

## chapter 6

### *the chesapeake shore of the northern neck*

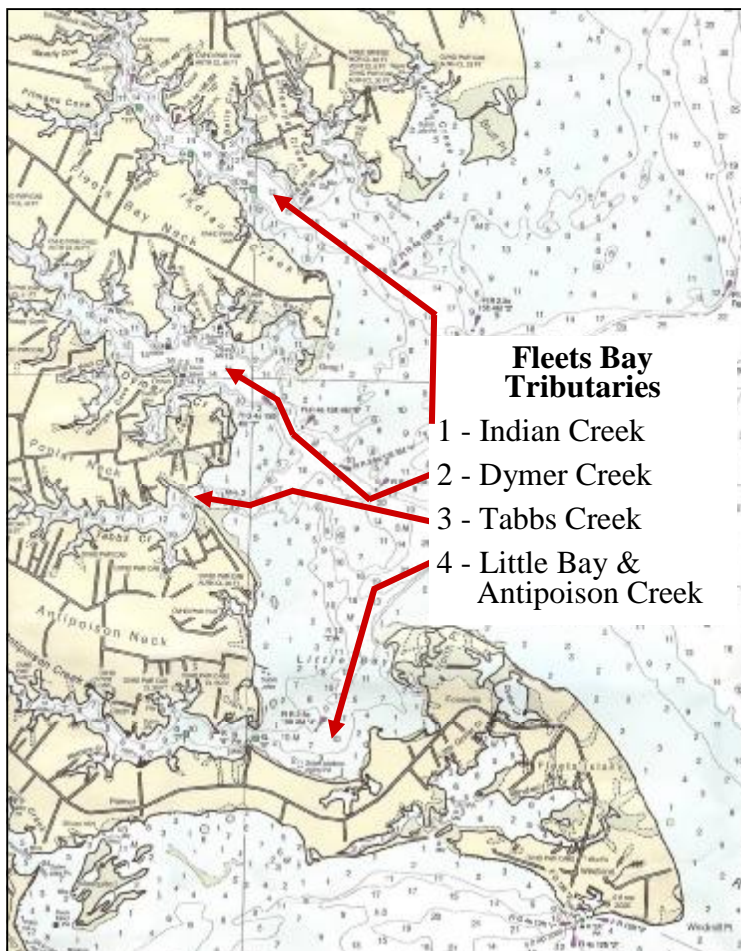
The Chesapeake Bay shore between Windmill Point and Smith Point has more than a half dozen creeks, each with several smaller creeks or coves, and also the short, but charmingly attractive, Great Wicomico River. The area comprises the northern half of what at one time was referred to as the Platinum Coast, the Chesapeake Bay's western shoreline from Hampton Roads to the Potomac River.

The southern portion of the Platinum Coast includes Hampton Roads, the James and York rivers, and Mobjack Bay with its four tributaries. The northern portion of this unique shoreline includes the Rappahannock River and its tributaries, and the creeks and tributaries of Virginia's Northern Neck, including the Great Wicomico river.



*Windmill Point Light - circa 1928*

Three creeks inside the Windmill Point peninsula (Windmill Point Creek, Oyster Creek, and Little Oyster Creek) are shallow and not navigable to cruising boats. However, they all make fascinating dinghy trips. In fact, you can actually go from Little Bay through to the Rappahannock River by this route. During the Civil War, a canal was dug by slaves from Little Oyster Creek to Little Bay which was used by Confederate forces to haul cargo through Windmill Point to bypass Union gunboats off the Point.



*Fleets Bay (from Chart 12235)*

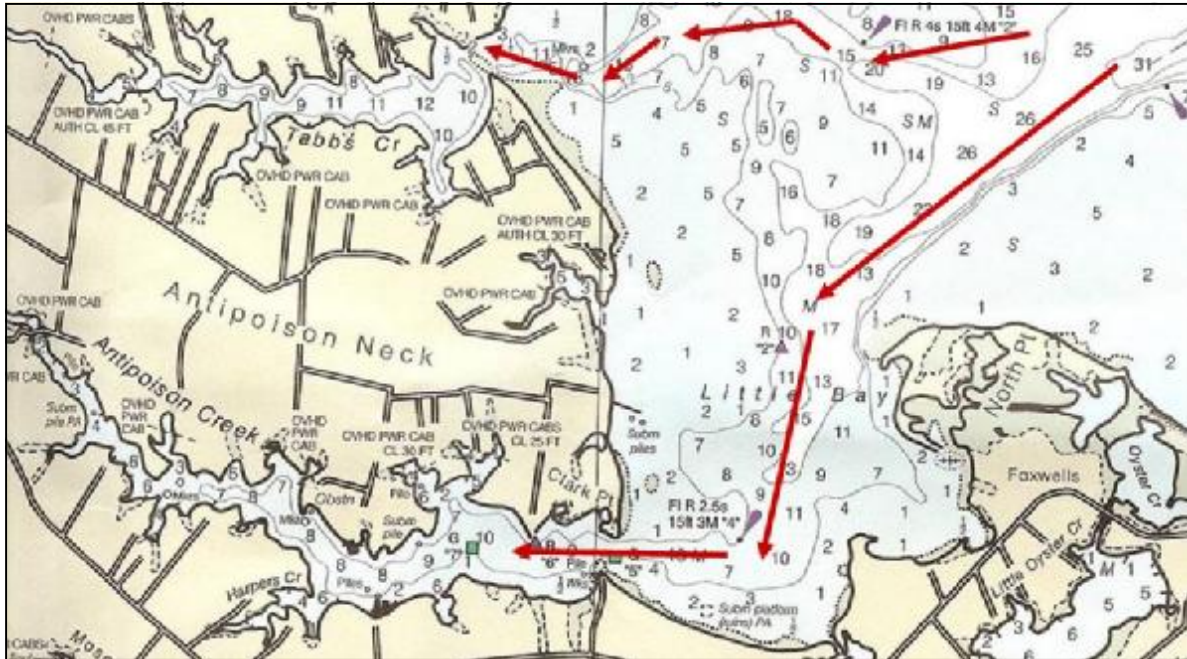
#### **FLEETS BAY**

The first area you come to north of Windmill Point surrounds a part of the Chesapeake Bay called Fleets Bay. The water around Fleets Bay and further north toward Ingram Bay is shallow with many shoals and marshes, but most of the creeks and their entrances are very well marked. The only trick is finding the marks and sorting them all out.

