

## Introduction

### Contact

Harbour Master. VHF #14; tel 01880 820334,

Tarbert Harbour nestles in the well sheltered East Loch Tarbert, a small sea loch branching off from the much larger Loch Fyne. The setting is picturesque in the extreme, with the village circling the naturally formed harbour.

The harbour is home to a small but active fishing fleet, but visiting yachtsman and motorboaters are made welcome by the harbour authorities. In late 2008 the pontoon system within the harbour was greatly extended, and continues to be extended to the extent that the marina is now the dominant development in the harbour

Entry to Tarbert is straightforward enough, and once within the visitor will find deep water and decent village facilities with the ability to fuel up alongside (not always so easy around these parts).

Although totally sheltered it is worth noting that in westerly winds squalls can descend on the harbour through the gap from West Loch Tarbert, the two lochs being separated by a narrow isthmus of land.

Their website can be found at

[www.tarbertharbour.co.uk](http://www.tarbertharbour.co.uk)

## Approach

East Loch Tarbert is approached by heading northwards up Lower Loch Fyne.

Loch Fyne is situated to the north of the Isle of Arran and is reached by passing through Inchmarnock Water.

East Loch Tarbert lies on the west side of Lower Loch Fyne, opposite Portavadie on the east side (with its [new Marina covered separately](#)). A ferry service links across Loch Fyne at this point.

The initial entrance to East Loch Tarbert is wide and clear. In the closer approaches Madadh Maol, a drying reef extending northwards from the south shore of the loch needs to be left well off on your port side. Its extremity is marked by a red light column (Fl.R.2.5s). Do not pass close to the light structure, there is plenty of deep water to the north of it.

Starting from a point about 100 m north of the Madadh Maol light beacon, a south westerly course will bring you through the main channel south of Eilean a'Choic (Cock Island). The channel is less than 100m wide, and is used by fishing boats, who sometimes charge through at some speed.

Reefs projecting from the south of Cock Island, are marked by a green buoy (Q.G), which needs to be left to starboard.

Once past Cock Island the new pontoons will be seen... make for these **being very careful to leave a green buoy (VQ.G) well to starboard**. This marks a drying rock lying about 80m WSW of Cock Island. Don't make your turn to starboard too early...

An alternative route to the north of Cock Island and the drying reefs and rocks of Sgeir Bhuidhe will be seen on the charts provided for those intrepid enough to try it. Mind you, at one time this was the preferred route into the harbour for yachtsmen, and, yes, it was interesting!

## Berthing

There are no anchoring possibilities within the harbour itself,

... the north arm of the harbour, Duhb-chaol Linne, is taken up with permanent moorings, and fringed by drying rocks at its head.

Outside the harbour, anchorage can be had on the South side opposite the hotel situated to the west of the pier. There is only a narrow band of useful water to anchor in with the drying banks off the foreshore, and depths plunging rapidly to 16m.

Another anchoring possibility is further to the east of the pier, where a more gently shoaling area will be found directly in front of a house with a cupola. Tripline advised here.

Both these possibilities are shown on the chart.

For those wishing to use the harbour pontoons, there has been an additional long pontoon added and reference should be made to the chart, the plan provided in our Navigation Gallery. Visitors under 12 m are accommodated on the very first pontoon you come to on the finger berths on seaward side and they now put some smaller boats way down on the end on G pontoon. (Note that each side of the legs has a different label so you don't have to get in close to work out which side your berth is on - which is always part of the fun!!)

Visitors with boats larger than 12 m are accommodated on the first two hammerheads or on the long pontoons deeper in off the town.

Contact details for the Harbour Master are as follows:

Harbour Master's Office, Garval Road, Tarbert, Argyll PA29 6TR

Tel : 01880 820344

Fax : 01880 820719

Email: [tarbertharbour@btconnect.com](mailto:tarbertharbour@btconnect.com)

VHF Radio Working Channel 14

Prices on the Tarbert pontoons (2022) are £3.00per metre from the beginning of April 2022. (cf £3.30 at Portavadie)  
They have a promotion which gives a weeks stay for the 6 day price.

