

Introduction

Contacts

Harbour Master 01542 831700 (Will be answered by Buckie HM) VHF#12 Better to call Simon on 07880 086756 - he's the Buckie Assistant HM who has an office in Burghead and is also responsible for [Hopeman](#)

One would be tempted to overlook this small fishing harbour on Moray Coast; it is listed as being very busy with fishing vessels and this is evidenced by the fact that, on frequent passages past it, there has always been FV activity there.

On the other hand its SW facing entrance makes it one of the few harbours on this coast whose entrance is easy in Easterly winds, though stiff Northerlies will produce an alarming amount of white water around its protective wall. The harbour consists of a main, narrow basin which is normally lined on both sides with FV; there is a secondary parallel basin which is even narrower and terminates in a slip. The entrance channel is at right angles to the main harbour and protected by the North wall which provides alongside berths for ships too large to enter the harbour.

What would appear on the surface as an uninteresting little town/village with little to commend it has, in fact, an amazingly interesting history and has been the subject of archaeological study for generations. The town today, built on the promontory overlooking the harbour, is one of the multitude of projects undertaken by that giant of Civil Engineering, Thomas Telford; in fact once one becomes aware of it, his influence is seen throughout this region in many of the harbours developed during the Industrial Revolution (the Caledonian Canal was one of his towering achievements).

In this case the pity was that, like many Victorians, he was no sentimentalist and laid his town over the top of what was an important fortified structure started, it is believed, during the Bronze age and developed as the capital of the Northern Picts (who have a long Latin name given them by the Romans) during the days of early Christianity. It is believed that some, now important, artefacts were incorporated in the structure of the harbour and the few remaining ones can be viewed in various museums around Scotland! A visit here must take in the visitor centre up behind the CG lookout to best understand the history of the area. The harbour didn't start out as shelter for fishing vessels (that came later) but as an import/export centre and this is evidenced by the large granary buildings around the harbour which have been turned into flats now. This was a town of great importance to the distilling trade supplying over thirty per cent of the malted barley used by the distilleries in Scotland and to that end much of the employment in the town was supplied by the malt houses.

Then, of course, the herring fishing took over the coast and it became another centre for the landing and processing fish. The railway came, and went with Beeching, but the harbour itself has continued to be mainly for fishing vessels, their catch being transported by road to the large markets on the East coast.

The harbour itself is well cared for, the pier sides are uncluttered and one doesn't have to negotiate ones way through a pile of creels and nets at the top of every ladder (though you'll be lucky to find a vacant ladder, especially at weekends!!). The result is that, although FV dominate the harbour, it doesn't have the heavy commercial atmosphere of somewhere like Buckie and it can be recommended as a stop over to yachties if tide and weather necessitate it.

Approach

Most documents recommend an approach from the NW which is where we have put our way point;

if approaching from the East you should stay a good 2 cables clear of the shore and headland to avoid the heavy scattering of rocks and reefs before turning in towards the harbour.

From the way point you should lay a course about half a cable to the West of the pierhead noting that the more prominent, northerly, of the white towers on that pier is well back from the entrance. Continue on that course until the entrance opens and then run in to the harbour keeping the white leading marks at the end of the channel in line. Once through the entrance the harbour depths will be sufficient to take most yachts but in the approach the depths vary and unless you are making an entry on the top of the tide you should make the HM aware of your draft and take his advice on the depths to be encountered.

There is a tide gauge on the port hand side of the entrance which indicates the depths inside the basin; if you are outbound you should subtract a meter from the tide gauge to have some idea of the depths outside the harbour. The harbour is dredged on a regular basis but there is only one dredger on this coast so it can be four or five months between dredges.

There have been reports that the radio masts behind Burghead can produce anomalies in GPS chart plotters but they have not been experienced by the author.

Berthing

You should definitely rig warps and fenders on both sides...

... before starting your approach as there will not be time to change sides once you are inside the harbour. It is highly likely that the main basin will be full and the only possibility of a berth will be in front of the first converted granary on the North wall.

During office hours the harbour master keeps a fairly close watch on VHF 14 and, if you are lucky, will be able to give you directions before entering harbour but you should not rely on this as he is part time here and may be away at Hopeman, though he tends to leave that to be visited at the end of the afternoon.

In the worst scenario there may be bad weather on the way (which would be one of the factors forcing you in here) and all the FV will be hunkering down here and you may end up rafted on one of those.

Burghead is administered by Moray Council so the charges here are the same as elsewhere, £20 per night unless you have purchased a Rover ticket. It is possible to pay for one's berth on the internet [HERE](#)

The Rover ticket is valid in Moray Council and Aberdeenshire council harbours - with the exception of Lossiemouth, Whitehills, Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh, Peterhead and Aberdeen itself. So basically useless in just about every harbour you would normally use North of Stonehaven

Facilities

There is water on the quay and public toilets are situated beside the HM's office. There is also a shower available. Presumably diesel can be delivered by tanker and you may be able to co-ordinate your requirement with that of a FV. The nearest petrol is at Lossiemouth.

There is an hourly bus through to Elgin which takes about half an hour to complete the journey; the Aberdeen to Inverness service does not call here and you will have to go to Elgin to connect with it or the bus through to Inverness airport.

There are only a few small shops in Burghead so, if you need substantial stores, you will probably have to use that Elgin bus.

What To Do

The striking feature of this harbour is the long expanse of the beach stretching five miles right round to Findhorn Bay but if taking on this walk you should note that there is no bus directly from Findhorn back to Burghead. There are three pubs (one of which was up for sale at the end of the 2012 season) and the one nearest the harbour does grub.

[Restaurants & Places to Eat in Burghead - Tripadvisor](#)

If you are interested in history or archaeology you shouldn't miss the Visitor Centre which has managed to put together an exhibition which is not completely about fishing. They will also point the way to other points of historical interest in Burghead.

History