

Bass Fishing

The area immediately south of Portland Bill is known as the "Race" or to give it its full name the "Portland Race",

The Race is an area of fast moving turbulent water produced by the combination of water being forced upwards from deeper water to spill over the much shallower muscle encrusted reef and the effects of the tide flow being diverted by the isle of Portland which juts out into the English Channel by about 8 miles,

On a flood tide the west to east setting tide meets a southerly tidal flow that has been displaced by Portland, this creates a confused sea state,

Even on a calm windless day the conditions in the race can be 'Lumpy' add to this a wind against tide situation and you could be forgiven for thinking you were on an Alton Towers ride rather than a charter boat fishing trip,

On an ebb tide the change in depth is more gradual so less lumpy although the shape of Portland Isle now serves to accelerate the east to west setting tide giving very high drift speeds, sometimes these speeds become too excessive and Bassing is abandoned until the tide begins to ease,

It is this turbulent water that attracts the Bass and the most turbulent water in the front of the race often produces the bigger fish,

Anglers wanting to target the Bass must be prepared to put up with the uncomfortable conditions and be able to cope with fishing from a boat that is drifting over snaggy ground at speeds sometimes in excess of 5 or 6 knots,

The race does not provide non stop action for the Bass fisherman, instead there will often be times when the area will appear to be devoid of all sea life, in general, when the drift of the boat has dropped below 2 knots the bites from the Bass will usually stop, and when I say stop, I mean just that, they will stop biting almost as if someone had thrown a switch!

When this happens we will usually move to another area and try for something else whilst we wait for the tide to start running again, these periods of slacker tidal flow are ideal for targeting Turbot, Brill and Plaice on the Shambles bank, or, on the smaller tides Blonde Rays on the Kidney bank,

Tackle & Tactics

Without any doubt at all the most productive rig for Bass fishing in the Race is the 'Portland Rig' this rig is used by the commercial rod & line Bass fishermen and has proven to be the most efficient rig to use in these conditions,

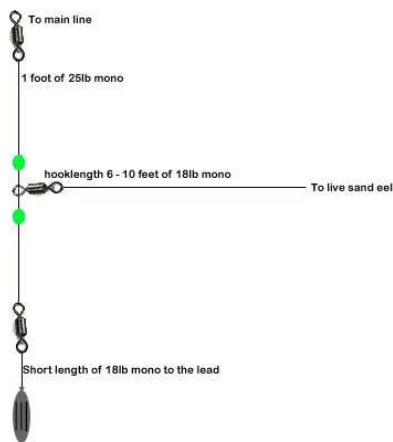
The materials needed to make up the Portland Rig are:

3 good quality barrel type line swivels

2 small beads

18lb clear (not white!) mono line

25lb clear mono line



The picture shows the simplicity of this rig and why it is so efficient, especially when you compare this rig to say a standard running ledger rig or even a flying collar rig,

There is the absolute minimum of resistance to the tide and the rig is less visible to the wary Bass,

Coupled with the fact that the cost of the materials needed to tie it up is only a fraction of other less efficient rigs,

Three things to remember when tying your own Portland Rigs,

1. Don't make the hook length too short

2. Don't make the lead link or the sliding length too long

3. Use a ball or pear shaped lead, avoid leads with flat sections.

The hook length should be at least 6 feet long and often more than that, even up to 20 feet at times,

The lead link should be as short as possible and the sliding length about 12 - 15 inches long,

Okay, so now you have tied up your Portland Rig, how do you fish it? Simple, lower it to the seabed in a controlled manner (to avoid tangles, but fast enough so that you feel the 'tap') when you feel the lead tap the bottom, lock off the reel, every few seconds drop your rod tip and if you don't feel it 'tap' then let out a little more line,

Caution. if you feel your lead tapping continuously, Wind back in a little otherwise you will snag the bottom and snap off, Some anglers like to tap the bottom and then do a slow retrieve of about 10 turns of the reel handle before dropping back to bottom again and repeating the procedure, this is a good way of ensuring your gear is always in close proximity to the seabed and you are less likely to snag up whilst fishing this method,

Bait

The number one bait for this style of fishing is without question, Live Sand Eel closely followed by Live Joey Mackerel, at certain times of the year when Sand Eels are not available, Shads, Jelly Worms, Eddystone Eels and even Hockais can be very productive however the latter will often account for the smaller fish which must be returned to grow and hopefully breed,

When you get a hit from a Bass, lift the rod tip sharply to set the hook, its worth mentioning at this point that most of the time the hook is only lodged in the mouth of the Bass and when we eventually slip the landing net under him the hook will fall out when the line goes slack!

Armed with that snippet of information it becomes obvious that you cannot allow the fish to have slack line, nor can you bully him,

The golden rule is set your reel drag correctly so that it will slip when necessary and use a soft tipped rod so that you can keep a nice slow bend in it at all times, keep watching that rod tip and if it starts to straighten wind faster,

Anglers often get fooled into thinking they have been smashed up when there line goes slack only to find that the Bass has swam towards them carrying the weight of there tackle with him, when I tell them to quickly wind in, to there amazement they discover he is still on and connected!

Bass fishing is becoming more and more popular with the growing breed of modern anglers who are prepared to invest in some good tackle and put up with the uncomfortable conditions that we sometimes encounter, if you fancy a days 'Bassing' then give me a ring.