

From Plymouth to Portsmouth: ADRIAN GILLAN buys British this summer. Fold back the car roof, jump that coastal train or hire a yacht, but whatever you do, cruise the hundred and fifty mile stretch fast becoming known as

# THE GAY ENGLISH RIVIERA.



## BOURNEMOUTH

BOURNEMOUTH isn't huge so you'd be a real dipstick to get too lost here, especially with all action clustered around a few small streets just north west of the town centre, around the Triangle and Commercial Road. The real pub of the moment is the **Branksome Arms** (Commercial Road; T: 01202 552 544) whose clientele is a microcosm of the Bournemouth scene – young and old, all swarming and warming up for hot club action. Hoards of young boys prowl and pack into compact **Xchange** (4 The Triangle; T: 01202 294 321) on The Triangle but arrive early to avoid the queues.

Long-standing clubbing institution, **Rubyz Bar & Nightclub** (formerly The Triangle, 30 The Triangle; T: 01202 297 607), still manages to pull in the pink punters, though things don't get real busy 'til past midnight come weekends. And it's all good fun in the pure pop basement dance zone.

Cruising means **The Gardens**, the upper tract of park strip that cuts a swathe right through Bournemouth town centre, notably the stretch just north of the A35 Wessex Way flyover, easily accessible by horned-up post-club fellas who failed to pull or prefer their boys all bushy. Or try your outdoor luck along **The Chines**, a series of sea cliff valleys along West Cliff, mainly used by randy motorists who pull-in-to-pull at the sea-view lay-bys.

The queer quarter is also awash with good eateries. **Rubyz Restaurant & Cabaret Bar** (Commercial Road; T: 01202 780 225) on Commercial Road is gay-run and fun, and camp but not cheap. Otherwise, try **Legends** (53 Bourne Avenue; T: 01202 310 100) across The Gardens for lighter snacks at any hour. And you can heartily recommend the perfectly positioned **Creffield Hotel** (7 Cambridge Road; T: 01202 317 900) for nourishing succour and overnight comfort.



## PLYMOUTH

PLYMOUTH reeks of seamen. From Francis Drake to The Pilgrim Fathers, there must have been immeasurable friggung rigging, humping down holds and orgies at inns over eons. Perhaps Plymouth's modern day gay yarn – a tragically short tale to be true – in part reflects an eroding of this historic city's links with the sea.

Yet all is not sunk. There are still beacons shining out like harbour lights, near the Hoe and down by the old town. Bob down to the cobbled Barbican district above the quaint marina and you'll soon hit against a most provocatively-named pub: **The Swallow** (59 Breton Side; T: 01752 251760). Gay-run, it wears its heart on its sleeve – even nailed to the mast – is the city's queer lifeblood and is packed to the aft come weekends. Next berth? Since Legends (a.k.a. 'Leg

Ends') around the corner has pulled the plug after a dramatic descent, **Zeros** (24 Lockyer Street; T: 01752 662346) is the only show in town once The Swallow has flown and cleared its throat. Open most nights, Zero's basement – a labyrinth of sofas, bars, pool tables and loos – fills up first and then overflows onto the be-mirrored ground floor dancing space.

**Moorings Guest House** (4 Garden Crescent; T: 01752 250 128) back at West Hoe offers an overtly gay-friendly dock, mere minutes from bars and yards from sea.

