

THE PERFECT WEEKEND ON...

THE ORWELL

The route: Levington, Hamford Water, Twizzle Creek, River Stour, Pin Mill

The Orwell is a very English river, its gentle landscapes stirring nostalgic wistfulness about all that's best in the old country. Down at its mouth there seems nowhere more English than Harwich, with its Ha'penny Pier, beach huts and Victorian shopfronts. In the middle reaches, Pin Mill is a timeless Suffolk hard, adorned by traditional barges and the famous Butt and Oyster Inn.

Suffolk Yacht Harbour lies two miles up the Orwell on the east shore and is just the place to start a perfect weekend. On Friday evening, wind down with supper at the Haven Ports Yacht Club aboard their fine old lightship moored alongside.

SATURDAY MORNING

Waking up in Suffolk Yacht Harbour is a delight on a warm summer morning. Rural scents mingle with estuary air and you might well see a sailing barge slipping downstream. Ideally, leave the harbour before a spring half-flood for a well-timed day in the Walton Backwaters. Heading seawards past Trimley Marshes, you reach the grand expanse where the Orwell meets the Stour off Harwich.

Passing Harwich, you emerge into open sea with boats all around. Ahead is the promontory of the Naze with its strange stark tower. Curving south-west across the bay, you soon pick up the narrow buoyed channel into the backwaters, a peaceful warren of remote creeks and saltings where Arthur Ransome's *Secret Waters* is set.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Inside Stone Point's shingle spit, Hamford Water leads towards the most secluded, soothing backwaters. I like to anchor north of Skipper's Island, just before Landermere Creek turns more southerly. A lingering lunch in this soothing spot chases away thoughts of work and deadlines. Curlews make their haunting music as the flood spills across mudflats and marshy island fringes.

A dinghy expedition is a must here, and as the tide fills meander up the creek to Landermere Quay, where sailing barges once loaded cereals from nearby farms. Or potter clockwise round Skippers Island into Kirby Creek, the top of which has a rustic landing on the mainland. Skippers Island has a smuggling history, and was once a hideaway for contraband until the coast was clear of revenue men.

SATURDAY EVENING

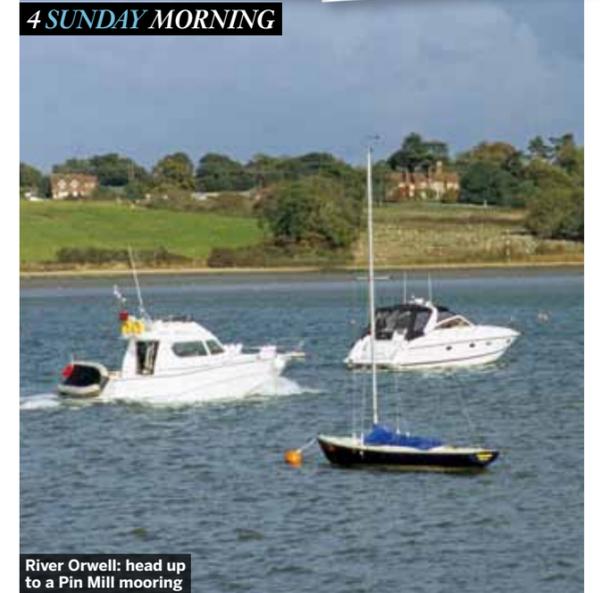
In the late afternoon, head back down Hamford Water to Island Point buoy and turn south inside the shingle bank, following Walton Channel towards the Naze. To port you pass the nature reserve around Cormorant Creek, to starboard the streams and gullies wriggling into Hedge End Island. Opposite the Naze tower, the channel veers west into Twizzle Creek and up to Titchmarsh Marina. Titchmarsh is snug and restful for the night, and looking across open saltings this is an idyllic spot to pull a cork

PROFILE

THE AUTHOR
Peter Cumberlidge has cruised widely on the East Coast and enjoyed this perfect weekend aboard a Nelson 29, a tough little boat for the offshore chop of the Thames Estuary and ideal for exploring rivers and creeks.




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Titchmarsh Marina: a peaceful night assured

3 SATURDAY EVENING

MARINA CONTACT DETAILS

All marinas on VHF Ch 80. Suffolk Yacht Harbour (Tel: +44 (0)1473 659465). Titchmarsh Marina (Tel: +44 (0)1255 672185) Woolverstone Marina (Tel: +44 (0)1473 780206). Fox's Marina, just below Ipswich (Tel: +44 (0)1473 689111).

