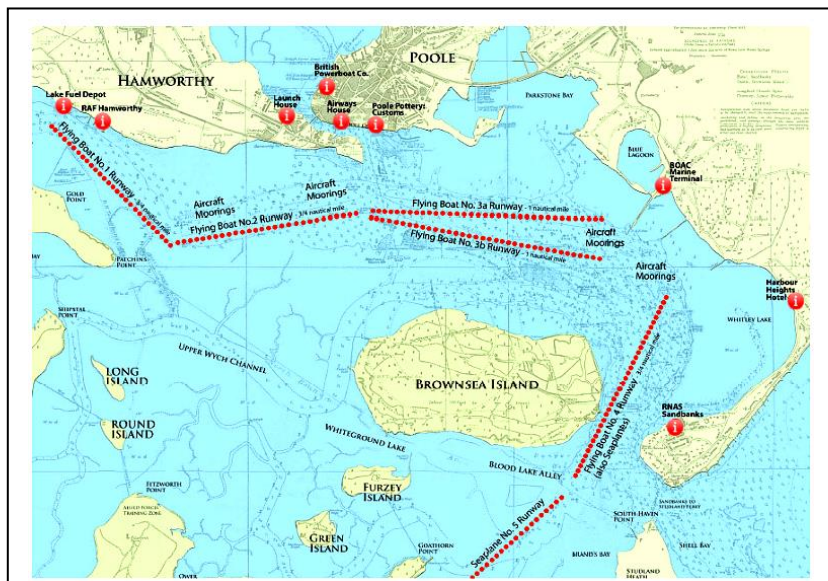
kayaks in the group hopefully matches what we started with – but to see again with new eyes what a fantastic area we have around us and which it is all too easy to take for granted. I for one really do ♥ Poole Harbour.

Making the move down to Dorset from Barnet, just North of London, a few years ago I remember how everything I saw during the weeks whilst working here in Dorset appeared so much clearer, sharper and brighter than Barnet seemed at weekends. It had that feeling you get when you arrive on holiday somewhere; the colours were brighter and the light - only a

hundred or so miles from my (then) 'weekend' home - was clearer. I guess it must be like that for Specsaver customers – or so the TV adverts used to suggest. I'd never really considered to be in a polluted area 12 miles out from London. A little bit of confirmation that it wasn't my imagination came from researchers for the programme 'Coast'. For one of the shows they collected air samples from the coast near St Ives in Cornwall to try to answer the question of why so many artists that made up the famous 'St. Ives School' had moved there in the 1930s and even earlier. The results of their tests showed that the air was measurably cleaner – with fewer tiny particles floating around in it and with the Poole winds coming mainly from the same SW direction the air quality in our area should be very similar.

With my joining 'The Club' it meant the harbour was suddenly regularly visited – and that started my awareness of how diverse the place is for interest. It doesn't just look great - it's fascinating. The majority of towns, villages and spaces in the rest of the country have had their share of history but Poole (known as 'Le Pole' or 'Pola' up to the late 15th Century) has probably had more than its fair share, as well as a more diverse history than elsewhere. Being one of the best protected natural harbours on the Channel coast gave it a good start and in 1433 the status of the town rose when it was made the Staple port – taking over from Weymouth - with exports being taxed as they passed through the town. Three hundred years later in 1724 the author, Daniel Defoe described Poole as “a considerable seaport, and indeed the most considerable in all this part of England.” Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries Poole stole trade from all the ports on the South Coast and was the major port for Newfoundland fishing but as this trade faded others arose. As PHCC members know better than most the geology around the harbour shores show there's a lot of mud and clay here and it's this geology that made it a major focus of industrial activity when its wealth of clay resources were recognised (they had been mined even by the Romans). With time, as that activity receded, the place has become a series of amazing habitats for wildlife.

