

Introduction

This is an impressive coastline with high cliffs and numerous small coves,

..... some or all of which can provide shelter from strong winds from NW through S to NE depending on the shape of the cove and the direction of the wind. The experienced mariner will realise that, in all but onshore winds, when one gets close in the winds are going to be fluky and at some stage, if intending to stop, the engine will need to be used. Whether stopping here or not, the variable winds plus extremely strong currents from unexpected directions mean that it would be unwise to arrive in these waters with low fuel reserves. The small harbours are administered by the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in Coleraine

Carrickarade Island. (55°14.3N, 006°19.5W). The Island is joined to the mainland by the, now, famous rope bridge. The main anchorage here is on the South East side in 5 to 10 metres of water and is well sheltered from the South through to the West. This makes it a lovely spot to stop, go ashore to the old landing and join the tourists for an hour or so. On the other hand it is a good bolt hole if caught out by increasing winds from the SW. There are no facilities here unless an enterprising Irishman has turned up with an Ice-cream Van.

Ballintoy Harbour. (55°15N, 006°21.6W). This harbour is used mainly by small open fishing boats; there is a small, drying inner harbour accessible to boats with a metre draft and able to take the ground. The inner harbour is fairly crowded with local fishing boats but a berth alongside the West wall can normally be found. The outer harbour has more water with up to 1.3 m at LAT alongside the West quay. For larger boats there is an anchorage in the approaches but only of any use in settled weather. Make your approach from the NNE keeping the square Lookout House tower in line with the church tower behind it. The rocky islets on the West side of the approach are clean and steep-to. Here, at least, there was a tea room on the harbour (which did sell ice-cream).

Portballintrae (55°13.5N, 006°32.9W). This is a pleasant little anchorage but uninhabitable in Northerlies. The entrance is easy, just come into the entrance steering South for the prominent slipway, taking care to stay clear of the Blind Rock to the east of the approach. When you have the West pier in line with the Seaport Lodge (large white building standing on its own) set the anchor in about 2.5m of water. The pier on the East side has about 0.9m at the steps and mainly used by diving and angling boats but one can row ashore to anywhere on the beach itself anyway. The village has a pub, a restaurant and a hotel and is convenient for the Giants Causeway, Dunluce Castle and Bushmills distillery, a mile inland, (But remember if visiting that – you've got to row back out to your boat when you get back!!).

Approach

The flood along this coast to the West of Ballintoy runs West to East....

.... starting about 5hrs before HW Dover. To the East of Ballintoy through Rathlin Sound the situation is more complicated. Almost as soon as the flood starts, a counter current builds up along the Irish Coast from Fair Head until mid-flood when it reaches as far West as Kinbane Head and sets up very troubled waters around Carrickmannanon Rock. It must be emphasized that the currents to the East of Ballintoy can reach speeds of up to 6kts at Springs, **there are strong eddies and overfalls**, especially around the headlands which should be given a very wide berth in heavy weather. Care should be taken when passage planning into or out of Ballycastle because, for most of the time the tides running past the entrance are going the "wrong" way whether you are going East or West!

The approaches to all the coves and harbours on this stretch of coast are visual. The main ones and advice on the approaches are listed above. Due to the lack of large scale charts it would be wise to keep a good lookout for rocks and make sure that the wind will not make the anchorage untenable during your intended length of stay.

Berthing

There is not much in the way of alongside berthing around here....

.... except, possibly, in Ballintoy. For the rest the sailor will have to employ his anchoring skills and for anything other than a quick couple of hours ashore one needs to observe all the safety measures one would use for an extended anchorage – anchor bearings, anchor watch and possibly double anchor moorings (either fore and aft or Y configuration) etc.

Anchoring anywhere along this coast in onshore winds would be extremely courageous!

Facilities

There is no fuel between Portrush and Ballycastle unless one takes a trip into the hinterland. Water is available at Ballintoy and Portballintrae but here the water in the toilet block is not potable. Use the tap on the wall below the pub pateo (see photo)

What To Do

At Portballintrae there is a good hotel (The Bay View) with a bar (The Porthole!), restaurant and entertainment at the weekend, some pubs and a boat club. Apart from that there is nothing on this coast unless you count the tearoom at Ballintoy!

History