

Despite the challenges faced by Dorset's fishermen each year they play their part in helping the UK fishing fleet land around 600,000 tonnes of seafood at home and abroad, for a total of £830 million (according to the Marine Management Organisation), although only four per cent of fish is brought in by smaller boats.

Aside from taking a healthy interest in the fishing industry, Sean also makes a point of knowing his boat registrations. 'PE is for Poole, WH for Weymouth and W for West Bay. It shows the observer where a particular boat is based and it definitely adds something to a piece and often forms the name of a painting.'

He is all too aware of the fact that fishing is the most dangerous peacetime profession. According to Seafish, the authority on seafood, 94 commercial fishermen in the UK have died in the last ten years and 25 per cent of fishermen claim they have had an incident at sea which put their life at risk. The already perilous lives of fishermen were dealt a double blow in the severe storms that struck during the winter of 2013.

'Many fishermen, particularly those in coves, with tidal restricted harbours such as West Bay and those launching from beaches were unable to fish for months,' recalls Sean. 'Those winter storms prevented fishing, caused the loss of fishing pots, smashed harbours, and in extreme situations boats sunk in the harbours. While the winter storms had an impact on many fishermen around the UK, those particularly affected were the inshore fishing fleets, especially those fishermen who operate day-boats located around Dorset. And these feature heavily in my paintings.'

Sean, who works from photographs, typically takes about 20 and then mixes and matches them to produce his ideal painting back in the studio.

'Fishermen do sometimes get in the photo but they are very much working and there is no posing whatsoever. I use a small camera that takes great photos and is ideal for shots of fishermen, because you don't want to make it obvious and put them off hauling in their nets.'



Fishing boat at West Bay

Sean has lived in Poole since the age of 14 after his parents relocated to the area. 'When I first arrived in Dorset I played in a band and later ended up falling for Andrea, who was Rob, the drummer's sister. Andrea is a psychologist and she does read things into my paintings,' says Sean, who still plays the guitar and does host the occasional exhibition of his work as part of a music gig.

He often exhibits with award-winning sculptor Philip Jackson and his work can be seen at Quarr Gallery, Swanage and Beaulieu Fine Art. ▶

▶ www.seancurleyfineart.co.uk

