

Introduction

Contacts

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This is another harbour run by Aberdeenshire Council and the **Harbour Master at Macduff looks after it**. It is another small drying harbour of interest to the yachting community who is exploring this coastline in a bilge keeler with time to spare and is a Mecca for yachtsmen all around this coast at the end of June for the Portsoy Festival when boats from as far away as Orkney (and sometimes the Faroe islands or Shetland) in the North and the Forth in the South gather here on the last weekend in June for the Portsoy Traditional Boats Festival. There will not be a Portsoy Festival this summer (2021)

<https://stbfportsoy.org/>

If you are looking for a quiet spot don't turn up that weekend because it is an endless celebration to which not just the yachts turn up but the whole of the drinking population of this coast!

Again, this was a thriving fishing village in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The old harbour was packed with boats landing herring to be transported to the South by rail. The railway pushed through to here in 1884 linking it with the mainline at Keith. It was closed by Beaching in the 1960s and traces of the old railway line can be seen running parallel to Church Street and Low Street (but you'll have to look over the wall!) down to the harbour. Portsoy has a fascinating history and is possibly one of the earliest on this coast to have had a harbour. Way back in Tudor times (when Scotland existed as a separate entity to England) there was a small harbour here which was rebuilt in the early 17th century and that harbour is largely the "old harbour" you see here today. Until the fishing industry went mad in the mid 19th Century this little harbour had a good import export trade and the remnants of that can be seen as some locals still have a small trade in Portsoy "marble" (a form of serpentine) which they carve into jewellery and object d'arts. Some of this marble can be seen in the palace at Versailles in Paris! The arrival of the herring boom necessitated the building of the new harbour in the early part of the 19th century but this was wrecked in a storm and had to be rebuilt thirty years later (which seems to have been the case for most of the harbours on this coast at one time or another as the winter storms have to be seen to be believed) So, what we have today are two small harbours, both drying, to the left and right of a narrow, north facing channel. Shelter in both of them is good but the entrance is impassable in strong NW to NE winds. The village behind them has very old restored buildings which get newer as you proceed inland. Some of the 18th and 19th century buildings/warehouses/mills around the harbour remain virtually as they were built. It has a wealth of pubs/hotels, some down on the harbour, others further inland up Church Street. At the top of Church Street you come to Seafield Street where you will find most of the shops, though, if you just want a paper and a pint of milk there is a shop on "The Square" at the top of North Street a short hop from the harbour.

Approach

About the first landmark you will identify from sea is the needle-like church spire in the town above the harbour;

....it's the most westerly of the three spires/towers shown on the chart but unfortunately it doesn't provide for any sort line up for your first visit.

The harbour entrance is very difficult to pick out from the dark grey/black background (aren't they all?!). Up until recently one of the buildings on the hard of the old harbour has been painted pale pink, so, if you can make that out over the top of the outer harbour wall it will give you some sort of aiming point until you can pick out the end of the wall.

It's worth noting that there is no light or lighthouse on this outer corner, though the lighthouse on the shore at the inner end of the entry channel can be seen over the wall if approaching from the East.

There is a running in bearing given on the Admiralty chart and we have given a way point out on the 20m contour

close to that bearing; if you are in any doubt stay away from the shore and bumble across the bay until north of the village and come in from that direction.

You will be able to see the prominent light house from quite far out and then pick up the mark behind it to line up for the approach. Our photograph sequence shows just that sort of approach (if a little closer in!)

It's not a place to try for in driving rain or short visibility and certainly not in northerlies but on a fairly nice day with a bit of sunshine it's a fairly easy approach. It's worth noting that, if you have ended up plugging the tide from the east and are confident of your position, there is a back eddy on the eastern side of Link Bay, but be careful of that isolated rock.

Berthing

Give Macduff a ring or call them on VHF12 and they will advise....

.... you on where to berth. These days it would be best to contact the HM at Macduff the day before and give them some idea of your intentions. It is possible, with a shallow draft boat, to get in to the new harbour quite late on in the tide and berth alongside just inside on the right hand wall.

If you prefer a more picturesque berth in the old harbour you need to be there before half tide. There is a charge of £20 per night unless you hold a "Rover" ticket for the Aberdeenshire Harbours.

Facilities

There are fresh water taps and public toilets, but that is all. Provisions will be found at the Co-op up on Seafield Street where you will also find the coast bus which runs hourly in either direction to Aberdeen one way and Inverness the other. It takes about twenty minutes to get to Banff which would be your main shopping centre. No fuel and no Gas or Gaz.

What To Do

You won't have to go far for your first pint as there is a pub on the harbour, but, of course, should you turn up here for the festival, there could be a queue! There are buses throughout the evening to and from Banff.

History