## Facilities

Electricity and water are available on the new pontoons. The toilet and shower facility was replaced in 2018/19 and there is now a combined amenities/**chandlery**/office block here with much improved amenities. They now have a laundrette.

There is also a pump out facility here now.

Diesel is available at the Fish Quay, as are Calor Gas and Camping Gaz 907s. Hardware shops and garages will be found around the village.

Sailmaking and rigging are available at W.B Leitch in the harbour. There is also a local boat builder. That sailmaker once dropped what he was doing and put a patch in my mainsail in a couple of hours back in 1996 - and only charged me £10 (come to think of it - it's still there now, must be about time for a new sail!!)

The village boasts a bank, a post office, food and provisioning including a co-op, plus various arts and crafts shops. Early closing is Wednesday which is still observed by some shops but rest assured, the Co-Op (nearest shop) now opens from 0700 to 2200 seven days a week.

Transport is covered by a bus to Glasgow, and the ferry that runs across Lower Loch Fyne to Portavadie.

Tarbert Fair is held annually, commencing on the last Thursday of July every year. This has to be one of the oldest fairs going and has been held since 1705. Originally a cattle fair, but now with music, gatherings, amusements and funfair rides. A visit to Tarbert at this time would probably be well rewarded.... best to book your berth in advance though.

## What To Do

With the village of Tarbert clustered around the harbour, the hungry and thirsty mariner won't have to go far or spend that much time in research...

Various cafes and a fish bar are close at hand, and for those looking for a more substantial meal maybe washed down with a wee dram there is also plenty of choice...

The Anchorage restaurant overlooks the harbour and specialises in locally caught seafood, while the Anchor Hotel also specialises in seafood and local products. The Tarbert Hotel offers bar meals and dining room, whilst being family friendly.

There are, of course, plenty of other hotels serving food in Tarbert and you won't have to wander far from the boat to find a decent meal. What you won't find in Tarbert is fast food...

Followers of Para Handy will remember that this was one of his favourite watering holes and often found it "necessary" to delay here!

This local site provides much useful information about the town:

[Tarbert Loch Fyne | Visitor and Tourist Information](#)

## History

East Loch Tarbert, Argyll is a small sea loch on the eastern side of the Kintyre peninsula in Scotland. It is a part of the much larger Loch Fyne. The village of Tarbert lies along the shores of the loch, which is separated from West Loch Tarbert by an isthmus only 1.5 kilometres (0.93 mi) long.

This sheltered loch became an important landing place for herring fishermen from at least AD 836 when it was mentioned in the Annals of Ulster.

According to Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla, Magnus Barefoot, King of Norway, had his longship dragged across this isthmus as part of a campaign to increase his possessions in the Hebrides. He made an arrangement with King Malcolm III of Scotland that he could take possession of land on the west coast around which a ship could sail. Magnus declared that Kintyre had "better land than the best of the Hebrides", and by taking command of his ship's tiller and "sailing" across the isthmus he was able to claim the entire peninsula, which remained under Norse rule for more than a dozen years as a result.

More than two centuries later Robert the Bruce completed a similar feat during the Scottish Wars of Independence

in order to impress the clan chieftains of Argyll. He used tree trunks as rollers.

In the 18th century Thomas Pennant recorded that sea-going vessels of up to 10 tonnes (9.8 long tons) were being hauled over the isthmus in order to avoid the dangers of storms and tidal races in the seas surrounding the Mull of Kintyre. James Watt surveyed the area and decided that it was feasible to construct a canal between the two lochs. Some 60 years later it was estimated that the cost for a cut without locks would be £90,000 but delays in implementation and the construction of the Crinan canal in 1801 rendered the plan redundant.

In the modern era the Tarbert (Loch Fyne) Harbour Commissioners control the loch, an area defined as "from the point of Garvell on the North, to the Oakenhead or Rudha Loigste point on the South". There are various quays and slipways in the inner harbour and 80 pontoon berths for yachts and other leisure craft.

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