

Introduction

Contacts:

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Banff harbour, situated opposite Macduff on the west side of Banff Bay, is the most easterly of the marinas on this coast. The harbour was first established here between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century although there had been a castle here since medieval times. Like all the other towns on this coast it was a hive of activity during the heyday of the herring fishing industry and was connected to the railway system in the mid nineteenth century (it still has a "Railway Inn" on the bluff overlooking the harbour) and the central pier is still, sometimes, referred to as the "Railway Pier". That railway was, of course, Beechinged!

The harbour has three basins; the outer basin which dries and is subject to surge, and two inner basins. The outer basin rarely has any boats alongside because of the surge and is mainly used for launching trailer sailors and canoes. The first inner basin as you come in takes deep draft boats and visitors and then the inside basin which takes the local smaller yachts and amateur angling boats. When the harbour was first excavated to form the marina it suffered badly from silting but that has, largely, been resolved and the entrance channel is kept dredged to CD (of which, more later). This unfortunate reputation has continued to drag on and it is only in the last few years that visitors cruising this coast have started to drop in. Skippers who have been along this coast in earlier years still tend to use Whitehills which has itself, of late, become silted and is no longer accessible by fin keelers 24/7 so Banff can be a better option.

As with all the harbours on this coast it is inaccessible in strong Northerly winds (from NNW through to ENE) but once you are in the inner basins it does afford complete shelter from all weathers. As well as having pontoon berths, the East wall has a shelf, marked by black and white poles with red topmarks, which dries at half tide, and is used by local skippers who do not require fully serviced berths. This shelf extends to a wider area at the inner (Southerly) end of the inside basin.

The town itself is less industrial than Macduff but, surprisingly, is better supplied with shops and is, these days, geared to the tourist market which makes it a useful stopping point for resupply.

Approach

The Assistant HM will be in attendance at the harbour during the forenoon watch only and at other times you need to contact the HM on his mobile to advise if you intend coming here later in the day.

Fin keelers should be able to enter the harbour four hours either side of HW.

You will see from the chart that the lead-in marks bring one in from the South East over fairly shallow water. We have given a Way Point on the two meter line but most skippers tend to line up from much closer in towards the entrance. The approach to this harbour has to take into account any swell from the North and the rocks which lie off the North wall and East Wall. In virtually any conditions you would be wise to clear away for entering harbour somewhere just inside the 5 meter contour to the NE of the harbour mouth (out of the swell) and then lay a course for a point about fifty yards to the SE of the entrance, running with the swell. You then have to line up with the harbour mouth, crack on a bit of speed, and judge the lateral movement as you run in; in a heavy swell and from

half ebb onwards you will need quite heavy helm corrections and in some conditions the Harbour Master may suggest you go to Macduff!

From the summer of 2016 the much promised waiting buoy will be laid in the close-in approaches to the harbour. Until someone has sat on it at LWS it is uncertain what sort sea conditions will be expected, especially in Northerlies. **Update 2023 This buoy was removed whilst Banff was closed and is expected to be back in place later in the summer**

If you are arriving from the East, navigate outside the Collie Rocks off Macduff (our photo, No 1, gives you a clearing line for this) and then, having identified the pierhead light, make for that. A word of caution here, if you are coming in during the night it is very, very difficult to separate the pierhead light from the street lighting (even for skippers who are familiar with the harbour) and, of course, the clearing bearing mentioned above can't be seen. The sector light on the end of Macduff Pier is, on the other hand, easily identified so use that to indicate when you are west of the Collies.

From the West Macduff will be more obvious as you pass Whitehills, the Temple of Venus being very prominent. Keep that Temple open from the rest of the coast until you see Banff pierhead and then make for a point about two cables North by East of it before turning in. At night run in towards Macduff in the white sector of its pierhead light until Banff pierhead is abaft the beam before turning in. The harbour entrance lead-in marks are not painted so you should be careful not to confuse them with the other lampposts in their vicinity; at night their top lights are easily identified. (and are all round lights which can be seen from the West which helps to identify the harbour)

You should lean a bit towards the starboard side as you pass the harbour entrance and, as soon as the entrance to the inner harbour opens to port make straight for the middle of that. Previous instructions to scrape along the East Pier wall no longer apply though do not stray too far towards the beach in the outer harbour as it shelves quite rapidly towards that. Having said that, with a draft of a meter and on neap tides you can actually gain the harbour at Low Water – but you'll be running along a breaking swell outside to do so!

Berthing

Visitors are moored on the first pontoons on the right as you pass the "Railway Pier" or on the next hammerhead along.

For larger 10meter+ boats the berths against the North wall of the inner pier are used **when available** .

The charge (2023) unless you have an Aberdeen Council "Rover" pass is still £25 per night but that includes electrical hook up, water and showers.

You will need security codes to enter and exit the pontoons, another one for the facilities (the toilets are open to the public during the day) and a separate code to enter the showers. These codes can be obtained by ringing the Assistant HM on 07920 270 360

It is possible to anchor out in the bay but is reputed to be very uncomfortable.

For further information they have a website at

[Discover The Recreational Harbour at Banff | Aberdeenshire Council \(aberdeenshireharbours.co.uk\)](https://www.aberdeenshireharbours.co.uk)

Facilities

Shore power and water is available on all pontoon berths and.....

..... in addition, water and power is supplied to both the shore compounds with a further water tap on the East Pier. There is a servicing pad and slip at the end of the first basin. Showers and toilets are situated adjacent to the HM's office and are free of charge (toilets are open to the public during the day but have coded access by night). The pontoons are accessed by code so, if you intend arriving "out of hours", you would be wise to ring the harbour master and obtain those codes before he goes home! (You need three separate sets of code; the pontoons, the toilets and the showers).

Petrol and diesel are a problem because of the distance involved (the nearest garage is across the bay in Macduff) but you will invariably find a local boat owner who can run you across with your cans or, if you need diesel you could make arrangements with the HM at Macduff and slip across the bay with the boat to refuel.

Update 2016 Buccaneer now carry small stocks of both Calor and Camping Gaz refills

Buccaneer is situated over the bay in Macduff and can supply all your boatie's needs and is very helpful. There is also a DIY shop up on the High Street for things like Meths, White Spirit etc.

What To Do

This is where Banff wins over other harbours on this coast. It has two high end hotels with restaurants and bars, a good pub (The Ship) just along from the harbour and on Lower Street (within walking distance) a Chinese take away (bit greasy), an Indian takeaway (excellent), and a pizza/kebab shop (good value).

To add to that there is a large Tesco's about ten minutes walk from the harbour and a Morrisons (Co-Op) further around the corner. There is a bakery and butcher on the High Street along with a PO and Chemists. There is also an emporium called the "Spotted Bag Shop" which sells everything at knock down prices, is renowned along this coast and must be visited as you are bound to find something you didn't even know you needed!

If you have children aboard you mustn't miss a trip to the Aquarium at Macduff; it's well stocked and jiggled for children's enjoyment and a real boon on a rainy day. For adults a visit to Duff House on the way to the Deveron Bridge can be really interesting and they often have events or art exhibitions.

Other than that there is the COAST Art festival early in the summer and the Aquarium in Macduff (regular bus service from Banff). There are the remains of Banff Castle to be seen and also Duff House to the South of the town which is linked to the National Gallery of Scotland and nearly always has an Art exhibition.

The library on the High Street has free access to the internet but has strange, part time opening hours.

History