

# Bang Tidy

The BFM Team headed to deepest darkest Pembrokeshire recently, to a tiny village called Dale, in order to sample some of the bass and pollack lure fishing on offer...

**We love Facebook here at BFM. In the past year we've ended up going on some great trips after being invited by people on Facebook, who have just happened to land on the BFM page.**

This was one such trip, and after a few private messages on the net between BFM Ed, Dave Barham, and Awesome Fishing boss James Lemon, the date was set and we found ourselves making the mammoth drive from Peterborough for a two-day extravaganza.

## A Beautiful Place

It was a first for Dave B and BFM photographer, Jim Midgley, because neither of them had travelled so far west in south Wales before. They were in fact headed for a tiny village called Dale, which is just a couple of clicks west of Milford Haven.

The scenery and general 'feel' of the place when they arrived blew them both away – what a truly magnificent place to live and fish!

Dale is actually situated on a peninsular within a huge bay, which offers a great variety of fishing. Some of the rock marks that we visited in our quest for early morning bass are truly stunning,

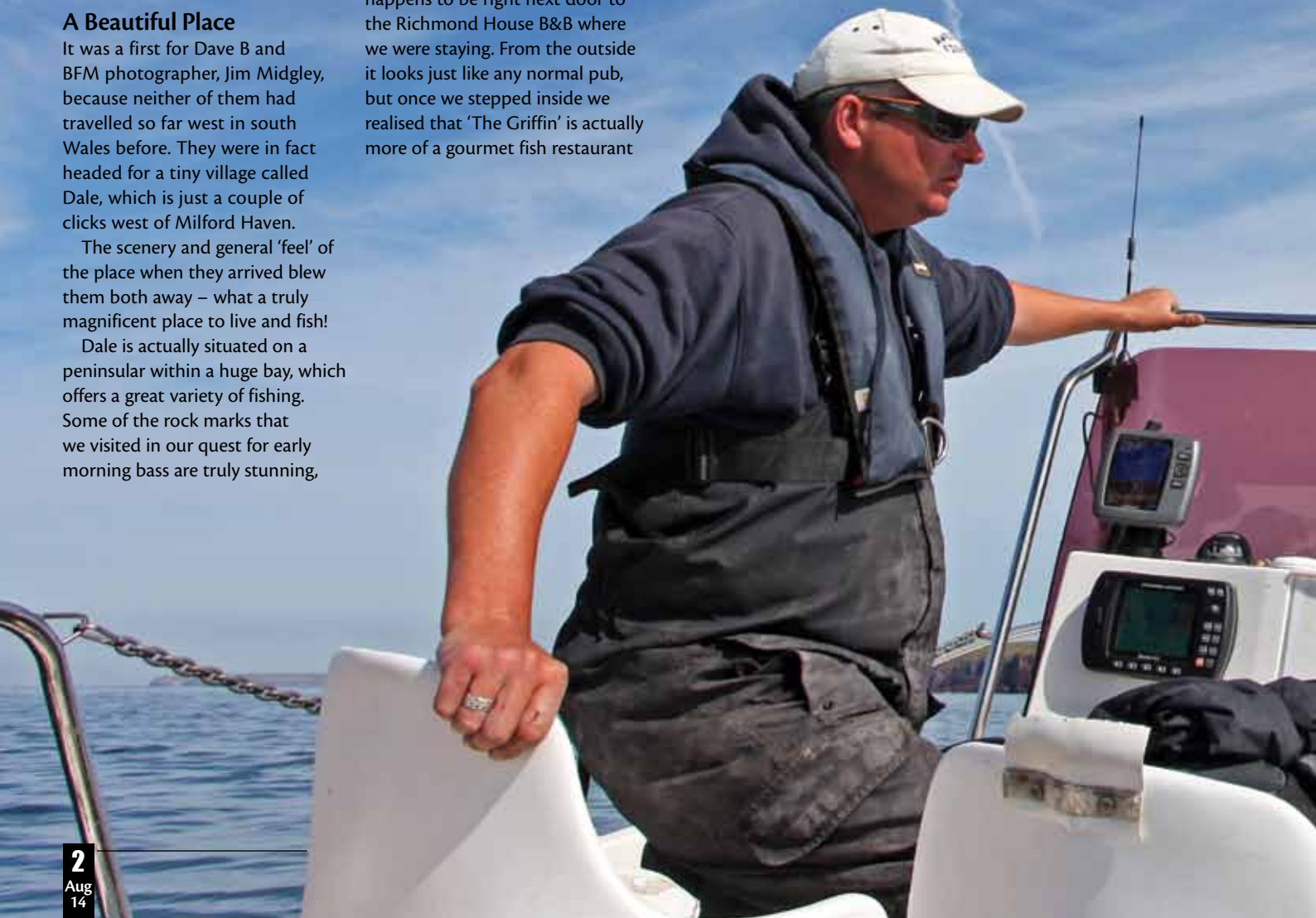
and most are only accessible by boat because they're fronted by hundreds of feet of sheer cliffs. They're the sort of marks that most rock hopping shore enthusiasts would die for, and they're all within just a couple of minutes motoring from the pontoon – yes, Dale has a pontoon, where boats can tie up or pick up from!

