

Introduction

Contacts

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These are two delightful little harbours situated in the bays on either side of Troop Head on the North Aberdeenshire coast; Pennan to the East and Gardenstown (with the detached), in Gamrie Bay, to the West. There have been harbours here since the early 18th century and each has been destroyed and rebuilt on several occasions but they have never been able to compete with larger more accessible harbours on this coast (Fraserburgh and Macduff). There were as many as fifty boats at Gardenstown in the early 20th century but it has declined to the few kreen boats that are here today. The two villages cling determinedly to the cliffs and their harbours take a pounding from the Northerlies during the winter. Gardenstown is by far the larger of the two and the harbour is well occupied with local amateur anglers and a few professional crustacean fishermen whilst Pennan boasts, at the most, a couple of kreen boats. Today they are both basically dormitory villages with holiday accommodation to let; Pennan has very little in the way of facilities but Gardenstown is better equipped.

As can be seen from our photographs Gardenstown has been fitted with floating pontoons in its western half whilst a few small yachts ride to fore and aft moorings opposite the harbour entrance. In Gardenstown at HW and with a northerly set to the sea there is a noticeable gentle surge which sets up the bilge keel boogey and the moored yachts can be seen rocking gently, but persistently from side to side.

Both harbours are popular with local yachtsmen that can take the ground, either as a lunchtime venue on a day sail or somewhere to visit for a Saturday night. They don't lend themselves as stop offs on a long cruise but, if you are exploring this coastline, they should not be missed out.

Approach

If coming from the East, Pennan is easily identified from the other side of Aberdour Bay...

... whilst still abeam Rosehearty but Gardenstown will not appear until one has passed Troop Head when it slowly creeps into view around Crovie Head. From the other direction one first sees Crovie tucked underneath "The Law" on the east side of Gamrie Bay and slowly Gardenstown shows itself inside More Head.

Gardenstown

From either direction one should hold off the coast until due North of the harbour and then make an approach down the East side of Craig Dagerty. As the kreen boats have laid pots on the rocks on either side of the approach there is really only one way through the middle of them and you should follow that on a Southerly heading (the chart gives a lead in line of 183°T but the shore marks are not at all obvious whereas the pot markers are!!) until the harbour mouth opens on your port side when you can turn into it. Most yachtsmen haul in their sails when well out in the middle of the bay and motor in cautiously. I wouldn't choose to make a night approach here on a first visit.

Pennan is even more interesting as you need to identify the Howdman rock and the Tamhead Rock (both of which dry at LW) before you start the approach and then make for the West pierhead on a course of about 170°T. Again you should hold off the coast until north of the entrance and shape a course towards the harbour when the West pier obscures the entrance; if you are coming from the East, do not be tempted to make for the harbour mouth whilst it is still open or you'll end up on the rocks which extend out from the shore to the east of Pennan.

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Berthing

In both harbours look for an alongside berth on the East wall

There are no published harbour dues but as both harbours are run by Trusts it would be nice of you to make a donation

Facilities

Gardenstown. Water and toilets are on the east pier. Fuel can be obtained in cans from the garage halfway up the hill but you will need your crew's Sherpa to get it! There are shops for basic provisions, but again they are up the hill.

At Pennan there are no facilities at all so come prepared.

The nearest boating facilities are at Macduff; Buccaneer Ltd can help with most problems. (01261 835199)

What To Do

Both harbours have a hotel/bar of good repute though the one at Gardenstown can get crowded on a sunny weekend. Gardenstown has a shop (collocated with the garage) but Pennan has only the hotel which was used as a location during the filming of Local Hero.

People have travelled from all over the world just to make a call from the red telephone box outside the hotel!

History