

## Coarse Boating – New Launchings.

Having moved house I now have a new stretch of water in which to float my little boat. When I lived in Hamworthy my preferred choice of launching site was the public slipway in Lake Drive (Check [streetmap.co.uk](http://streetmap.co.uk)) which, being inside Poole Harbour, was a calm and tranquil place.

Now I face my nemesis in an entirely different location, a few miles away as the crow flies, the public slip at the southern end of the beach in Swanage.

This is a fine and public place, never short of a crowd to watch me make a fool of myself and handy for the chip shop and the Mowlem bar. It is an old slip, solidly built from large blocks of Purbeck stone, uneven and slimy.

This fine old stonework is incredibly durable. Should you happen to fall over and bang your knee it will not be damaged in the slightest. Should a wave roll over it and bash your boat down hard on it, it will be marked with a small amount of your best blue paint, which will wash off with the next wave.

When you launch a small sailing boat there is a brief period when the boat is under no kind of control. You need a couple of feet of water under the boat before you can ship the rudder and lower the centreboard, without these my boat has all the directional qualities of my late Grandma's Yorkshire pudding tin, and none of its flavour.

Here's the routine:

- Drive down to the slip with boat trailer attached.
- Pick your way through the crowds of squealing kids, pensioners on day trips, Chavs (Let's face it – nobody looks good in a baseball cap) and the loony bloke who stares and mutters at everyone.
- Unhitch trailer and roll it to the top of the slip.
- Remove boat from trailer and return trailer to car.
- Leave TCMD on guard and take the car back.
- Walk back to the slip.
- Rig boat; place everything so that it can be reached once afloat.
- Slide boat into water and put one leg over the side to push away from slip.

- Take leg out again and attempt to stop boat smashing down onto the slipway when unforeseen large wave breaks over it.
- Drag boat back up slip and remove sea from inside it.
- Repeat previous three actions a random number of times.
- Get afloat, using paddle to put distance between boat and shore.
- Stop paddling and lower centreboard.
- Fend off from stones again.
- Paddle away from slip, stop and attempt to attach rudder, which involves getting two pins into two holes whilst boat pitches around in the surf
- Repeat above another random number of times, wondering at the magnetic attraction that wood has for stone, or vice versa.
- Finally get under way, sail away from shore and start to enjoy sailing
- Realise that you have forgotten something vital, like the drainage bungs or doing the washing up.
- Decide not to worry about the washing up.
- Feel guilty about leaving the washing up and going sailing whilst TCMD is hard at work in the bookshop.

After working through this list you are free to enjoy the rest of the day on the sea, whereupon one or more of the following will occur:

1. The wind will fail completely
2. It will get dark
3. It will start to rain
4. The wind will increase to an un-forecasted strength over and above the capabilities of the boat

It is prudent at this point to think about returning to the shore. The beauty of this is that the crowd of people around the slip will be a different one to the one that watched you leave, so you can swagger ashore and act as though you just crossed the channel, that is, if you don't slip on the stones and bang your shins again.

With boat pulled up to the top of the slip it is but a few feet to the bar in the Mowlem centre where you can sink a pint or two, warming your bruised and salt-soaked limbs in the glow of an English summer day.

Coarse boating is alive and well and living in Dorset.