Because of the shallow water, this is a good place to have a GPS with a chart plotter and depth sounder or, failing that, a reliable depth sounder and a good chart.

Fleets Bay has four major creeks. All four of them make excellent cruising stops.

For this section of this *Cruising Guide*, we will start at the south end of the area and work our way north. Please look back at the section on the Lower Rappahannock to see the directions for rounding Windmill Point Light (see page 1). And don't forget Chart 12235 is your primary aid.



*Antipoison and Tabbs Creek Entrances (from Chart 12235)*

### LITTLE BAY

After rounding Windmill Point, head northwest to the flashing 4 sec white light identified as “N” on the chart ( $37^{\circ}39.2'N$ ,  $76^{\circ}18.0'W$ ). From “N” head southwest towards R“2” off of North Point at the top of Little Bay, keeping to the western side of the channel. Continue in a more southerly direction to red light R“4”.

### ANTIPOISON CREEK

Legend has it that when Capt. John Smith was attacked by a stingray off the point that’s now known by that name, local Indians brought him a medicine prepared from plants that grew on a creek north of the large point on the north side of the Rappahannock River. That creek is now appropriately called Antipoison Creek in honor of the Indians generosity with the white man from across the sea.

Today the creek is lined with many fine homes of people who have moved to the area from inland cities and municipalities, although there are still traces of the traditional fishing, crabbing, and oystering businesses that used to be prevalent here.

Entering Antipoison Creek is not difficult. Head west from R“4” at the bottom of Little Bay and follow the marks into the creek. There any number of places to anchor here, including two large unnamed coves along the north shore of the creek.

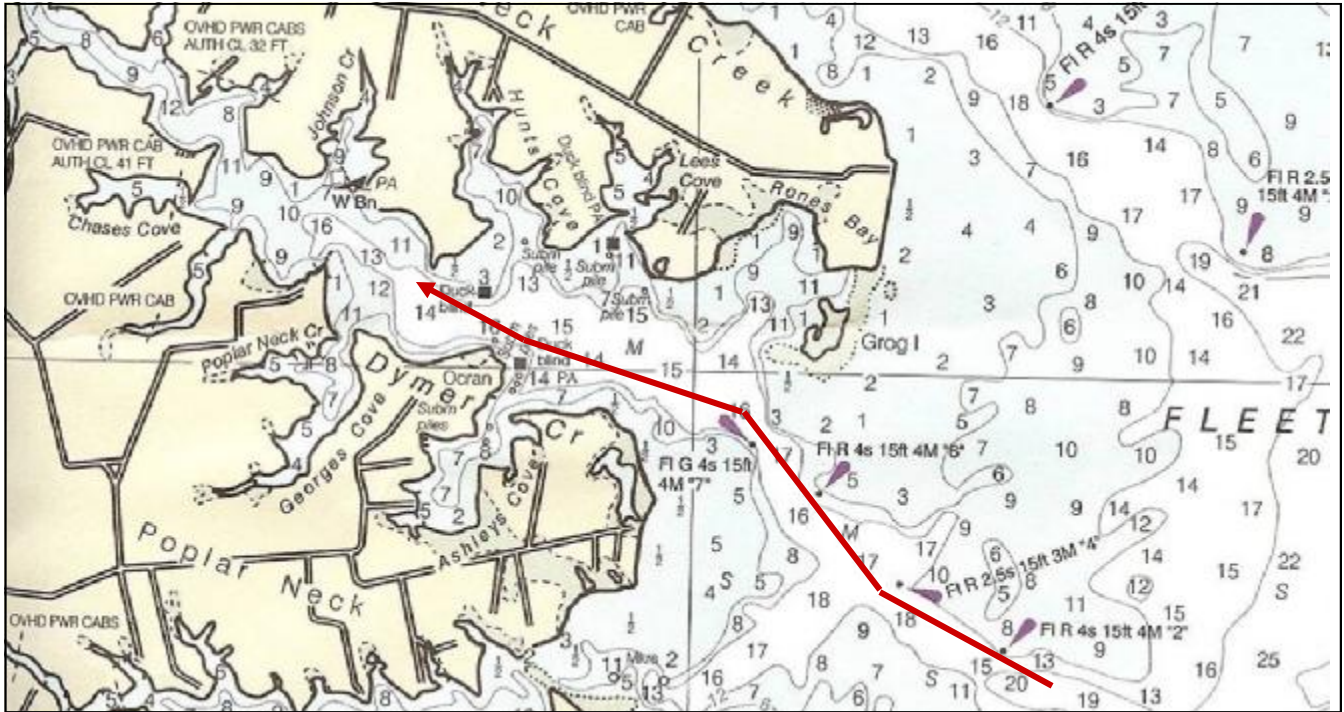
### TABBS CREEK

Just north of Antipoison Creek is small Tabbs Creek with ample depth and very secure protection.



*Tabbs Creek (from Chart 12235)*

Although the chart shows an obstructed entrance, the channel was recently dredged to a depth of 6 feet all the way in. The channel is well marked. Just keep to the north side as the south side tends to shoal. Tabbs Creek would make an excellent hurricane hole, but it is also an excellent place for an overnight stop when cruising the area.



