

## Introduction

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The Island main harbour (which is run by the HM at Ballycastle) is in the NE corner of Church Bay and provides good shelter from the NW through North to the ESE. It is worth noting that if you were to arrive in these waters running before a N to NE gale this is about the only place on this coast which would realistically provide shelter between Lough Foyle and Larne. There is a small inner harbour to which is attached a pontoon and the whole lot is contained in quite a large outer harbour protected two boulder based piers.

The few families who live on the island are fighting a rear guard action to remain on the island. As in many of the Hebridean Islands there is no work here apart from farming and fishing so the youngsters are migrating to the mainland and quite a few of the present population commute across to the mainland to work. The local school is fast approaching the stage when it will become unviable and may have to close which will increase the pressure on the diminishing population.

During the summer months it is busy with tourists who come across from the mainland attracted by the birds, seals and scenery but for the visiting sailor the attraction is that most of the tourists are day trippers and the island becomes a peaceful haven once the last boat has gone back to the mainland!! From a bird life point of view most sailors will be familiar with the varieties here having had to scrub their topsides clean of their visiting cards though you may get the chance to get a close up of a puffin to add to your album.

## Approach

Expand the "More Information" section for detailed tidal information.

The harbour in the notch on the NE corner of Church Bay poses no difficulties except in conditions produced by a strong W or NW wind. There is a SCM in the approach which should be left about a cable to port; it marks the sight of a wreck which used to be a hazard but is now dredged to a depth of 8m.

Take care to approach and enter the harbour on a ENE heading with the seaward end of the Manor House Pier open through the harbour entrance; If you can't see that and your heading is getting on for North then you are in danger of running aground on the rocks and shallows off the South Breakwater.

The harbour entrance will appear to be quite narrow from this aspect but will open up as you pass the end of the North (West) Breakwater. At night there is a sector light (shown on the charts) which will lead one safely through the harbour entrance. The North Breakwater referred to on the Admiralty Chart is often called the "West" breakwater by the locals which can be confusing

## Berthing

There are now three pontoons in Church Bay with about 2 m depth.

Take care if going alongside on the SE side of the outside pontoon as there is deep water only out to about 20m, ie. not much of a turning circle, if any.

Aside from this, it is possible to anchor inside the North(West) Breakwater in 1.2m but there may not be sufficient water at LWS, especially if one ends up swinging to landwards of ones original spot. The old South pier inside the harbour and the Quay just to the West of the harbour both dry at Low Tide.If you do choose to anchor outside to the West of the harbour, stay to the East of a line North/South through the old quay to avoid the submarine cable from Ballycastle.

A berth here costs you £2.50 per metre per night in 2022

## Facilities

There is water and shore power on the pontoons but no fuel. There are toilets and showers in a block on the shore and there are a few shops and a Post Office.

## What To Do

The area around the harbour is set up to cater for the holiday trade. There is a groceries shop with limited hours (opens mid morning, closes for lunch and opens again for an hour in the afternoon and is closed on Sundays). There are also a Gift Shop, a pub, a restaurant, a chip shop and the Manor Guest House which has a licenced restaurant catering to non residents. The village also has a Visitor Centre and an RSPB Bird Centre open from April to August.

## History