

Wool to Wareham on the Dorset Frome.

Sunday 24th October. It was warm and sunny, a lovely autumn day. We parked a vehicle at Wareham on the quay, where we intended to finish and took the LR with David's open canoe and my kayak on to Wool. Here we put in just upstream of the old bridge. There was plenty of parking and an easy get-in. Cags were removed fairly soon after setting off as we warmed up.

It had rained the day before after a dry spell, so the river was lowish, but running fast enough to help us, though we had to pick our route carefully in some places where it was shallow. We went past a couple of friendly fisherman after a short while and on to first portage at Bindon Mill, having already passed a "no canoeing" sign. There was a lot of work going on here, diggers and mud everywhere. There was no-one around so we managed the portage, but it would probably be impractical when people are working. They are installing a screw turbine generator in a newly excavated turbine channel. The whole area looks quite different to the views on Google. We got the impression the portage may not be possible once the works are complete.

We continued on our scenic trip, admiring kingfishers and grey wagtails and a family of swans with a very vocal goose attached! We had no problems at portage at the fish-counting station (see photos), but getting out is not trivial as the bank is high. It was quite comical hauling the boats out of the water!



After passing under the bridge near East Stoke we encountered more "no canoeing signs", but fortunately there was no-one around! Yet more wonderful, peaceful scenery and warm sunshine.

Some time beyond this, near West Holme Farm, we came across a fisherman, fly fishing. As we approached him a swan, not happy at being trapped between a fisherman and some kayaks decided to take off with vast amounts of noise and splashing. The fisherman, annoyed at the disturbance, told us we should not be there. We were quite polite, and he calmed down and asked if we would wait there for 5 minutes whilst he fished a pool a short way on. We agreed to this and pulled in to an eddy. He waved us on a little later and we chatted to him as he walked on down the river. I offered to portage past his pool and explained we had "googled" the route and no-where had we seen anything which suggested we could not canoe it. We then had an amicable chat about access, fishermen and canoeists. He appreciated our efforts to help him and we parted on friendly terms. Shortly after we went under the bridge at Holme.

A little way after this there were more "no boating or canoeing" signs and many more swans. We meandered on, doing great loops as the river really could not decide which way it wanted to go. We saw the same herd of cows several times as we did a near circuit of their field. There were egrets, herons, lots of ducks (mainly mallard & a few wigeon) and more swans. We came to the railway bridge, then the noise of traffic and the road bridge, but there was no-one around at all until we reached Wareham Quay.

The whole trip was scenic as promised, easy flat-water canoeing, but lots of interest in the scenery and wildlife. It took us about 3 hours, but the river was not flowing fast and once on the tidal stretch both wind and tide were against us.

An enjoyable trip, such a shame you are made to feel guilty being there.