*Dymer Creek (from Chart 12235)  
NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION*

## DYMER CREEK

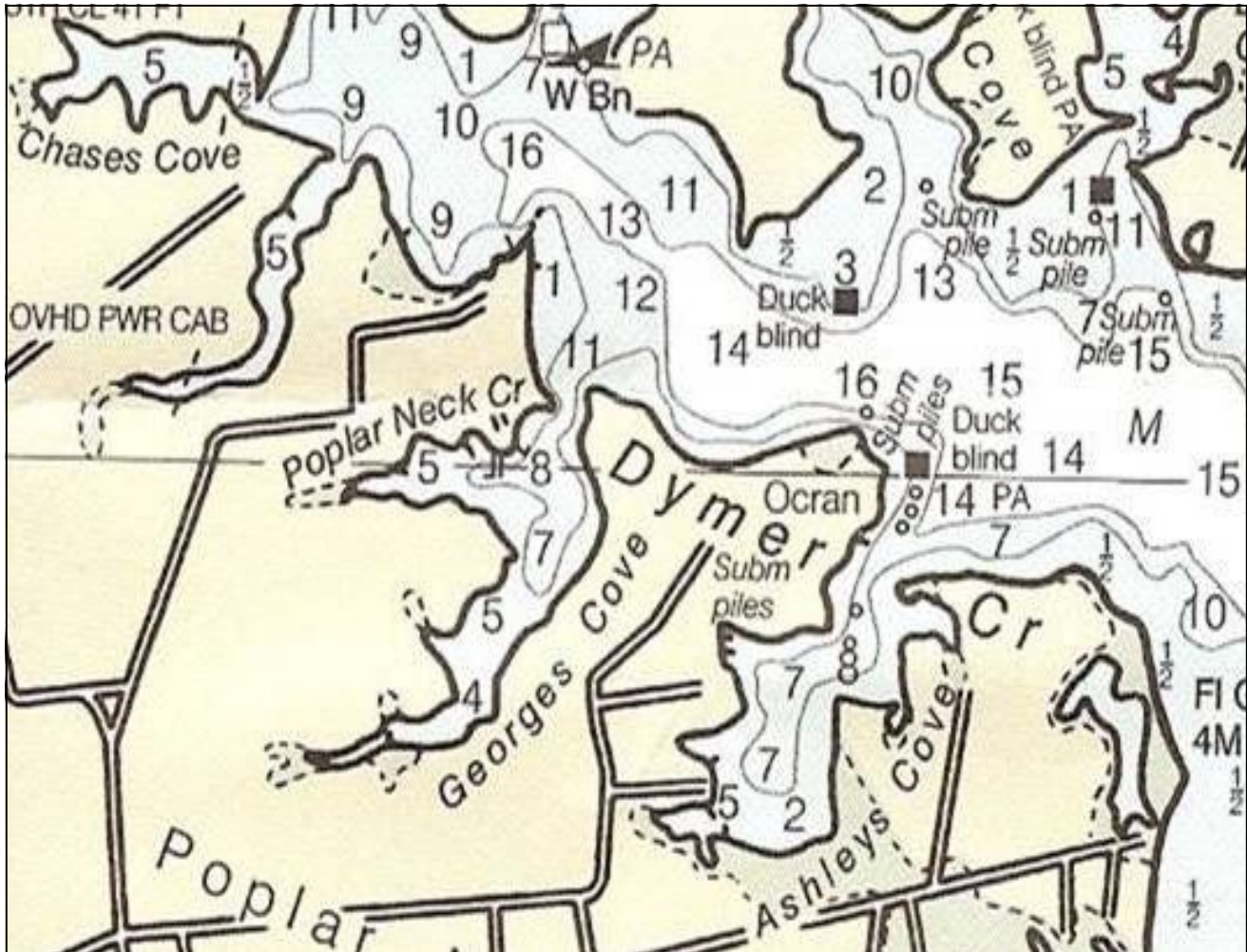
Dymer Creek has a lot to offer for the cruising boater. It has a very easy entrance - just follow the marks (3 red and 1 green) into the creek. There are nine creeks and coves from which to choose an anchorage, most of them suitable under a variety of conditions.

Dymer Creek has been an active commercial and residential creek since early colonial times. Named for Captain Nicholas Dymer who came to the area in the early 17th century, its deep natural entrance has made it a natural harbor for commercial activities. Today, almost all the former commercial fisheries are long gone, replaced by large waterfront homes, including several mega-mansions.

## *Union Shipwreck on Dymer Creek*

In 1865 during the last few days before Robert E. Lee surrendered, a Confederate raiding party from Windmill Point led by Captain Thaddeus Fitzhugh, went up the Bay to Baltimore and captured the Union steam vessel *Harriet De Ford*. A fleet of Union gunboats chased the *Harriet De Ford* down the Bay and finally

into Dymer Creek. The Confederates set the captured Union vessel on fire and the Union gunboats shelled the Confederates, in the process sinking their own vessel, the *Harriet De Ford*. Although her remains are no longer visible, parts of the keel and ribs have been recently discovered under the creek mud.



Ashleys Cove, Georges Cove, Poplar Neck Creek, and Chases Cove  
(From Chart 12235)

### Ashleys Cove.

The first cove you come to on your port side is Ashleys Cove. It is fairly easy to enter and has plenty of water and room. But it tends to be somewhat exposed to southeasterly winds coming across the low land toward the Bay. The pilings on the starboard side of the entrance are from canning factories that burned down in 1960.

### Georges Cove.

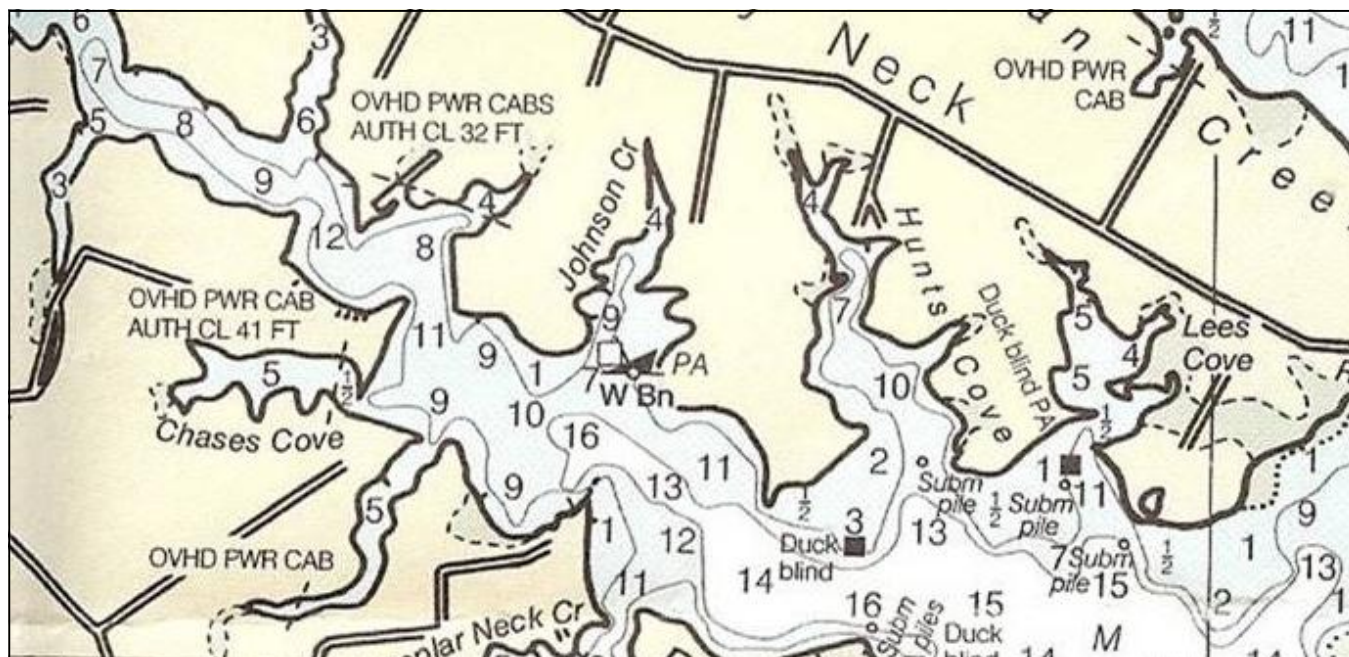
Georges Cove (and its western prong called Poplar Neck Creek) is the second cove to port coming into Dymer Creek. It has well protected deep water with a good holding bottom throughout.

