

Introduction

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The first thing to note about Carlingford Lough is that the NE shore is in Northern Ireland and the SW shore is in the Irish Republic. As both Eire and N.Ireland are in the Common Travel Area along with the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man there are no immigration rules in force at present but it is unclear what "carriage of goods" rules are in force at the level of tourism! You should note that, if you are using a UK based mobile phone, calls to the SW shore are the same as calls to the other side of the English Channel from Dover; ie expensive! It's also worth noting that dialling codes are different in Southern Ireland - numbers starting 08 are generally mobiles. If you have a ship's cat or dog it might be wise to check on the rules regarding landing those before you set off (They might not take kindly to stoppage of shore leave!)

Right, having sorted the admin out, Carlingford is more like a Norwegian Fiord than its neighbour Strangford, having steeper sides and a deeper bottom, but it resembles it in that there is a large body of water passing in and out of a narrow entrance with every tide so you need fairly settled conditions and a favourable tide to pass through. There are two approach channels to the neck at Cranfield Point; one is a straight run in on the leading marks off Greencastle the other a dog leg around the shallows to the South of Haulbowline which is subject to cross tides. Our chart shows both, with the transits to be followed.

Once through the neck you have the choice of several anchorages up the Co Down side before [Warrenpoint](#) (separate page on this site) and a Marina, Harbour and some anchorages on the Co Louth side. Further passage from Warrenpoint will take you up the river to the canal and Newry. The moorings at Warrenpoint and the canal to Newry are dealt with on a separate page on this website; for a link click [HERE](#) (opens in a new tab)

The first anchorage is off Greencastle and, although it is out of the main tide stream is still affected by it. It's useful if you have come up with the flood from the South and made it through the narrows on the last of the flood and need somewhere to drop the pick before you get swept back out again on the ebb. There are no facilities there what so ever; even the pier is falling down and not suitable to tie up at. Further up this side is an anchorage at Killowen Point which is the home of the Carlingford Lough Yacht Club (not to be confused with the Carlingford Sailing Club at the Marina on the other side).

This is a popular spot with easy entry and good facilities ashore when the yacht club is open (most mornings during the season). Further up there is Rostrevor which, although listed as an anchorage, has shell beds along the low water mark so one would have to anchor a fair way out to be clear of them. Between Killowen Point and Rostrevor there is fairly deep water close in at the Wood House which would provide shelter if the wind is whipping up or down the Lough making Killowen a bit choppy for anchoring. At the head of the bay is Warrenpoint which is a commercial dock and Ro-Ro ferry point. There is a pontoon here just inside the SE breakwater and although there is room to anchor there are permanent moorings and it's not a good place to do so. There are pontoons in the Town Dock built for shell fish boats; you may be able to use one of these if you ask Warrenpoint on the radio (#12) There are, of course, plenty of facilities here.

Crossing to the SW shore there are exposed anchorages off Omeath and Greer's Quay suitable for shallow draft boats.

The main destination in Carlingford Lough is Carlingford Marina. This has a room for visiting boats, ample depth both inside and in the approach and all the facilities of a modern marina with the addition of a bar and restaurant. If you can take the ground, just down the shore is the old Carlingford Harbour which dries to soft mud at low tide. This is a Council harbour and nothing to do with the marina.

Approach

Tidal Information:

It is worth noting that tides at Cranfield Point.....

..... are as Liverpool so ingoing stream starts at LW Liverpool and the outgoing stream at HW Liverpool. Out at the Hellyhunter Buoy where your approach will start the tidal streams are coastal and the change to in/out streams occurs as one gets closer in. At their height the currents will slowly increase to 3.5 kts in the approach, reaching 4.5 kts abeam the Haulbowline Light and further increase to 5kts at Greenore Point. They then reduce quite rapidly to about 2.5 kts between the Watson Rocks and Stalka Rocks and then down to 1.5kts at the Marina. In the bight of the bay off Rostrevor there is very little tide whilst in amongst the shoals at Greencastle you can expect to be anchored in a tideway.

Approach:

The coast in this area, from St John's Point to Dublin, is such that in any onshore conditions above F4 to F5, unless you are trying to make it in to shelter, it's best to stay a good two or three miles off shore. The slope of the bottom and frequent shoals mean that the surf will start to gather quite a long way out and cause quite challenging conditions for a yacht on passage. If intending to close with Carlingford Lough you should pick settled conditions and if unfamiliar with this coast make your approach in daylight. Coming from the North you'll be coming down on the ebb aiming to arrive off the entrance about LW to go in on the beginnings of the flood and, if from the South, it's a bit more ticklish because you'll be coming up on the flood but don't want to arrive in the middle of that but you must get there before the ebb starts (which is why you'll probably need to drop anchor at Greencastle as soon as you get in).

There is a dredged channel all the way in which goes as far as Warrenpoint; it's well marked with PHMs and SHMs of various shapes and sizes (mostly buoys but some permanent marks) and they are numbered, evens port and odds to starboard. It is interesting that there are more starboard marks than there are port so by the time you are halfway up the Lough you find that the No 16 to port is paired with the No 21 to starboard!

From the North pass outside the Hellyhunter Rock buoy to the Initial Fix and pick up the lead in marks off Greencastle and follow them in. (the marks are tall square constructions; see photograph in our gallery) At the Initial Fix itself you'll still be under the influence of the tidal stream parallel to the coast but as you get closer in the current into the Lough will start to take effect; it needs constant attention to keep those marks in line and, if you don't, there be dragons to left and to right of the channel. It should be noted that ships making their way to or from Warrenpoint will be on #12 so it would be a good idea to be on that yourself before committing to the approach and be prepared to leave the channel a bit to starboard (but not too much!) to avoid them. It is possible to come inside the Hellyhunter Rock with Slievenagloagh (Eire, not the one in the Mourne to the North) just to the left of the Haulbowline Light on a bearing of 267T; this will save you a mile over going round the outside.