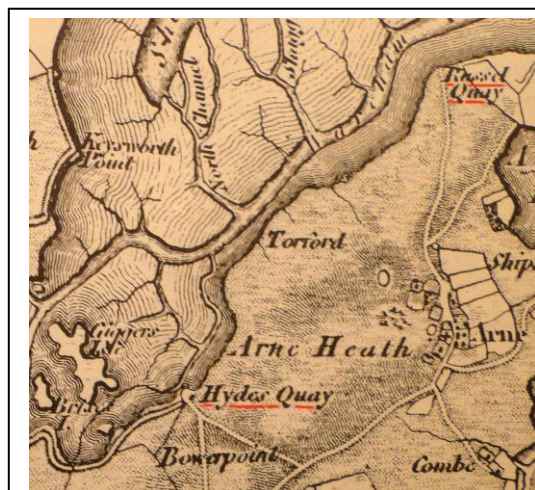
Probably the most obvious feature at Lake Pier is the pier itself - and alongside it the large concrete mooring posts. Some members of the club were lucky enough to be a part of the harbour as youngsters and swam around the pier or fished whilst sitting on the mooring posts ...but for me it was all new and I was immediately hooked at the idea that these concrete mooring posts were once used to tether flying boats. I'm sure I'm not alone in having my imagination fired by seeing things and given the slightest chance I want to know more. In the not-so-distant-days before large airports were everywhere and planes were much smaller it made better sense for larger towns to have their own aerodromes. These were often only grass-covered fields with a wind-sock on which small planes could land – but towns by the sea or rivers had the great advantage that sea planes could take off and land without the expense of 'building' an aerodrome - and a little checking on the net found the main runways map in the harbour (<http://www.pooleflyingboats.com/map.html>). When long distance air journeys must still have been pretty much like Indiana Jones adventures – both during and following the Second World War the harbour was used by BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) as well as the RAF and Fleet Air Arm. Flights included “Poole to Karachi via Gibraltar and Cairo” and passenger numbers doubled each year till 1948 when the services were moved to Southampton. “Five million Miles a year” flown out of BOAC's Poole base made it a pretty busy 'airport' – not to mention the role of flying boats for the RAF during the war. Finding pictures of Flying Boats taking off and landing or just riding out storms in the Harbour brings this part of the history very much to life.



Anyone who has sat on a ferry listening to the commentaries of the tourist guides returning from Brownsea or a 'round-the-islands' trip (or has listened-in whilst paddling) is probably an expert on the gossip of 'who lives where' and 'who did what' on the Sandbanks peninsular - and has more than likely also had a pretty good introduction to the history of clay mining in the harbour as well. The stories usually explain that clay is being shipped out of Poole "*.. to Spain and then returned as tiles that are sold in B&Q*" but the length of the history of clay mining in the area deserves more than just a jokey comment. It has left us with so many quays; though often now remembered only with quay names on the map and a few rotting stumps visible at low tides. 'Quayless' perhaps but certainly my interest grows. To have such an amazing archaeological heritage site to paddle around also allows some delving into the human stories of the people working the clay deposits of the harbour and as an 'incomer' this is another great reason to say **'I♥PH'**.



Checking early maps – this image is part of the '1st series Ordnance Survey' of Poole, surveyed and drawn before 1800 and showing that its quays were well linked by paths and tramways. These old maps have far more graphic detail about depth and direction of stream channels and give an idea of what was most important to the people using these maps; these were transport channels with no 'cardinal markers' available to guide boatmen then. A few trips with Rose, Frazer, Hugh or Allen will make sure you have visited Goathorn, also once a clay-shipping quay; Hydes Quay (marked here), from which in 1771 Thomas Hyde started shipping clay to Josiah Wedgewood's famous factory in Staffordshire and for which he had a contract to supply 1400 tons per year.



