



Harbour at West Bay

Dorset artist

# WORKING WITH THE SEA

Tim Saunders talks to Poole's prolific maritime painter Sean Curley

Over the last decade Sean Curley has produced more than 100 paintings of Weymouth, West Bay and Poole featuring his trademark brightly coloured fishing boats. His largest painting is an 8ft x 3ft triptych and the smallest measures just six inches by four.

His work, particularly popular among Sandbanks residents, pays homage to the local fishing industry; it is the busy nature of harbours, the colourful boats and the gritty realism that most appeal to him.

'Poole, West Bay and Weymouth are all working harbours, which for me provide a better composition than other settings because there's always something happening. They are ever-changing in terms of light, movement and, of course, seagulls. The compositions are not perfectly posed, as in Gainsborough's paintings, for instance,' says Sean who draws inspiration from Renoir's works including Luncheon of the Boating Party.

'Poole and Weymouth are the largest with ferry services while West Bay is a more traditional harbour with small fishing boats. I like the fact that this trio are working harbours generating business and continue to survive during increasingly challenging economic times. Poole has a nice fishing fleet, which supplies restaurants on the quay and it's the same with West Bay, which supplies Bridport

– I paint it most weeks. There are plenty of fish and chip shops in Weymouth so supply and demand is well matched at all three locations.'

At the vast natural harbour of Poole, he has found himself painting Brittany Ferries' *Barfleur* as well as yachts and the panoramic views. 'It's good to live near Poole so that you can visit the harbour with ease when the right weather conditions arise. I have been there at the crack of dawn but I do prefer the evening at Poole. The skies are important and I have discovered the best scene is when the sun sets. I also need nice cloud formations and colours,' adds Sean, who prefers to use straight oil paints without mixing them to ensure the brightest colours.

At Weymouth there are the fishing trawlers and associated buildings that frequently fuel Sean's artistic appetite. At West Bay smaller fishing boats are set against the backdrop of the cliffs, which provides a suitably different setting.

'I love the bright colours of the fishing boats. For me they are very similar to flowers such as the red of poppies against the green. I believe the boats are such a bright colour so that they stand out, which helps if they get lost at sea, but this also really lends itself to canvas. I greatly respect this industry.'