On our first visit here we spent a quiet night with flat water in the cove, while just outside Dymer Creek the Bay had 3 to 4 foot waves. Ocran Boat Works, once located at the south end of Georges Cove, is no longer in operation.

The unnamed cove between Georges Cove and Chases Cove is known locally as Dymer Shores Cove. It has a deep but very narrow channel lined with summer cottages.

### Chases Cove.

Chases Cove has a very shallow (1 foot) entrance which makes it unnavigable to cruising boats. Inside, however, there is 5 to 7 feet of depth and it is a good place for a dinghy ride.



*Lees Cove, Hunts Cove, and Johnson Creek  
(From Chart 12235)*

### Lees Cove.

Lees Cove appears to starboard as you enter Dymer Creek. It has a very shallow (3 feet) and crooked entrance marked by poles. Dinghies can enter by keeping to port at the entrance, then turning to the right after passing the east point of land. There is a canal to the east that lets you take your dinghy almost to Rones Bay. The north branch has deeper water but also has a shallow entrance.

### Hunts Cove.

Hunts Cove is the second cove to starboard as you come in. Although the entrance is deep there are shallows on either side. Stay well away from the west side. Once inside there is adequate depth and good anchorage almost anywhere.

### JOHNSON CREEK

Johnson Creek is the third cove on the starboard side as you sail up Dymer Creek. Stay in the middle on the way in, avoiding the shipwreck marker on the east (starboard) side. Although we have not been here, it looks inviting.

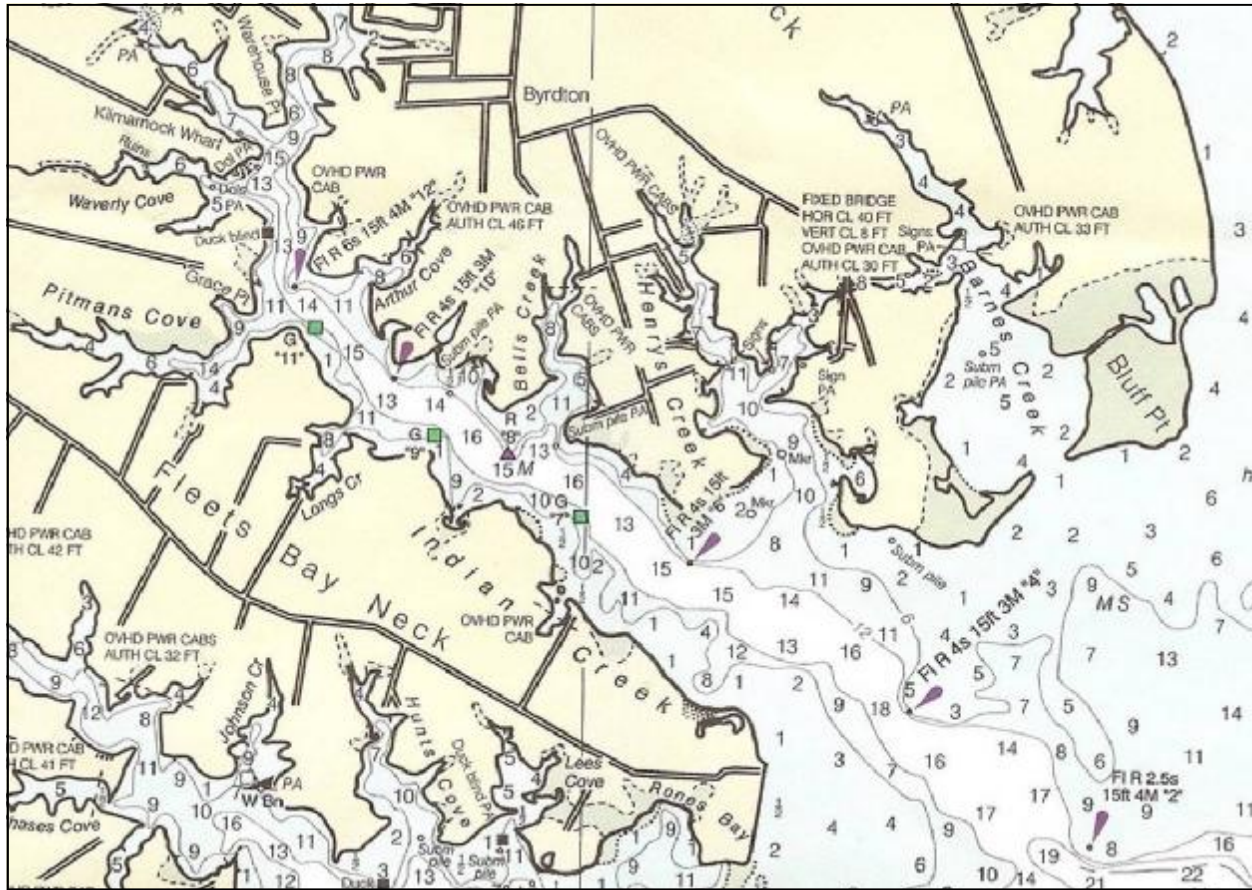
There are two other small, unnamed coves on the north side of Dymer Creek, upstream from Johnson Creek. Both are navigable to cruising boats - just stay to the center to enter. The second is called Hideaway Cove by the locals. It has 6 feet throughout most of its length. When entering, stay very close to the white boathouse on the right side of the entrance.

