

Saturday 28th June 2008 –

The Kimmeridge sea trip - a report

It was with the promise of cream teas, fossil hunting and a days paddling along the beautiful Dorset Jurassic coast that Brian, Anne, Debbie and myself jumped into the Biffin's Bongo and headed off to Kimmeridge. A couple of hours later and we were catching our first glimpse of the sea, Brian starts to get excited when he spots white peaks out in the sea, Debbie and me aren't sure if this is a good thing or not.

We arrived at the car park to find Merry with Tom and his parents waiting for us. We unload the trailer and start packing the kayaks Merry was a little worried that the spraydecks may not fit the two Carolinas. Merry was right to be worried, only one fitted, but he decided to give it a go without a deck and hoped it didn't get too choppy. Brian gave him the pump just in case it did!

The six of us (Brian, Anne, Debbie, Merry, Tom and myself) launched into the bay, it's a bit rougher than the canal, my stomach told me as we paddled out towards open water, not sure if sea kayaking is going to be my cup of tea.

Once out in open water the swell got bigger and I actually started to enjoy myself, with waves breaking over the front of the boat we headed along the coast.

After an hour or so we realised that we hadn't covered as much distance as we'd have liked and with the tide changing soon, Brian suggested we head in closer to the shore as any help the tide had given us would now be negligible. Realising that Lulworth Cove would have to wait for another day we started to look for somewhere to have lunch. A little bay was spotted and Tom and myself headed in first. Tom made it look so easy as he surfed in threading his way through the rocks to beach gently on the pebbles. I on the other hand spent ages manoeuvring my kayak so that I could bounce off several rocks before finally hitting the beach! Everybody else managed to get in with ease and the boats were dragged up a bit as the tide was now coming in.

Whilst the rest of us tucked into our lunches, Merry spent the next few minutes emptying the water out of his boat. Brian wanted to get back on the water by about 2pm and said it would probably take us longer to get back due to 'weather cocking' (apparently it's when the wind stops you from going in a straight line and you have to keep correcting your course). However, after looking at the sea getting rougher over lunch, Brian decided that it would be unsafe for us to attempt the return journey and after explaining the situation we all agreed to call it a day and abandon the return journey.

We'd landed at a place close to Tyneham village, which has quite a history attached. It was 'commandeered' by the army in 1943 to provide a training area. The villagers were given a month to move out never to return. Their houses can still be seen along with the church and school, although the houses are now just ruins creating a 'ghost' village in the woods. Well worth a visit if your down that way. There's a car park by the village, unfortunately it's about a mile from the beach where we'd landed. We decided to carry the kayaks up to the car park, once we'd got them past the tank traps on the beach the path was nice and wide and we could double up and carry two kayaks between us. Not too bad I thought, after all, how heavy can a kayak be! 50 yards later I'm looking for the concrete block that must be hidden in the Anas Acuta, another 50 yards and I'd swear the Carolina had one as well! Fortunately an American guy stopped and he asked us if we needed a hand, so before his girlfriend could persuade him otherwise, we had him trudging up the track carrying the ends of a couple of kayaks behind Anne and Debbie. After a while we did feel sorry for him so we let them go on their way.

Eventually we get to the car park, but the vans back at Kimmeridge, so Debbie's on a mission to get Brian a lift back and starts accosting motorists as they leave the car park. Luckily she

succeeds and soon Brian was back with the van and no sooner had he stopped, Anne had the kettle on ready for a brew. Tea and cake followed, before finishing off loading the kayaks.

Merry had finally made contact with Tom's parents, who came down to pick them up, so we said our goodbyes, and after dropping off the club's Carolinas at the Paddle Sport weekend we headed back to Fleet.

All in all a very enjoyable trip, OK, so no cream teas or fossils and my arms are now two inches longer, but we had a great paddle out, along a beautiful part of the coast and we got to look around Tyneham village as well. Thanks Brian, I'm hooked and I'll see you on the next one.

Carl Veness