

Introduction

Contacts: Portmuck Harbour Master (Terence Stitt) 02893 382549

This is a lovely little harbour easily overlooked by passing yachties. It was originally built for the export of limestone from the Island Magee quarries but when this trade fell off in the 1920s the harbour was allowed to decay until the 1980s when it was restored to support local fishermen. It is a drying harbour but the small bay outside it is a very secure anchorage in about 4M and protected all round from the SE through to the WNW; obviously it is rough in Northerly winds. The anchorage can be effected by the wash from decelerating High Speed ferries entering Larne as they drop off the plane, so don't be surprised by a sudden roll at anchor here.

As well as the anchorage off the harbour itself there are the bays inside the Isle of Muck to the North and South of the bar connecting it to the mainland. (one of our photos illustrates the dramatic difference in the seas under the island when conditions in the North Channel are quite severe).

The Island and coast adjacent to it is owned and administered by the National Trust and they have erected short coastal walks to the North and South of Portmuck. The Isle is, itself, a designated bird sanctuary and the NT actively discourages visitors to the island but good views can be had from the coast walks.

The village is small but does have a toilet block for holiday visitors. Regrettably both the shop and café at Mullaghboy have closed.

Approach

Tidal Data: There is no published tidal data for this harbour.

For anchoring purposes the range will approximate to that of Larne ie Spring range about 2.4M and Neap range about 1.7M. The causeway out to the Island dries at MLWS and is barely awash at MLWN but at MHWS you'll drown!!

Off the coast, halfway through the ebb in the North Channel a counter current sets in southwards and runs for the rest of the ebb and the whole of the flood. When this counter current is running at full belt it sets up some serious overfalls where it meets the north going stream about one and a half miles off shore.

Approach:

The chart coverage for this area is not very good so it is necessary to take great care when navigating close in to the coast here. Firstly, stay well out (at least quarter of a nm) round Skernaghan Point if coming round from the North to clear the rocks extending North from there. After that remain outside the 5M contour to be certain of clearing the inshore rocks before running down to the harbour on a course of about 140°T. Coming from the South continue North for about 200M past the north end of the Isle of Muck before turning in towards the coast until the entrance to the harbour bears 160° and run in to the anchorage on that.

Berthing

Anchor in the bay in about 5M with the slip just...

.... opening behind the pier on a Westerly bearing. Be aware that there is a gravelly spit stretching NE out from the pier for about three quarters of a cable.

At High Water Springs there can be as much as 3m inside the harbour but it dries out beyond the pier at LWS so only boats which can take the ground could rest alongside here. Before opting to go alongside, remember the inshore counter current on the flood; if you have to wait until you float to get out, your next leg may be compromised by that.

If anchoring under the island, there are no dangerous rocks within the bays, so just pick an anchorage with suitable depth (about 3.5M on the South side or 6M on the North side) but remember the outlying rocks at the Northern point

of the island.

There are no harbour dues inside or outside the harbour here - which could make it an attractive alternative to battling into Larne for the night.

Facilities

There are toilets ashore in the car park but nothing else. The Harbour Master may be able to help with advice if you need engineering help locally; there is a slip and local fishermen use the harbour so there may well be someone handy.

What To Do

None

History