### RONES BAY

By far the most popular anchorage in Dymer Creek is barely in the creek. Rarely will you enter Dymer Creek without seeing at least one boat anchored in Rones Bay behind what used to be Grog Island. The island no longer exists, eroded away with time, the last tree stump now gone. There is less protection from easterly winds and fetch than when the island was present, but on hot summer nights it's still a good anchorage and a nice place to stop for the cool sea breezes.



*Rones Bay  
(From Chart 12235)*



Indian and Henrys Creeks (from Chart 12235)

## INDIAN CREEK

Indian Creek is the largest and probably the busiest creek along the entire shore between Windmill Point and the Great Wicomico River. Its wide deep channel leads inland to the city of Kilmarnock.

Coming around Windmill Point from the south, to find Indian Creek at the north end of Fleets Bay, leave light "N" (37°39.2'N, 76°18.0'W) on a course of 335° True to Indian Creek Entrance Light R"2". A series of red lights will lead you straight into the creek.

From the north, pass Bluff Point until flashing red light "B" (37°40.5'N, 76°16.5'W) is abeam to starboard. A heading of 260° True will take you to Indian Creek Entrance Light R"2" and then all you need do is follow the next 2 red lights into the creek.

## BARNES CREEK

Barnes Creek, on the starboard side of the entrance to Indian Creek, is inaccessible with no deep water at the entrance. If you go in by dinghy, however, there are walking trails and access to beaches.

## HENRYS CREEK

The first creek you come to after entering Indian Creek is the large Henrys Creek to starboard. It has deep water throughout.

When entering, however, stay in the center of the channel watching for the shallows on both sides, but particularly the large shoal to port.

Henry's Creek provides excellent shelter except in strong southeasterly winds.

The eastern prong turns into a canal that connects to Barnes Creek.



Henrys Creek (from Chart 12235)

### BELLS CREEK

The next creek is also to starboard. The entrance is at red daymark R“8” locating a shoal from the point at the starboard (west) side of the creek.



Bells Creek (from Chart 12235)

Although narrow, the creek carries 8 feet nearly to the headwaters.

### Indian Creek Yacht and Country Club.

Just past red mark R“8” and directly across the creek from green mark G“9” is a cove with 10 feet of water just about to the shoreline. This is the home of the Indian Creek Yacht and Country Club, one of the southern Bay’s more prestigious golf and sailing clubs.

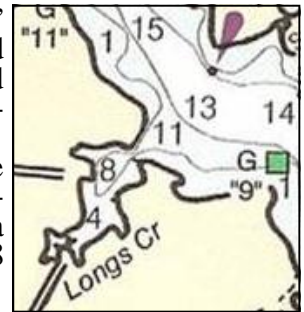


The docks at Indian Creek Yacht and Country Club

The docks at Indian Creek Yacht and Country Club are for the use of its members only.

### Longs Creek.

Just past mark G“9” and directly opposite red light R“10” is small and narrow Longs Creek on Indian Creek’s south shore.



While the entrance is straight in, it is very narrow although there is a small opening inside with 8 feet of water.

As you approach the next bend in the creek you will find two coves, a small one to starboard, a much larger one with lovely anchoring possibilities to port.

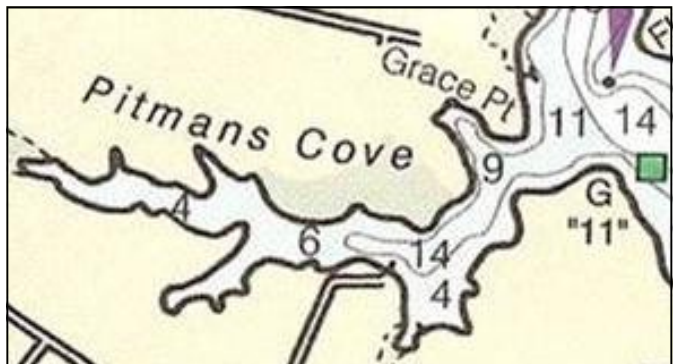
### Arthur Cove.

Arthur Cove is small but may offer some protection in strong easterly winds.



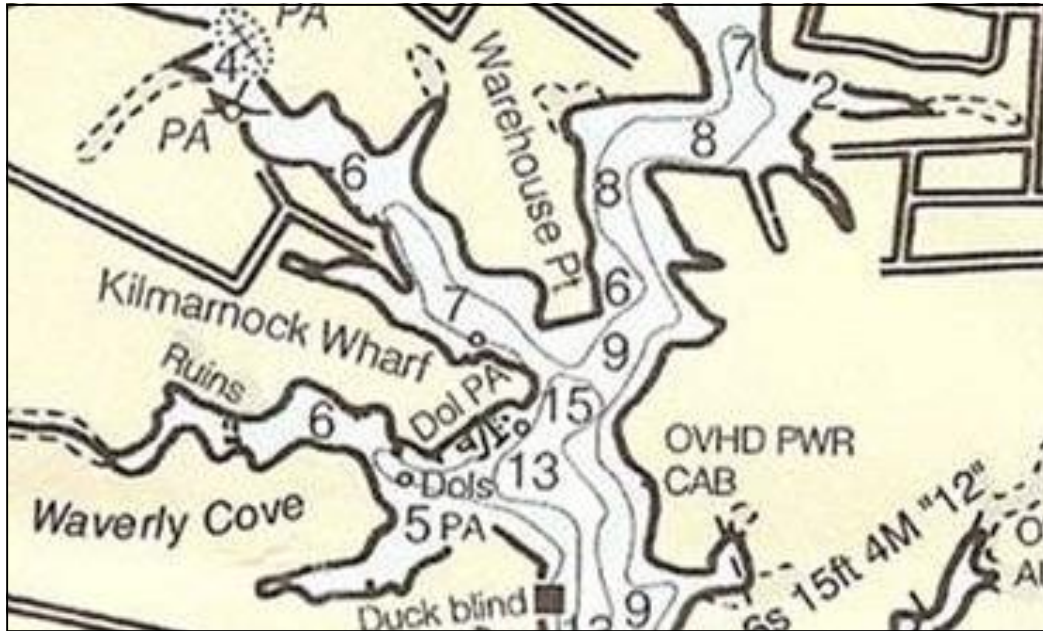
### Pitmans Cove.