## Day One – The Taster

After our long drive to Dale, we arrived at around 6pm and got straight into the pub, which just happens to be right next door to the Richmond House B&B where we were staying. From the outside it looks just like any normal pub, but once we stepped inside we realised that 'The Griffin' is actually more of a gourmet fish restaurant

than a pub! A quick glance at the 'specials' board confirmed that, with dishes such as hake, monkfish, turbot, bass, john dory and lobster on the menu, it looked like we were in for a treat.

It just so happened that an old friend of ours, skipper Rob Rennie, had moved his boat down from Swansea for the summer sharking season, and he and his girlfriend Debbie were soon joining us for a few beers and dinner – which made the evening even more special.



# Bassing!

## Skipper And Boat

Skipper James runs the rather sleek and sexy 'Bang Tidy', a Karnic Bluewater 2105, which measures 6.6 meters in total. She's powered by a Suzuki DF 140, which provides a cruising speed between 15 - 20 knots with a top speed of 33.5 knots, in flat calm conditions with three persons on board.

James has been skippering for two years, but has 20 years experience of fishing in the area from shore, boat and kayak. He started guiding from the shore and yaks three years ago, and very quickly realised that a boat was the way to go for numbers of decent bass and big pollack.

He supplies all the gear and lifejackets if you don't have your own, including Rovex Plugger rods, Penn Fierce 4000 reels loaded with braid, plus all the lures and soft plastics. He's keen as mustard, and knows exactly where to take you – it's just up to you and bass to decide whether you catch or not!



*Fish on! But is it a bass?*



As the beer and wine flowed, the smoked mackerel pate, mussels and salmon starters went down a treat, followed by poached hake with some really tasty trimmings.

After we'd had our fill of food and booze, and after a few hours of tall fishing stories, we hit the sack to try and grab a couple of hours' sleep in preparation for a 4am dawn raid on the silver spikeys. Anticipation and excitement were running wild, and it was a job for us to get any sleep at all.

## Early Start

We awoke, bleary eyed, to a warm, calm, glorious morning, with the sun just about to pop over the horizon. There were fish cruising and topping in the Bay, and as

James quietly slipped the mooring and clicked the engine into gear, everyone on board was geared up and ready for action.

James took us to his favourite spot, where he's caught numerous bass to well over 6lb on surface lures in the past, and what a mark it is too. The water was gin clear, and we could see the rocks and weed below us in 10ft of water quite easily, even with very little light.

