

Introduction

Contacts:
Berthing Master

Cairnbulg is a small harbour with a very narrow entrance and awkward approach situated opposite Fraserburgh in Fraserburgh Bay.

The harbour here was started in the 1920s when the present east wall was built but money ran out and it was not until the early 1980s that the west wall was built to enclose the present harbour. It is a drying harbour with a hard sand bottom, so of no use to the cruising fin keeler but for those who can take the ground it is a delightful, off-the-beaten-track harbour which does not, as yet, charge harbour dues to the visiting yachtie.

It is an ideal stopping off point if one needs to hold before rounding Rattray Head. Ideally one leaves the Moray Firth and makes directly for Peterhead but often that means a very early start to catch the south bound stream at Rattray Head; a stop here can be very much less arduous! In 2009 they increased the depth in the Western half of the harbour and put in a pontoon which gave more berthing options and have now excavated the centre of the harbour and installed a further pontoon.

As you can see from the chart, it is about a half mile walk in to the village of Cairnbulg which transforms itself into the village of Inverallochy as you go further SE (be careful not to call one the other, there is a proud rivalry!).

Cairnbulg is a typical NE Coast fishing village; most of the houses are single story granite built buildings although many have been converted to two stories with attic conversions and dormer windows. You will also notice a preponderance of what in Scotland are called "drying greens"; this because the houses were built without large gardens and the open spaces in between were used to dry the laundry; the greens on the shore line may have been used for nets in the old days but they now fulfil this function as well.

Approach

We have given a waypoint which will put you on a safe approach path....

.... to the harbour entrance on a heading of 110°T.

From the South you need to give the beacon at the end of Cairnbulg Briggs a couple of cables offing depending on the sea state and from the North you can make directly for the waypoint when you have rounded Kinnaird Head. Sea state is critical for the approach as Fraserburgh bay shoals from a long way out and if the swell is Easterly it can make for an interesting ride, as to make harbour here you will be sideways on to it. There is no buoyage to guide you in; any buoys which may appear to be channel markers are creel markers laid around the edge of Bruness and the associated rocks.

There is a "but " to that because the kreel markers do mark where boats have been able to get to in order to lay their pots and can be a good indication of where the rocks are; but treat these with caution; they are not definitive. The good news is that the harbour trustees are considering laying some channel markers.

The best advice is to keep the right hand pier just open of the left hand one and crack on a bit of speed to spend as little time as possible in the cross swell.

Berthing

Cairnbulg has installed yet more pontoons (see our recent addition to our Gallery)....

..... It is uncertain how deep the water is around the pontoon and, at present our advice is to tie up as far West as

possible; further in you may have to take the ground.

Facilities

It is difficult to keep up with improvements here and, although there is no sign of water and electricity on the new pontoons they may have plans for it.

There were little or no or no facilities in the harbour so you need to arrive with enough water for your stop and enough fuel to carry on.

The good thing is that there is an hourly bus into Fraserburgh which takes about 15 minutes to get there.

There is also a library which has free computer access - it has scattered opening times but is open at some time on most days apart from Friday and Sunday.

What To Do

There is a mini market and a Post Office and it is reported that there is Peter's, an ice-cream shop at the end of Church Street which also does fish & chips. P Buchan used to have a butchers shop but it is not known if they are still trading.

There is a preserved But n Ben cottage that was occupied until the 1950s. It was originally built as a fisherman's cottage and is now maintained in its original state and is open to visitors in the summer months. It is an eye-opener, it's been smartened up but you can imagine an extended family living there in the 1920s, no water, no electricity, no sewage and, in the winter, the wind raging in from the North Sea; life for the fisher folk was no picnic in those days.

History