Pitmans Cove is an excellent anchorage and a popular destination for cruising groups as well as individual boaters. The entrance is easy as you round green mark G“11” and inside there is plenty of room to anchor.



Pitmans Cove (from Chart 12235)

A large condominium complex with good dockage for its residents is located well up into Pitmans Cove on the south side.



*Indian Creek Headwaters (from Chart 12235)*

## INDIAN CREEK HEADWATERS

Shortly past red light R“12” Indian Creek takes a turn to the right and continues to carry more than 7 feet for a good ways.

### Waverly Cove.

Waverly Cove is to port as you approach the headwaters of Indian Creek. Although it has an easy entrance and 5 to 6 feet throughout, you will find better anchorages elsewhere.

## KILMARNOCK WHARF

Although the point of land on the north side of Waverly Cove is shown on chart 12235 as Kilmarnock Wharf, there is no longer any public waterfront access here. It is now entirely private residential and commercial property.

## *Kilmarnock*

First settled in the mid 1600s, the town of Kilmarnock was first know as “The Crossroads.” In the early 1700s William Steptoe opened a storehouse and ordinary and the settlement was called “Steptoe’s Ordinary.” In 1764 an agent for a firm in Glasgow, Scotland encouraged the name “Kilmarnock” from the Scottish town of the same name. It was incorporated as the “Town of Kilmarnock” in 1930. Today it is the economic hub of Lancaster County and the Northern Neck.

## Chesapeake Boat Basin.

Located to port just past Waverly Cove is the newly remodeled Chesapeake Boat Basin. This Boat/U.S. Cooperating marina is a full service facility with covered slips as well as fixed and floating open slips. Slip fees include free wireless internet access. Each slip has metered electricity available.

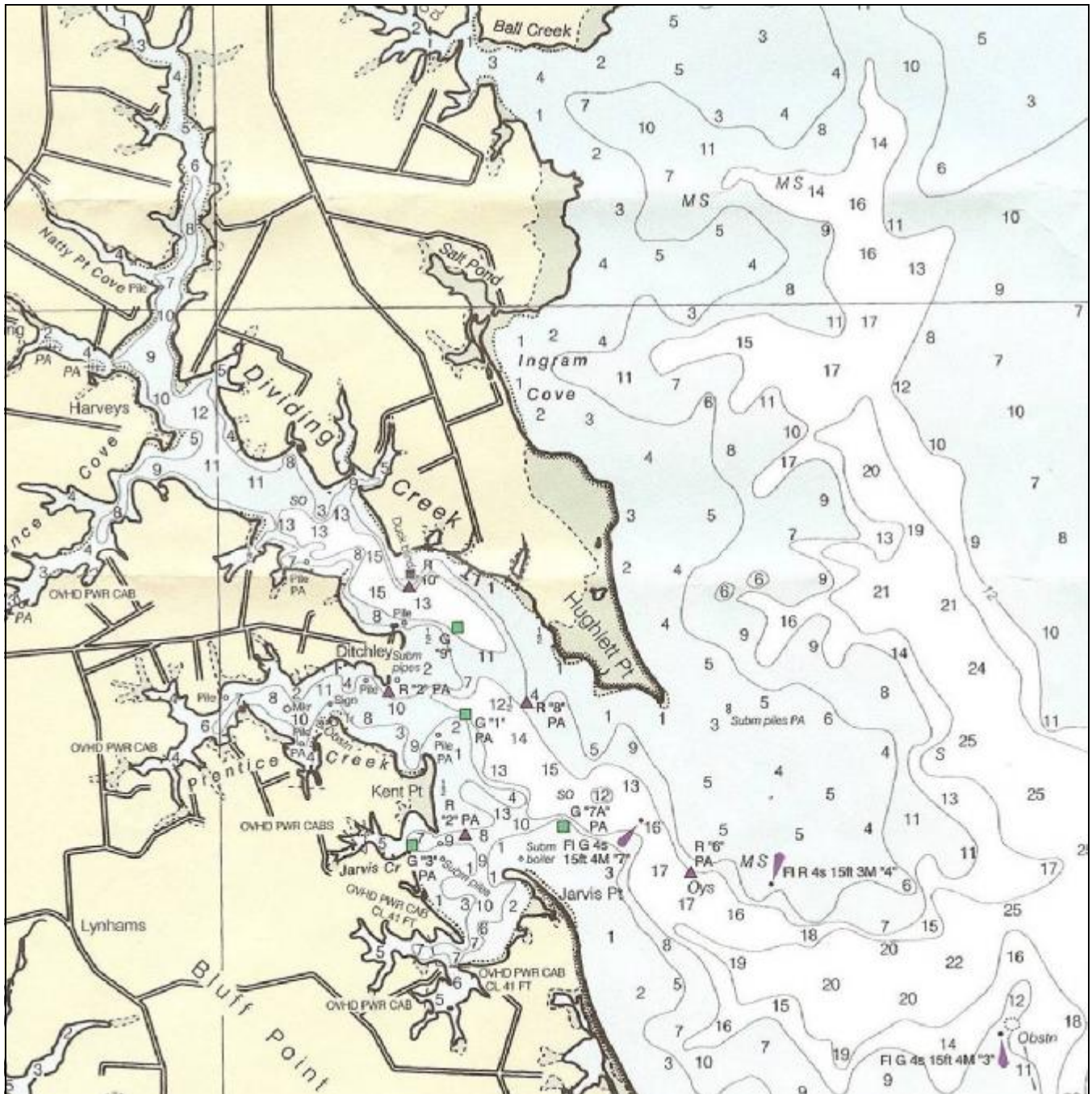


*Chesapeake Boat Basin*

Chesapeake Boat Basin has a well stocked 1,600 sq. ft. ship’s store (the smaller of the two yellow structures in the upper right corner of the photo above) and may be able to provide transport to town for groceries and other supplies. Contact them on VHF channel 16 to arrange your needs.