From the South, abeam the Imogene Rock Buoy, you can make for the same Initial Fix and use the main channel but to save a bit of time (the difference is just over a mile) you could use the unmarked Hoskyns Channel. To do this leave the Imogene buoy on 031T and track towards the seaward side of Cranfield Point and stay on that (to avoid the Ballagan Spit) until the cranes on Greenore Point come onto 310T and are in line with Cloghoge Mountain up behind and a bit to the left of Warrenpoint. Follow that line until Slieve Donard (the tallest mountain to the NE in the Mourne Mountains) comes on to a bearing of 028T and then follow that bearing, with the Red No 6 Buoy on the starboard bow and the Green No 5 Buoy on the port bow, into the main channel.

The cut-the-corner routes in have been included but it would depend very much on the visibility on the day and what nav aids you have onboard; if all you have is the Mark I eyeball and a hand bearing compass and the hilltops are shrouded in cloud perhaps the long way round might prove more prudent!!

Berthing

Greencastle . As has been said, this is the first anchorage inside....

.... the entrance to the Lough and is in behind Green Island on the North East shore. To get there follow the dredged channel as far as the No 9 buoy on the Vidal rock; pass close to this and turn starboard towards the houses on Greencastle point. This will take you to the West of the back lead in mark (tower structure, Oc 3s) and as you pass abeam this look ahead for a thin red pole with a small square top mark; aim to leave this close to port

(about 15m) and when you've cleared it turn slightly to port and aim for the root of the derelict wooden pier. You'll see quite a few boats on permanent moorings off this shore from quite far out; don't go for these too early in your approach and keep in mind the rocks and shallows which lie off shore. You should anchor in the tideway to the West of the moorings. There is a prominent building with a green roof on the shore; the transit between this and the end of the pier is a useful guide to the rocks and shallows off Greencastle Point; stay to the South of it and you should be outside the two meter line.

Killowen Point. This is a popular anchorage and is the home of the Carlingford Lough Yacht Club. The approach is straightforward from the dredged channel but don't turn in too early North of the No 25 SHM as there is quite shallow water to the NW of the Killowen bank; leave it until about halfway towards the No 27 SHM. You can anchor outside the permanent moorings about 300m offshore or, by arrangement with and payment to the Yacht Club (£10 per day), you can pick up one of their visitors moorings closer in. You can land at the slip off the Yacht Club but those of you blessed with an outboard for your dinghy will find it bottoming in the shallows and will have to row the last bit. It can become a bit open here in some winds when the choice would be to either flee across the other side to the marina or motor further half mile up the Lough shore and anchor to the SW of the "Wood House" where you can tuck in closer under the shore than at Killowen. Keep in mind that the NE shore of the Lough is peppered with shellfish beds so don't drop your pick unless you are really certain that you are clear of them unless you want to incur the wrath of the local fishermen who rely on them for a living.

Warrenpoint is the next stopping point at the top of the Lough and will be dealt with in a separate article.

Omeath & Greer's Quay. These are both open anchorages on the Co Louth side of the Lough. At Omeath it is shallow water for quite a way out and you need to anchor over quarter of a mile off shore to be sure of not grounding; on the other hand, if you can take the ground you could park alongside the slip an hour either side of HW. The same is true off Greer's Quay but the shore is slightly steeper to and the water deeper alongside the pier which makes the pierhead accessible to drafts up to 1.5m at all states of the tide. Be aware that the bottom here is reported as "mud" so if you take the ground at anchor you may find that the shore is inaccessible unless you have mud skis!! Bear in mind too that, at Omeath, one is quite close to the shipping channel and you may well be affected by their wash.

Carlingford Marina. **This is the primary port of call for leisure sailors** in Carlingford Lough; it is easy to get into but unless you are familiar with the ground at the NW end of the Carlingford Bank it's best to follow the buoyed channel as far as the No 18 PHM and come back down to the marina entrance from the NNE. The marina has 160 berths and can be contacted on VHF#37.

At low water Springs there may be less water than usual at the visitors berths here and they advise that if approaching these berths at LWS you should avoid them for an hour either side of LW

They have a website: www.carlingfordmarina.com

They have changed their pricing structure here and are now charging 25 Euros per boat per night irrespective of size

Carlingford Harbour. This is still available to visiting boats but dries to a soft mud bottom and has an unusually wide entrance making it very vulnerable to winds with a Northerly component. The soft bottom means that even twin keeled boats can settle on an uneven keel as the harbour dries out.

Facilities

Greencastle . None

Killowen Point. The yacht Club has showers/toilets when open and are very helpful to visitors. They also have a bar! Rostrevor village is two miles along the shore and has most supplies.

Omeath & Greer's Quay. Omeath village has pubs, restaurants, supplies and fuel in cans from the filling station, Greer's Quay has nothing but its slip and is two miles from Omeath

Carlingford Marina . This has full marina facilities, (shore power and showers are complimentary for visiting boats) including a daytime cafe; and an Indian Restaurant in the evenings, and Carlingford "town" is close by with more facilities for recreation. They have diesel but petrol must be obtained in cans from a garage (3 miles - the marina is amenable to giving a lift)) which also has Calor Gas. Nearest chandlery is at Warrenpoint where they stock Gaz.

What To Do

All the villages around the Lough have their stores and pubs; Killowen has its Yacht Club bar and the Marina has its restaurant with spectacular views.

History