Dave opted for his favourite topwater lure, the Lucky Craft Sammy, while Jim set up with a Maria Chase. The pair made cast after cast along literally miles of coastline as James guided the boat in and out of tiny bays, reefs and channels, but try as we might we just couldn't induce a take. There were plenty of sea trout rolling in

the shallows, and one bumped fish was all that we had to show for two hour's fishing.

It really didn't matter though, the scenery is quite literally breathtaking, and we've both done enough of this type of fishing to know that it's not all about catching fish.

We could see the potential of the place, and every single inch of the coastline in that area just screams bass at you. It was a real joy and pleasure just to be flicking lures into likely spots on such a glorious morning.

Just as we cruised around one of the tiny bays we bumped into local commercial rod and line fisherman, Mark Gainfort. We'd had a couple of beers with him the night before, and he was more than forthcoming with information about the fishing

in the area and how he goes about it. And, as you would expect from a commercial fisherman, he'd had a productive morning with a couple of bass and some nice pollack in the boat. That was a great sight to see, and it just made us work harder at our game to try and mimic his success the following morning.

## Change Of Plan

With no bass falling to our lures on the dawn raid, we decided to head back to the pontoon (about three minutes away) and head up to the café for breakfast. We didn't even sit in, we just got it to go and headed straight back down to the boat and back out to sea – we didn't want to miss a second on the water.

James suggested that we head round the corner, seaward side, to try a few more rocky bays and



*Commercial fisherman Mark gave us plenty of tips and pointers.*



*Dave's hard lure selection – he tried them all!*



maybe hit some deeper water for wrasse and pollack on soft plastics, before heading back into the Bay for the evening session. It seemed like the perfect plan to us, and one that most bass anglers would agree was the right thing to do on such a day.

However, after fishing one particular sandy bay, which had an exposed rock and subsurface mini reef system some 20 yards out from the shore, we were quite amazed at what we saw.

We'd hit a few pollack and small bass on the drop off on ultralight gear (you can read all about that in Dave B's LBF Adventures elsewhere in this issue), and as we drifted off the reef into the sandy bay we began seeing bass swimming along, under the boat and in the vicinity, in 8ft of water. The sun was well up now, and the bass were obviously

swimming and feeding deep, so we changed our tactics to suit and donned the soft plastics – namely Fiiish Black Minnows.

Yet again, try as we might, we couldn't connect with a bass. We had a few follows, and Jim hit into one and lost it, but nothing made it to the boat. Again that didn't matter, we'd seen plenty of bass cruising, so we knew they were there, and that's about as much as you can wish for when you know they aren't in a feeding mood. It keeps the enthusiasm up, and the heart racing!

We gave up on the open water in the sandy bay, and pushed back over to the small reef drop off where we'd had the pollack, and as we made our first drift Jim latched into his first bass of the trip, right on the drop off, directly under

the boat. He was fishing the Black Minnow, exactly how it is designed to fish – vertical jigging style.

In came a feisty two-pounder, followed by a 5lb pollack. He then switched to a Delalande Shadka II lure (having lost his one and only Black Minnow to the reef!)

Again, fishing vertical jig style, he brought a 1lb 8oz bass to the net. We were off the mark, but then suddenly it just all went quiet – and that's when we noticed the two seals swimming around the boat!

That was our cue to head on off, and James suggested fishing the jetties up the river, which are notorious for bass. We liked the sound of that, any structure in an estuary system is a guaranteed bass magnet!

## **Bang, And The Fish is Gone!**

When we got to the first jetty there were already another two boats in the vicinity fishing on the other jetty that we could see, so we decided to stick where we were and try our luck on jetty number one.

We gave it a good go, from both sides, but we didn't even get a follow – it was obvious why the other two boats were fishing the larger jetty number two, so we headed over to see how they were getting on.

When we quietly glided in behind the jetty, one of the boats had already moved outside, which meant we had plenty of space to fish there. We dropped the anchor outside and drifted back towards the pylons, and stopped about

*What a glorious morning to go bass fishing!*

*Jim caught loads of two and three pound pollack.*



*You know it's time to move when you see a couple of these!*





*Pollack at first light on the Black Minnow.*



*This pollack looked like it had a narrow escape from a seal at some point.*



20yards short of them.