FUEL BERTHS

River Orwell: simplest at Suffolk Yacht Harbour, with both diesel and petrol alongside (open 0815-1750). Walton Backwaters: Titchmarsh Marina, diesel and LPG (0800-2000 in season).

FAVOURITE EATERIES

The bar in the Haven Ports Yacht Club lightship is very congenial (Tel: +44 (0)1473 659658). The Ship in Levington village (left) is just over a mile from the marina and has first-class food and ales (Tel: +44 (0)1473 659573). At Pin Mill, the Butt and



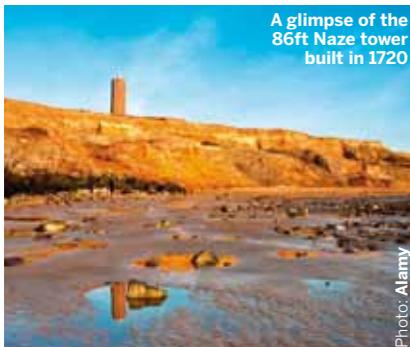
Oyster is a delight (Tel: +44 (0)1473 780764).

For Walton-on-the-Naze, the Victory Inn, 30 minutes from

Titchmarsh Marina, has good food (Tel: +44 (0)1255 677857).

NAVIGATION NOTES

Suffolk Yacht Harbour is accessible at all tides via a dredged channel. The Orwell is navigable at all tides within the buoys, though at low springs mudflats extend well out from either shore. Use Admiralty chart 2693. Pin Mill dries out at datum. Strangers should enter or leave the Walton Backwaters above half-tide. Use Admiralty 2695. The Stour is pretty deep within the buoys at any tide for four miles up to Wrabness Point, but thereafter the channel is more delicate. With care you can reach Mistley Quay at half-flood, but you can't get alongside easily until near HW.



A glimpse of the 86ft Naze tower built in 1720

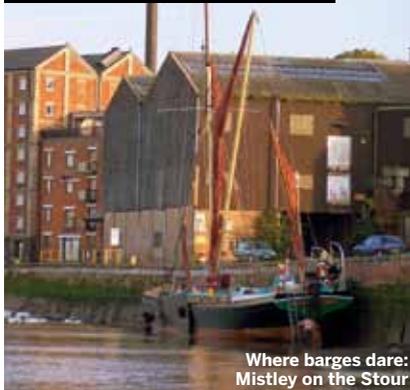
Photo: Alamy

4 SUNDAY MORNING



Constable country: the glorious Stour

5 SUNDAY AFTERNOON



Where barges dare: Mistley on the Stour

6 SUNDAY AFTERNOON



The Butt and Oyster is an East Coast classic inn, best visited within two hours of HW

and celebrate Saturday evening. Active adventurers might take the dinghy further up the Twizzle to where the creek shallows across the Wade and a low-tide causeway meanders across to Horsey Island and its 300-acre livestock farm.

When your appetite is nicely honed, either make for the Harbour Lights restaurant next to the marina, or on a warm evening it's a pleasant country stroll into Walton-on-the-Naze, where the Victory has well-kept Abbot Ale and good bar meals.

SUNDAY MORNING

Sunday is as quiet here as any other morning, with only oystercatchers to bring you round. Just sit on deck with a coffee and savour the peace. When the tide serves, drop back down Walton Channel and out into the bay to discover more local treats.

Cutting across to Harwich you'll be sure to see ships. The deep channel leads ten miles east and there's always something moving. Coming in past Harwich quay, turn west into the River Stour, a stately stretch of water few boats visit. You'll pass old lightships moored off Shotley and the ferry terminal at Parkeston. Then you are out in the country Constable liked to paint. Above half-tide you can follow the buoys up to Mistley Quay. Flatford Mill isn't far upstream, though not accessible by motor boat. It's not too easy to stop at Mistley, so head back down the Stour and up the Orwell to find a mooring off Pin Mill. A pint of Adnams and a cracking lunch await you at the Butt and Oyster.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Back on board, shake a leg and cruise upstream through Potter Reach past rolling acres of park. To port is the Royal Harwich Yacht Club at Woolverstone Marina, overlooking one of the finest stretches of the river. Up ahead is the graceful span of the Orwell bridge, a towering 38m high. Coming back down to Suffolk Yacht Harbour, make time to pop into Levington village for a quickie at the Ship Inn; a perfect finish to a perfect weekend. **MBY Next Month:** Channel Islands

DO YOU HAVE A PERFECT WEEKEND? If you'd like to show fellow *MBY* readers how to spend the perfect weekend in your home waters, drop an email to hugo_andreae@ipcmmedia.com. We pay for successful submissions!