Chesapeake Boat Basin offers both diesel and non-ethanol gasoline.





Dividing Creek (from Chart 12235)

## DIVIDING CREEK

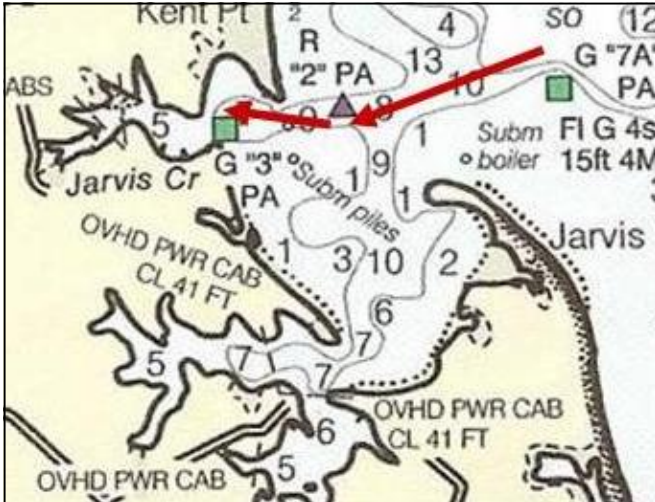
Approaching Dividing Creek from the south you must be sure to round Bluff Point well to the east. Head north to green light G-3 then bear 310° True toward Dividing Creek and follow the markers in. It really is a fairly straight approach and should offer no problems if you follow the marks.

Approaching from the north is less daunting. Pick up the 76°15'W longitude line near the Great Wicomico River Light (37°48.2'N, 76°16.1'W). Follow this line south to Lat 37°42.8'N. From there head 270° True to flashing green light G-3 and then bear 310° True toward Dividing Creek. Follow the markers in.

Hughlett Point on the north side of Dividing Creek is a nature preserve with hiking trails and beaches. If the water is calm it makes an excellent dinghy trip.

### Jarvis Creek.

Just after entering Dividing Creek you will find Jarvis Creek to port. Its entrance is well marked, but it is small and you are better off to go on just a little further to Prentice Creek.



Jarvis Creek (from Chart 12235)

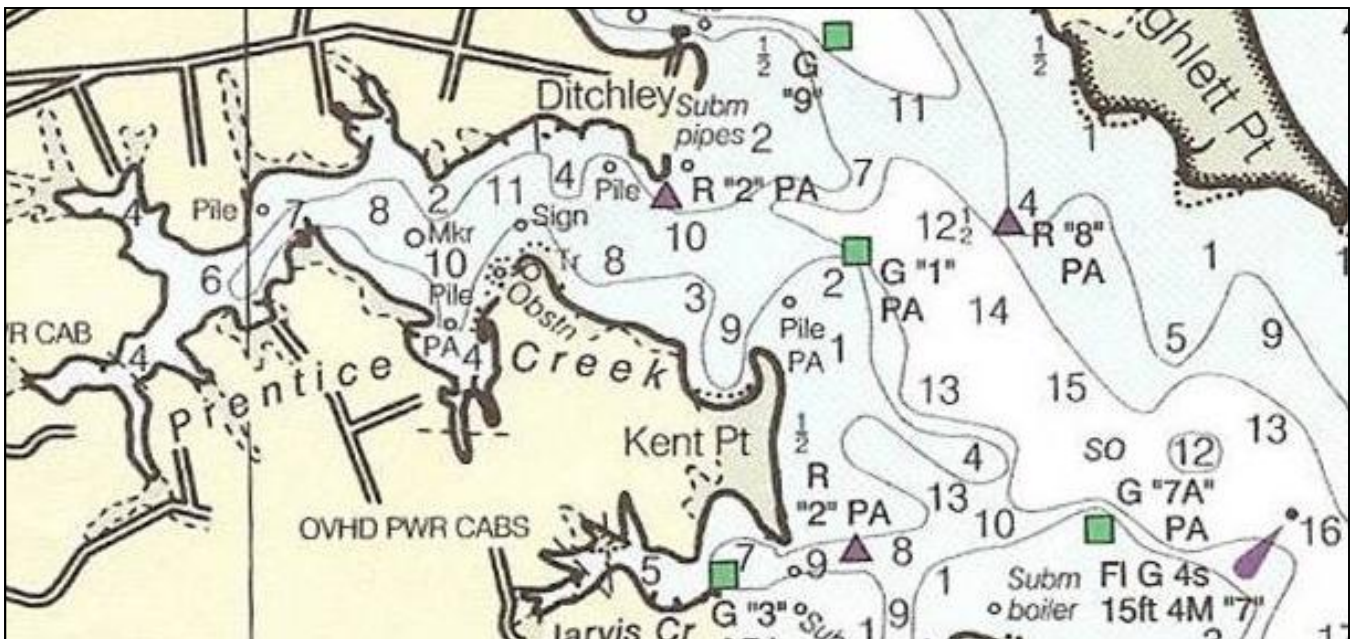
The Bay behind Jarvis point south of Jarvis Creek has a very narrow unmarked entrance and is probably best to avoid.

### Lawrence Cove.

Just before the end of practical navigation and the beginning of the narrow but deep headwaters of Dividing Creek, you will find narrow Lawrence Cove to port. In spite of its narrow width, there is adequate depth and you may find it suitable for an anchorage.



