

## Introduction

Contacts: North Down HM (William Angus) mobile 07718579105

This is a very small sheltered harbour, **not much used by visitors as they haven't room for but one at a time!** All the same it is popular with those that do use it and, if you are the sort of yachting who prefers not to use large expensive marinas and prepared to pump up the dinghy to get ashore, this might be your sort of place.

The harbour is owned by Ards and North Down Council and the Harbour Master here also looks after [Donaghadee](#) round the corner along with [Ballyherbert](#) and [Ballywalter](#) further South

It's a well sheltered little cove with an island guarding the entrance and keeping the big waves out, but you need your wits about you getting in. At high water they have enough water at their pier to nip alongside to fill up your water tank; there's a friendly boating fraternity called the Cockle Island Boat Club (that being the name of the island in the middle of the cove).

The basic population of the village is only about 1000 but in the summer that is swelled by holiday makers who arrive for day trips or occupy one of the caravan sites close by. There is seldom a summer weekend without some form of entertainment and there are sufficient retail outlets for the boat owner to replenish basic consumables and have a gentle time ashore or afloat.

One thing's for certain; if you can get your wee boat in here you won't be moored next to some fifty foot boat with stainless steel ground tackle and the crew all wearing this year's Mustos!!

## Approach

Passage to Groomsport needs to be well planned with tidal streams in mind.

The interplay between the tides into an out of Belfast Lough and the fierce flows through the North Channel is shown in the "More Information" section below. Groomsport is also at the northern end of the unusual tidal pattern which exists between here and Dublin; careful examination of that pattern reveals that it possible with good timing and a six knot boat it is possible to move to and from here to Dublin on favourable currents the whole way. Details of this route can be found in our article:

<http://www.visitmyharbour.com/irish-sea-tides.asp>

**Approach** Before you start the approach you need to contact the HM to ensure that they have room for you. In good weather this is a simple approach. Both the Eastern and the Western channels are navigable but for a first visit the East Passage is probably the preferred route. There are lead in marks consisting of a slim red pole beside the flagpole and a taller plain wood pole about twenty yards behind that. If you come in from our Initial Fix (see chartlet) it'll bring you in on a bearing of 202°. The Island to starboard is cleared by a Starboard perch and the HM will tell you where to park. If there is enough water for you and there is space you may be able to turn straight in to a berth on the wall where you can dry out - otherwise you'll be directed to a spare mooring between the island and the shore.

There is no small scale chart available for this harbour so for the best indication of what this place looks like the best we can offer is the Aerial photo shown in our Navigation Images gallery

## Berthing

There is only room for one visiting boat that can either.....

..... take the ground or has a draught of less than one metre. They now (2021) charge harbour dues for a stay at this harbour. It'll cost you £14.00 for an overnight stop, £44.00 for a months stop (the limit) and £7.00 for one tide.

They have a website at [Harbours | Ards and North Down Borough Council](#) and it will eventually be possible to pay on line but in the meantime call Bill Angus on the mobile number above to make arrangements.

They have installed visitors Buoys just on the right hand side after you enter the via the West Channel as was planned but have let them to local residents so you still have to plan ahead and contact the HM before setting out for here.

## Facilities

There are toilets ashore and a couple of freshwater taps in the boatyard. There is a slipway for launching dinghies. Although there is a hard there is only room for the local boats to over winter here.

## What To Do

The night life here consists of a restaurant/wine bar and a local pub. Near the harbour there is the Cockle Row Cottages which house a museum of fishing life in earlier years. They also put on events on most weekends in the summer whilst, if you are lucky the Boat club may have found an excuse to have a barbeque.

Plenty of shore walks or just relax and plan the next leg.

## History