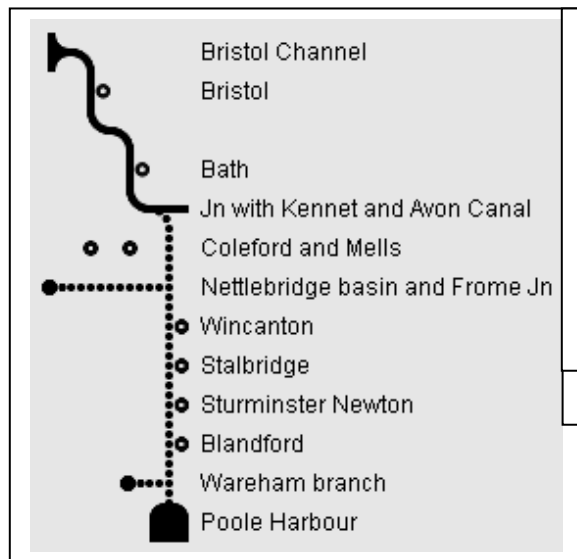
Bristol Channel
Bristol

Bath
Jn with Kennet and Avon Canal
Coleford and Mells
Nettlebridge basin and Frome Jn
Wincanton
Stalbridge
Sturminster Newton
Blandford
Wareham branch
Poole Harbour

Poole to Bristol Canal

This was the first 'railway' in Dorset and ran for around a hundred years between 1806 and 1905

A rival family of clayworkers, the Fayle's had their operations shipping from Middlebere Quay and a 'plateway' allowed carts loaded with clay to be pulled by horses down to the quay.



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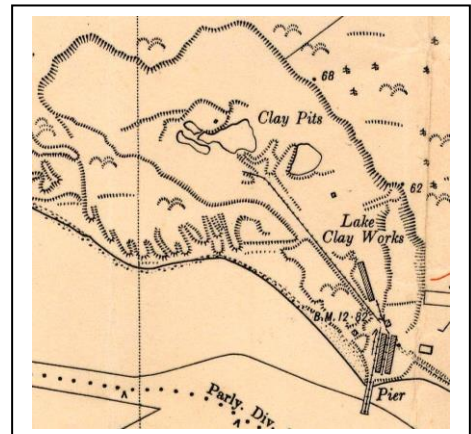
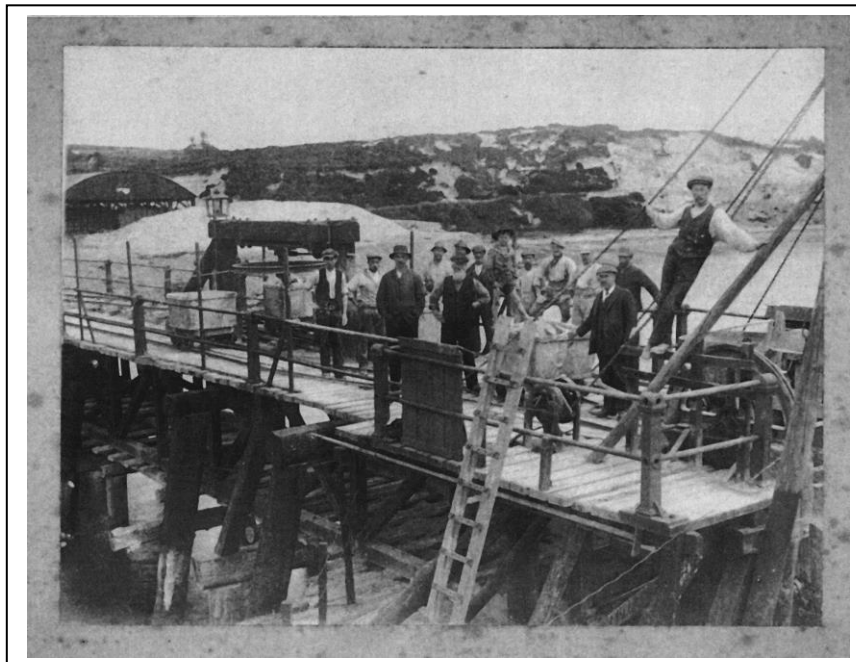
One of the most mined areas since Roman times was around Newton – so long an area for clay mining that many old workings could still be used in the 19th Century and as the area had been so productive and therefore good for Royal taxes, in 1286 Edward 1st ordered Richard de Bosco – the constable at Corfe and Walter de Marisco, the Lord at the castle, that a ‘new town should be built there. Clearly it wasn’t built, but how different the development of the ‘two towns’, Poole and “Newto(w)n”, might have changed the area had it been built. Would the southern quays of Newto(w)n being so close to the harbour entrance and access to the sea

have dominated or would Poole's better land access to the north have simply led to the two combining ?

