

Introduction

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The original settlement here was purchased in the mid 18th Century by the then Earl of Fife, one James Duff, who started the present day harbour and renamed the settlement "Macduff" (They weren't short on ego in those days!). By the end of that century two basins had been built and have remained ever since.

The South West wall and basin were added at a later date. In the heyday of the herring fishing it was an extremely busy harbour and in 1860 became connected to the railway network as was Banff across the bay. The fishing industry provided plenty of work for both harbours until the early 20th Century but since then it has slowly declined to its present day level. There are still about three dozen fishing vessels based here but they land their catches at larger harbours, either on this coast or the east coast and, quite often, are crewed by non UK personnel under the command of a UK skipper. The ship yard is still fairly busy and you will normally see a fishing vessel up on the slips overlooking the Collie Rocks.

The harbour consists of three basins, two to the NE of the entrance and a further basin in the SW corner.

The harbour entrance has a tall white lighthouse with a sector light on the Northerly pierhead (that's the one on the port side going in!!) and they normally put yachts in the first of the two easterly basins. It used to be the case that they didn't welcome yachts because they were too busy but these days they will quite happily accept you if you don't want to use either Banff or Whitehills. It has the advantage that when sea/tide conditions prevent entrance to Banff or Whitehills they are normally sheltered (and vice versa, of course!)

The town itself is not what you'd call a "tourist attraction"; it's fairly functional with not very much in the way of shops. The harbour front is dominated by fishing related buildings and, behind it, the town is mainly residential serving the men who work in the harbour. It used to come to life during the week of the Banff-Stavanger off-shore race but that event had its last race in 2008. Now the main event of the year (which it shares with Banff) is the COAST Art Festival in May which is well worth a visit in its many venues.

Approach

If arriving from the East, remain a good half mile off the coast....

.... opposite Macduff due to the Collie Rocks. NB those rocks are a popular spot for divers as it is littered with wrecks!!

We have included a view of Banff Bay when approaching from the East. If you can identify the small lighthouse on Banff pierhead and hold a course outside the line through that and the arch in the building above it you will remain clear of the Collie rocks. You may be tempted to cut inside the rocks, especially if you see a local yacht doing so but, be warned, some of the local yachties have their own individual lead in marks in Banff which they swear by and others never go inside them as a matter of course so as a visitor you would be advised to take passage outside! The "inside" passage will save you five minutes at most and one doesn't have to rush to make "Last Orders" on Sunday lunchtime anymore, so it's not worth it. Just keep well off the coast and come round into the bay, lay a course towards the middle of Banff when clear of the Collies and when Macduff harbour entrance opens you can turn in towards it. When approaching Macduff, remember that the white lighthouse is on the port side and, as you can see from our photo, the harbour wall behind it is whitewashed; it is very easy to be confused at distance and set up a course towards the outside harbour wall to the left of the lighthouse.

From the West the approach is clear of dangers; you'll probably pick up the "Temple of Venus" on the hillside to the South of the harbour fairly early on in your approach (it'll be identifiable as you pass Whitehills) and as long as you haven't cut too close to Knock Head you can shape a course for this until the lighthouse on the pier becomes obvious.

The pierhead lighthouse is a sector light RWR and the white sector keeps you clear of the Collie Rocks and the shallows off Banff. The lead in marks up on the hillside behind the harbour are not immediately obvious; they have orange triangular topmarks and flash red at night; they are useful by night but difficult to pick out of the street lighting; by day, if you can see the lead in marks you'll probably have the harbour entrance in clear view and with a normal yacht draft you won't need to use them.

The photo of the entrance in our gallery has been taken from the right of the recommended approach line.

There does not have to be a very strong northerly set to the sea for there to be quite significant surf in this bay. In those conditions and from half tide that set can affect the harbour entrances of both Macduff and Banff (see our photo with a Force 5 to 6 blowing) – and in really strong conditions it can be almost impossible to get in without broaching. It may be best to drop your sails early in deep water rather than hang on to them until close in where you may be affected by the swell/surf.

At night you will have to rely on the sector light atop the east pierhead of Macduff to gain the harbour entrance as just about all the other lights are difficult to identify in amongst the street lights.

Berthing

Yachts are normally berthed alongside in the first basin to port....

.... as you enter the harbour but you should confirm this with the HM.

The harbour is administered by Aberdeenshire Council and the charges are as listed on their website (£25per night)

Facilities

This harbour is not set up for the leisure trade; there is no 240V electric hook up. There are toilets but they are open to the general public and there are no showers. Petrol can be obtained in cans at the garage just around the corner to the SW of the harbour and diesel can be arranged with the HM.

There is, of course, the shipyard and apart from repair facilities they do most of the cranage for yachts along this coast. Macduff is also home to one of the best (if not the best) yacht chandlers on this coast, Buccaneer Marine, who can be prevailed upon to sort any problem (his forté is electronics but his staff can help with most things boatie). There is a Ship's Chandler on the harbour: he deals mainly with fishing vessels but is useful for anti-foul (bring your own bottle!) and makes some very good bespoke tarpaulins.

There is Calor gas and Camping Gaz available at Buccaneer Chandlery

What To Do

You won't have to go far for a drink as there are five or six bars just over the road from the harbour. The shops such as they are can be found up the hill from the harbour, though the better fish & chip shop is along the harbour past the shipyard and halfway up the hill to Fraserburgh.

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

Macduff has a golf club up on the East cliffs and Banff has one down on the west bank of the River Deveron. There used to be an open air swimming pool in the bay to the east of the Shipyard but that has fallen into disuse; there is a local pressure group trying to get it open again.

Eating Out

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

History