

PASSAGE THROUGH GREAT YARMOUTH

(from the Editor of *Hamilton's Broads Navigations*)

Just like everything else in life, a little forward planning tends to make passage through Great Yarmouth less eventful. The first job is to work out the time of Low Water at Great Yarmouth Yacht Station, which is the crux of all Broads tides. Low water is between three quarters and one hour later at Yarmouth Yacht Station than low water at Gorleston bar. Tides on the Broads usually flood for five hours and ebb for around seven. The ebb is usually 0.5 mph faster than the flood.



Vauxhall Bridge

It isn't difficult to work out how long it will take to reach Great Yarmouth Yacht Station from your starting point. However, there are few moorings on the lower Bure and only the Stracey Arms mill has facilities if you are too early for the tide. Emergency moorings, with no facilities, may be found at Runham Swim, five miles upstream of Great Yarmouth and at Scare Gap, three miles upstream.

Skippers intending to pass straight through Great Yarmouth should time their arrival for low water. If you have to wait at Great Yarmouth Yacht Station and your bridge clearance height is critical, beware of an interesting tidal effect. You can watch a nice ebb flowing along the surface of the Bure after the allotted time of low water. After a while, it becomes apparent that whilst the Bure is apparently ebbing, the water level is rising. The heavier, salt-water flooding tide comes in as a wedge under the fresh water. The **Yarmouth/Acle Road Bridge** and **Vauxhall Bridge** (the disused rail bridge now qualifies as both an ancient monument and hazard to navigation) both have height gauges between them. In mid stream there is roughly 24 feet (7.5m) between the bottom of the river and the lowest point of the bridges. There's plenty of depth available, unless you stray too close to the edge.



The bank between Buremouth and Asda is known as The Knoll. This is what happens when you cut the corner.

At Buremouth, stay in the marked channel and do not be tempted to cut across in front of Asda. You will find you have a full flood tide to help you to wherever you wish to go on the south rivers. **Breydon Bridge** will open by appointment but any vessel that has just passed under the Bure bridges will pass easily under the side arches.

The River Bure is narrow in Great Yarmouth and the tide can be strong. Vessels with limited steerage or excess length may decide to pass through during the small hours (if fitted with navigation lights), when at least they can be assured there will be no other traffic. Beware of taking Great Yarmouth just before dawn. Lights on the shore can be difficult but if you turn into Breydon at dawn, you will be travelling into complete blackness. In such circumstances it may be better to tie up to one of the posts on Breydon for a quick nap and proceed in the daylight. Sailing boats with mast lowered and particularly short-handed, will find departure easier from a post than the pontoon as the rigging can catch as the boat turns.

The easy answer for sailing boats without engines to passing through Great Yarmouth is to arrange a tow. However, the adventurous may wish to try the traditional method, perfected by wherry-men. Some flowing ebb is required for this manoeuvre: In a part of the river where there is sufficient space to turn and preferably no motor boats to confuse, turn your boat around heading upstream and drop your mudweight (the wherries used chains). Lower the mast as quickly as possible and shorten the line on the mudweight until it is just brushing the bottom. As the tide sweeps past your rudder you will find that you are making steady progress downstream and as the water swirls past your rudder it is possible to steer the vessel. If you wish to moor at the Yacht Station, pay out the line on your mudweight and steer towards the quay. Please bear in mind that this only works with the mudweight hanging from the bow – if it hangs from the stern and the stern is unable to swing, the rudder becomes useless. Any dinghies will hang around a quarter, the yacht will be unable to steer and finish up where the current takes it.

Power boats with no aircraft constraints may find it easier to go through Great Yarmouth against a very early flood which will give them a little more steerage way.

From the south rivers, power boats should time their arrival at Great Yarmouth Yacht Station for no later than Low Water. There will be a weak ebb to punch across Breydon but the end of the ebb down the Bure will give more control of the boat for mooring or stopping in the event of another boat suddenly changing course. Always stay in between the channel markers. If you have to wait, there is a pontoon or just hang off a post for a while.