Back to the soft plastics and we tried just about everything in the box, then Dave resorted to an old faithful – the 15cm Grauvell Jinza Select, which is basically a sandeel pattern. He fished it on a 15g Berkley jighead and cast it out in the tide and let it roll underneath the jetty.

As he began twitching it back, something hit it hard and his line went taught. The fish then bolted off out into the open water, and Dave could tell it was a heavy fish from the off. Then it all went solid! This fish may well have been big, but it was also wise, which big fish usually are. It knew exactly where there was an obstruction, even out in the open water, and no amount

of slack lining, tugging and waiting was going to shift it. Bass 1, BFM nil!

Another twenty minutes by the jetty drew a blank, so we headed back to the Bay and rock marks for the evening 'rise'. Apart from two tentative 'follows' on the surface lures, and a hammering of pollack on the soft plastics, we couldn't hit a bass, so we headed back to Dale for a couple of pints (thirsty work casting all day) and another gourmet fish

supper, before hitting the hay at half eight. Yes, half eight, we were both shattered and we had 3.30am start the following morning for round two!

**Let's Get Ready To Rumble**

At 3.30am we were up and ready to rock. Again the excitement and anticipation were sky high as we looked out of the window to see a flat calm Bay in front of us, with Jupiter glowing in the deep

*There are hundreds of rocky bays like this that can only be accessed by boats.*





*We caught plenty of bass, but couldn't connect with the big ones.*



*One of James' pollack and cod marks – it's a lot deeper here.*



blue sky as the sun began to slowly light the place up.

James was already on the boat as we waddled down the jetty at 4am, and we were quickly away to mark number one where Mark had caught his bass the previous morning. Again there

were sea trout rolling all around us, and we could see the odd bass 'dolphining' along the water's edge. Out went the first cast, and then the second, and the third, but nothing. Dave stuck to the surface lures, Jim kept with the subsurface, and James joined in

switching from one to the other.

We fished for about an hour before James hit the first bass on a Rapala J13 (what a classic bass lure that is). It was only a schoolie, but he followed up with another and then a missed take. Then Dave missed one on the surface, and

that was a rather impressive swirl behind the lure to say the least.

All too soon the sun had lifted too high in the sky for the shallow water fishing, and rather than go to the previous day's successful bass mark, Dave requested a look for some wrasse on the soft plastics.



*A wrasse devours Jim's Black Minnow.*



*The wrasse were very forthcoming, especially to the HTO Sea Minnows.*



*A small codling on the speed jig for Dave B.*



And that turned out to be a great idea. In just over an hour's fishing he managed to boat four really nice wrasse to just under 3lb, plus a few decent pollack too. He caught most of these by vertical jigging with a white HTO Sea Minnow lure fished on a 20g HART Absolut jighead.

With the Midday sun really hammering down it was time to head back to Dale, so we could get packed away and hit the road before getting stuck on the M5 or M6 rush hour, but not before James gently glided the boat into Dale

Bay and an area known locally as The Gann. Here it's just four feet deep, with plenty of weed cover and a small estuary inlet, where we were greeted by literally hundreds of mullet cruising around, with the odd bass thrown in for good measure. Twenty minutes of messing about there really topped the trip off, and it was really exciting, if non productive, fishing.

**A Place To Remember**

Even though we didn't score any big bass, we'd caught plenty and

had an amazing time in Dale. And, would you believe it, about three hours into our journey home we received a text message from James to 'Check out Facebook'. Jim logged on and there was James with a plump 4lb+ bass in the boat that he'd just caught on a subsurface plug. Typical!

We'll definitely be going back to Dale, if not for the hake in the Griffin, to try and search out one of those bigger bass off the top in what can only be described as a 'lure anglers' heaven'.

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*Dale is a stunning place.*