Access into the harbour was improved with the "training bank", built between 1876 and 1927 and intended to funnel the tides to scour a deepwater entrance channel to the harbour – certainly effective in 'funneling the tides' if you have tried going through the harbour entrance at the wrong time or if you have watched sailing vessels moving against the current to leave the harbour. It was the Seacombe Quarry area near Winspit that was the source of the stone brought by barge to the harbour and some will have then been transported on the railway line used originally for transporting clay and ending at the tip of Goathorn. This railway was finally closed in 1943 but a few of today's ferry boat captains talk of the 'railway station' at the end of that line being used for passengers between the wars' – and this much more memorable use of the line saw children being taken from the Studland and Poole areas to school in Corfe village.

The frenzy of activities linked to the Clay Industry around the harbour slowly reduced as the silts, mud and clays clogged up the access to the quays but for many years the area of Lake and the Pier, whose supports we weave inbetween to practice forward and reverse paddling, was also a small part of this scene. By 1896 Corfe (32 miners) and Creech (56 miners) were the most active areas - with Hamworthy run by G.F. Wanhill having just four.

Frazer's sleuthing skills and a lot of his hard work unearthed some interesting old photographs of the 'car park' area (*kindly supplied by local resident Clarice Hale*) of the slightly larger Doulton (Royal Doulton) clay operation that took place up to the 1920s. When you are next at the pier try to look at it with 'new eyes' and try to visualise the group of workmen seen in this image loading the barges and coastal vessels.



Clay mining at Lake Pier





With Lake Pier being just across from the Arne peninsular no club member can fail to know its beaches and wooded shoreline pretty well – if only for the comparatively calm waters found there if a strong South-west wind is blowing. Across the water there are sandy beaches, oyster shells around Gold Point, salt-marshes, secluded bays, countless birds, deer, bracken and wooded slopes, Next time you paddle head-down to cross the rushing main stream of an outgoing or incoming tide to reach the calmer protection of the far shore think what this area must have seen even further back in time – way before the clay miners were at work. Think back to the late 800s when Wessex was the only remaining stronghold of the ‘Saxon-British’ with the invading Viking Danes, under Guthrun their leader, attacking and taking Wareham, then by far the most important town on the harbour. Legends say that King Alfred laid siege to the occupied town to remove the invaders and after successfully taking the town unwisely let the Danes go free. He then needed to renew the fight against the same forces later in 876 and so the king built a fleet of ships to attack the Danes. He used his newly assembled ships to defeat the large Danish fleet that had sailed up the channels to Wareham. The battle took place in the harbour, off the shores of Arne, with the Dane’s surviving boats heading out past Studland only to be wrecked in storms along the coast. Other reports mention Danish ships being lost in a battle off Swanage – maybe these relate to the same battle, or maybe with so much Viking interest in the port of Wareham, these reports were about other vessels. Either way - in racing across to Arne to get out of the wind or tide you are crossing the tracks of a host of stories of personal tragedy or triumph from over a thousand years ago and which help to make up a significant stage in British history.

Coming back for a moment to the 21st Century, think back – or forward if you prefer - to Summer days and the club soirees that Keith and the team organised. For the last couple of years Holton Lee has been the site for camping and partying; lying just a little further past Rockley park – but also for many years the site of the Royal Navy cordite factory. It won't take much detective work to find what remains of the jetty / pier (only in fairly recent years demolished) from which trains delivered the cordite to the waiting ships at Rockley – from where it would be taken to the 'filling factories' in South Wales making the shells and other ammunition. The woods now hide remains of demolished buildings that were part of what must have been a major target for bomb attacks throughout the Second World War. In fact it was mainly this target that made so many dummy fires on islands within the harbour - a distraction-strategy used to give the impression that the cordite factory itself had been damaged. Arne was taken over by the military in the same manner as Tyneham further along the coast – but here as a site for their "Starfish" decoy plans. Our "First Saturday" lunch stops at Shipstal Point was an anti-aircraft gun battery guarding this mock 'decoy facility'.