Lawrence Cove (from Chart 12235)

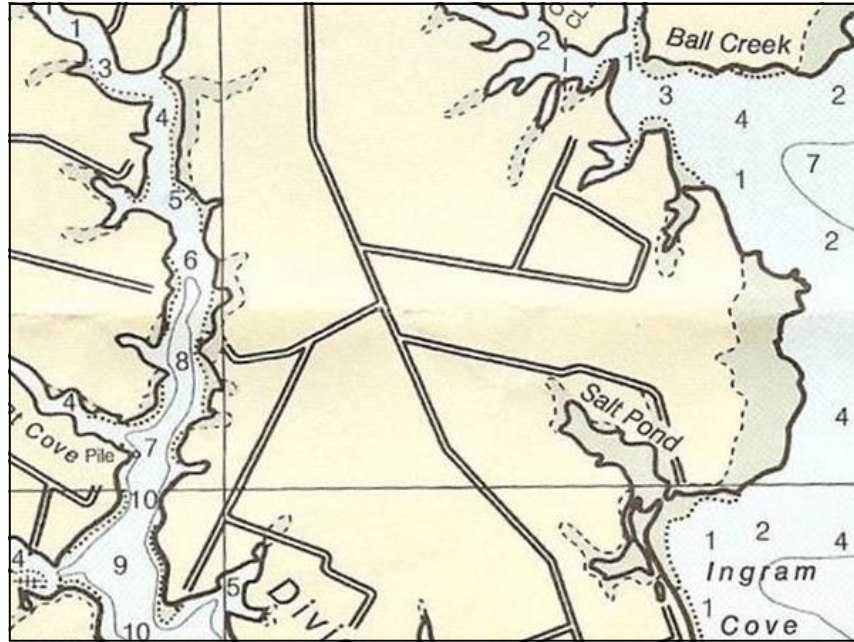


Prentice Creek (from Chart 12235)

### Prentice Creek.

Prentice Creek makes a lovely stopover with lots of room and good holding when cruising the Chesapeake Shore of Virginia's Northern Neck. Its easy entrance is found just past Jarvis Creek after entering Dividing Creek. Be sure to go directly from flashing green mark G "7A" to

mark G "1" at the entrance to the creek to avoid the shoal north of Jarvis Creek. From G "1" keep mark R "2" to starboard as you enter. Watch for the 4 ft. mark to starboard just past R "2". Prentice Creek makes for a comfortable and snug anchorage with easy return access to the Bay.



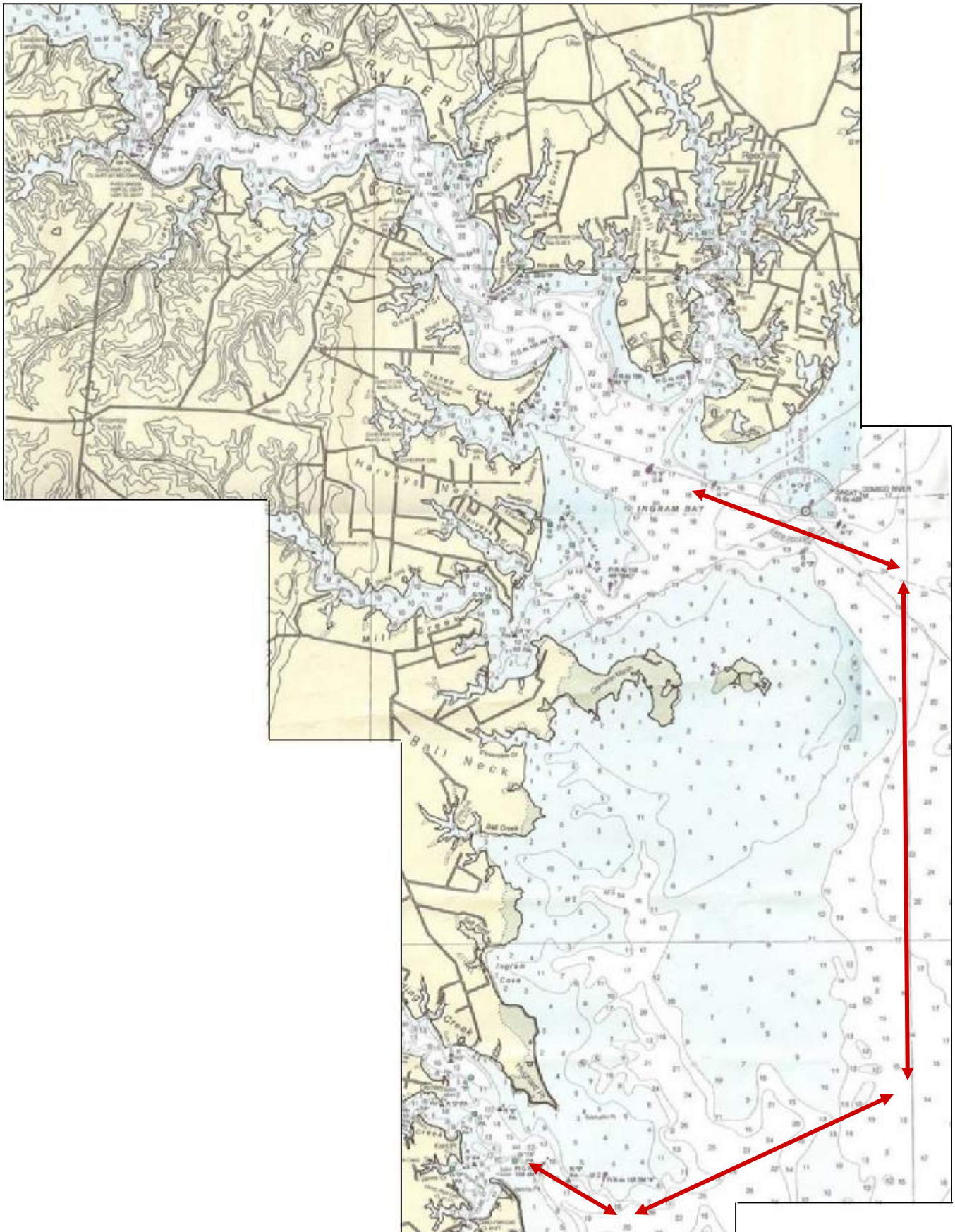
*Dividing Creek Headwaters, Ingram Cove and Ball Creek  
(from Chart 12235)*

### **HEADWATERS**

Dividing Creek headwaters, although narrow, extend for some distance beyond Lawrence Cove with depths of 5 feet or more.

### **BALL CREEK & INGRAM COVE**

Ball Creek and Ingram Cove, both north of Dividing Creek, are too shallow for cruising boats to consider except as an opportunity for dinghy exploration.



*Dameron Marsh, Ingram Bay, and the Great Wicomico River  
From Chart 12235 - NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION*