

Introduction

Contacts

Helford Mooring Officer tel 01326 250749 VHF #37A (M1)

The Helford River is a beautiful stretch of water that is relatively undeveloped, and offers only modest facilities. The entrance faces east and when the wind blows from this direction unless you are well upstream things can become a bit uncomfortable, however shelter from the West is complete.

It is close to Falmouth, and many boats based there make a pleasant day sail to the Helford River a regular outing. As with many stretches of water in the UK, a shoal draft boat drawing less than 1.5 m is ideal for exploring this "Ria". There are no marinas but well maintained visitors moorings, some possible anchorages, a couple of boatyards at the end of drying creeks, two sailing clubs, a few pubs and a general store. Not a place for the yachtsman or motorboater to stock right up, but peaceful little haven well worth a visit.

One of the reasons there is no overdevelopment is the Duchy of Cornwall's oyster fisheries. The numerous oyster beds which have been established possibly from Roman times have prevented excessive moorings and commercialisation.

For those seeking a bit of solitude (outside of high season), the Helford River is ideal.

There is now a website for the Helford river at:-

<https://www.helfordrivermoorings.co.uk/>

Approach

The River authorities have now supplied a video of the approach to their moorings which can be found at [HERE](#)

When coming from the direction of Falmouth it is essential to locate

..... and pass outside of Gedges Rock (dries 1.4 m), which is marked with a green buoy (Fl.G.5s) in season only. Standing off a good half mile until the entrance bears due west will keep you clear of this. In easterlies Falmouth Bay and the approaches to Helford River produce a very short and steep sea. Swell in the outer reaches, moorings and anchorages make a diversion to the River Fal desirable. Pilotage details:

When approaching from the South you will pass the entrance to Gillan Creek, which is guarded by a drying rock, marked by the easterly Cardinal "Car Croc". Shoal draft craft can wiggle in here providing they have a large scale chart, and particular attention is needed to Car Crock rocks which dry 1 m, and extend quite a distance to the south-east. The safest approach to this Creek would be to arrive at low water when you can see the hazards, and to creep in on the tide. There are many local moorings in the pool but it may be possible to find an anchorage off Flushing, alternatively if you can take the ground, move up the Creek to the hamlet of St Anthony where you can dry out in this picturesque little corner. There is a small boatyard here.

When entering the River stay in the middle of and keep an eye out for a rocky patch on the South Shore, marked by a unlit northerly Cardinal "The Voose", which you should leave to port. Deeper into the River a drying area, The Bar, is marked by a green conical unlit buoy which lays opposite Helford Creek.... leave to starboard.

Expect to find extra buoyage on the South shore marking the positions of storage pots for crustaceons; they are normally marked at their extremities by yellow (sometimes lit) bouys.

You will now be in the area of the visitors moorings.

Berthing

There are a couple of possibilities for anchoring just within the

..... entrance provided the wind is in a westerly quadrant but note the restriction on anchoring on the North Shore in the area shown because of Eel Grass, which needs protection from yachtsman digging it up with their anchors. This no-go area is marked by yellow buoys in season. Both these locations are well away from facilities, and will require an anchor light at night, and outboard on the dinghy for provisioning. Anchoring is prohibited on the South Shore West of the Voose, because of fisherman's store pots or anywhere in the inner River West of the telephone cable that crosses the narrows. There are clear warning notices on the shore regarding this matter. More berthing details:

There is a Google Map on which the Visitor Moorings are indicated:

[Visitors moorings Chart](#)

As you continue westwards deeper into the River, (being mindful of the fisherman's store pots on the South Shore may be marked by small red port hand buoys along the outer edge), you will come to a large cluster of moorings. The best plan is to keep to the southern side of the river until you can identify the green unlit Bar Buoy (seasonal), which marks extensive shallows radiating out from the North. It can be a bit hard to identify amongst all the moored craft.

In this area you will find several visitors moorings with green pickup buoys. Do not anchor in this area, pick up a spare visitors mooring. The moorings officer is normally out in his launch, and you may be able to contact him on VHF channel 37A or channel M1, callsign "Mooring Officer". It may be possible to reach him on the phone 01326 221265. In any case he will be round to relieve you of money at the rate of £21 for an overnight stay (30 foot boat). Boats over 14m can only be accommodated by prior arrangement. For a daytime stop they are charging £8 which is valid until 1630; after that you pay for the night.

During busy periods you may have to raft up, and apparently the moorings are strong enough to handle rafting in winds up to F6. Good fenders will be needed.

A ferry service crosses the river at this point and also doubles up as a water taxi, VHF channel M callsign " Helford Ferry" or telephone 01326 250770. The normal charge is a rather steep £2 per person each way, with a maximum charge of £10 per boat. The ferries normally operate from 10 AM to 6 PM or later by arrangement during the summer months.

If using your own dinghy people can be dropped ashore at the ferry slipway, but you mustn't leave your dinghy here, use the pontoon just upstream. This is a private pontoon, and although the owner doesn't charge, there is a box where you can leave a small donation towards the upkeep of this useful facility.

Other than at dead low water it is possible to use the dinghy landing pontoon belonging to Helford River sailing club, identified by its impressive wooden building on the eastern side of Helford Creek. (See photo gallery).

For those wishing to explore further, Porthnavas Creek on the North side offers a friendly yacht club, with a few visitors' moorings and boatyard. Apart from a pool in the entrance known as Abraham's Bosom the whole Creek dries out, and areas not occupied by moorings are taken up with oyster beds. They welcome visitors who can dry out and charge from £15 a day for a 10ft boat up to £35 a day for a 28ft boat. You should ring ahead to ascertain the availability of a mooring.

If continuing towards Gweek up the main river, you will find shortly after Tremayne Quay, the whole river dries out. You will also find a large section of the river devoid of moorings after Port Navahas Creek, and occupied by more oyster beds. It is possible for moderate draft craft to make their way to Gweek Quay with a reasonable tide, and the last part of the drying channel is well marked with port and starboard hand buoys.

Facilities

The anchorages mentioned above are well away from any facilities whatsoever,

..... and the village of Helford on the Western side of Helford Creek will be the nearest source of provisions. Vessels on visitors mooring buoys will be much closer to the village.

The village can offer a pub, and Helford village stores and post office, which is basically the only shop on the River and can supply basic provisioning including frozen meat, fresh vegetables, bread and an off-licence. The village possesses one payphone.

Helford River Sailing Club lies opposite the village of Helford and extends a warm welcome to visiting yachtsmen. The facilities include bar, restaurant, showers, washing machine and tumble dryer.

Hosepipes with fresh water are available for top up at the end of the pontoons tide permitting. Waste disposal and recycling facilities are also available on the site. Please call 01326 231006 (office), or the bar 01326 231460 for restaurant bookings and further information.

<http://www.helfordriversc.co.uk/> Helford River Sailing Club

The northern side of the river at this point offers a pub that provides food, and payphone, together with the already mentioned ferry link to Helford village. There is an hourly bus service to Falmouth from this side of the river but it is a long hike on foot to reach the bus stop.

Port Navas Creek, offers nothing in the way of provisioning, but does have a payphone and Port Navas Yacht Club, which has already been mentioned. They can be contacted on 01326 340065, and a link to their website is below:

www.pnyc.co.uk

If you can make it to Gweek at the head of the River, you will find Gweek Quay Boatyard, in this relaxed and charming little village. The boatyard offers shoreside storage for over 300 boats, and you can dry out alongside at the yard. They provide toilets and showers, shore power, diesel and water. Phone them to arrange a berth on 01326 221657. They also offer full boatyard facilities including a 25 tonne crane, a chandlery, engineering and wood and fibreglass repairs, with several specialists operating from the one site. (See business directory) Link to website below:

www.gweekquay.co.uk

The village itself offers a grocery store and a post office, but the garage where you could obtain petrol in Jerry cans has closed, so no petrol. There is a pub serving meals, also cafes. There are occasional buses from here to Falmouth and Helston.

What To Do

Apart from the pubs and yacht clubs already mentioned, not a lot !

For the energetic there are plenty of coastal footpath walks, and of particular interest to children, and found at Gweek, is the Seal Sanctuary where sick and injured seals are nursed back to health before being released once more to sea. It will be found on the North side of the creek and is open daily in summer months.

The following sites may give some more information of use:

[Helford Village pubs and bars: pubs in Helford Village, cornwall # beerintheevening.com](#) pubs

http://www.cornwalls.co.uk/Cornwall/helford_river.htm info

<http://helfordmarineconservation.co.uk/> conservation

History

Helford River is not a river or an estuary but a ria located in Cornwall which passes the Trebah and Glendurgan gardens, and the Durgan village. At the Head of the Helford River is Gweek, containing a boat building and repair centre, and the Gweek seal sanctuary, where injured Atlantic grey seals are nursed back to health before being released to the freedom of the Atlantic Ocean. The local area is well represented by public houses; with excellent food and local ales available at the Shipwright's Arms in Helford, the Ferry Boat Inn across the river in Helford Passage, and the Gweek Inn.

On the north side of the river Helford River Boats (HRB) has a kiosk sitting on Helford Passage beach (officially called 'Passage Cove') which sells ice creams, souvenirs and beach gear. HRB runs a ferry across the river to Helford Point every day between April and October, as well as renting out motor boats, kayaks, sailing dinghies and rowing dinghies.

On the south side of the river the Helford River Sailing Club lies just above the shore. In the sailing season it is popular with visiting yachtsmen, and regular evening races for both yachts and dinghies. Teaching schemes for both adults and children also run throughout the summer.

Helford River harbours many secrets which can be seen by boat. Small dinghys may be hired from the boatyard in Helford village or across the river in Helford Passage. Popular destinations are Frenchman's Creek, made famous by Daphne du Maurier in her work of the same name - it's easy to imagine smugglers rowing silently up the creek with muffled oars and creeping through the woods to their safe house. Also worth seeing is Tremayne Quay, built for a visit by Queen Victoria in the 1840s which she then declined to make. Camping is permitted on the quay, although the National Trust require a stay for one or two nights only to give others the opportunity to experience this wonderful setting. There are many other activities to enjoy on and around the river, such as sailing, windsurfing, swimming and fishing or simply sailing around and taking in the scenery.

There are seven creeks off the Helford, from West to East are Ponsontuel Creek, Mawgan Creek, Polpenwith Creek, Polwheveral Creek, Frenchman's Creek, Portnavas Creek/Port Navas Creek, and Gillan Creek.

Gweek

Gweek is at the head of navigation of the Helford River. It has been a port since Roman times and was a thriving port in the Tudor period, with its own Customs House.

During the mining boom, a tin-smelting blowing house operated at the quayside.

In a Topographical Dictionary of England published in 1848, it was described as:

GWEEK, a small port, in the hundred of Kerrier, W. division of Cornwall, $\frac{3}{4}$ miles (E. by S.) from Helston. The pilchard-fishery is carried on extensively, 200 boats being employed in taking the fish, which are cured in the various creeks and coves within the limits of the port. In addition to the fishery, the chief trade consists in the exportation of copper-ore, corn, moorstone, and oysters, and the importation of timber, coal, and limestone.

Current activities

Gweek is the home to Gweek Quay Boatyard, which houses several boatbuilding, repair and maintenance

companies, namely Hardman Jones Marine Services, A2 Rigging, Working Sail (builders of classic pilot cutters), and David Walkey Yachtbuilders. Also here is Seacore, a marine drilling contractor, which was acquired by Dutch Company Fugro NV to form Fugro Seacore, and as of 2007 is planning to move to Falmouth.

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