Rockley Jetty – for Cordite loading



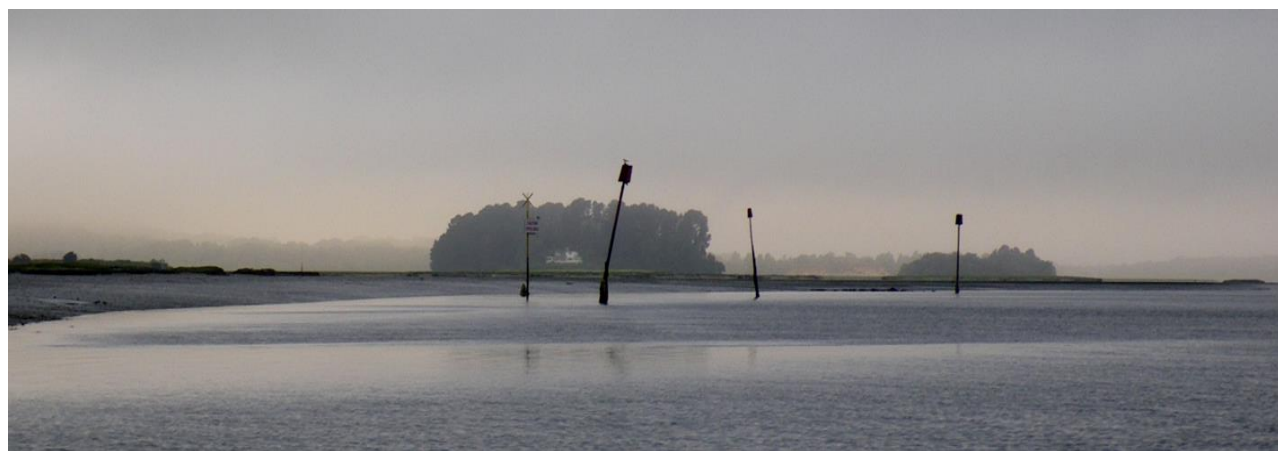
RN factory Holton Heath with the old railbridge to Rockley jetty across the main line. Within the woods are the remains of the now demolished factory.

A network of tar barrels, pipes and tanks of paraffin when set alight as enemy aircraft approached proved so successful that after one raid in June 1942 over 200 bomb craters were counted across Arne with radio reports being monitored from Berlin showing that it was believed that Holton Heath had been seriously damaged. At the end of the war – unlike Tyneham the land was returned to non-military use and has now been preserved as an area of rare lowland heathland. The peninsula is one place prized for the unusual transition from dry woodland and heathland to saltmarsh. Perhaps with only a few changes in the history of Arne and the wider area around the harbour things might have been very different.

Jumping back in time 2,500 years and we might have seen a very different harbour, then a trading port; trading not from Wareham or Poole but from Green Island and its Iron Age causeway revealed at very low tides – and if you can drag yourself from bed before dawn, the destination for a few special paddles that only take place at extremely low spring tides. On these occasions the harbour takes on a totally different form. The streams feeding into the harbour can be seen crossing the vast areas of domed



mudflats – and the channel markers and Cardinal warning markers make instant sense – since nearly all of the obstructions can be seen alongside the signs.



The causeway itself inspires the imagination – The ‘South Deep’ being the main navigable channel for centuries and boats may well have traded from here to the continent. Channel Four’s Time Team programme covered this in a documentary a few years ago but it can still be seen on YouTube – originally on “4oD” (Series 11 Episode 6)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNhDne2Kpml>) For a fuller report on this particular topic follow this link >> https://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=457510

There can't be many areas of the country that have a more varied series of stories and facts that can be told about them and in our being a part of the harbour every time we head off on kayak trips and for barbeques and walks on the shores around the harbour, the chance is there to spend just a moment or two to reflect on where we are, what we are seeing and what has taken place here in the past. **I♥PH**



Bill Richmond