

Introduction

Contact

Harbour Master 01656 815715 mob 07580 947347 VHF #80

The harbour at Porthcawl was constructed as a commercial harbour in the early decades of the nineteenth century on the back of the industrial development of South Wales. It seems to have been at the centre of ongoing competition between rival railway developers and mining interests with the result that about fifty years after it was built, competing interests in Barry won and it entered a decline in commercial activity and by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century started to don the mantle of a resort town rather than an industrial one.

In the latter half of the twentieth century this harbour was a tidal mud puddle approachable only a couple of hours either side of high water and really only used by the local angling fraternity, indeed to enter it you had to run the gauntlet of complaining pier-end fishermen.

Recently this has all been changed and the harbour has now been fitted with a cill and tide gate and pontoons. The tide gate means that the boats on the pontoons no longer dry out and the depth is maintained inside at 4.95m above chart datum. Outside the gate the approach is still tidal and dries so entry times are still restricted by the depth of water outside the gate and over the cill. Access is now 3 hours either side of HW with a cill height +3.45m on CD.

This is the fifth year of the marina's operation and it's really doing well. They have added a cafe and restaurant; they have a good web site and it's becoming a nice place to visit. A good addition to the list of sailing destinations in the Bristol Channel.

You will see in the approach section below that the approach to this harbour is very dependent on tide and weather and, given the distances to other harbours, it probably not a place to use as a planned stop off if transiting the Bristol Channel en route to somewhere else; it's more a place for a Channel based cruiser to visit because he's been everywhere else on the Channel and wants to try some where new; such a skipper will be familiar with the Bristol Channel and its moods.

There is a harbour website at <http://www.porthcawlmarina.co.uk/>

Approach

The first thing you notice about the approach to this harbour

..... is that coming from any other direction than the SW is going to involve some pretty careful navigation. There is the long sand bank extending 7 miles West North West from Nash point out to the West Nash WCM and, to the North West of that, the Scarweather Sands and the Hugo Bank. All these banks dry at low water and there was a time when the locals used to hold a cricket match out on the Scarweather at LWS! (it was limited over cricket long before it was introduced in England!!)

If you are coming down from Swansea or Monkstone you'll be running with the flood and can basically, in settled weather, make a bee line for Hutchwins Point just NW of Porthcawl. It is fairly shallow there but by half tide in the Bristol Channel you will have at least an extra 3m of water above chart datum to add to the depths shown on the chart and can squeeze between the overfalls and the coast. Alternatively you can go round the end of the Kenfig Patches if there is heavy weather from the SW but if heavy rollers are sweeping in towards Porthcawl Point you should probably consider turning back to Swansea!

Coming down channel from Barry you will be running on the ebb and can go through the Nash Passage though that can be daunting in breezy weather from the SW - the breakers over the East Nash Bank roll on halfway across the

Passage making it look very narrow and scary. Once through there, unless you have a very shallow draft, you must shape a course to the West of the Tusker Rock and the Fairy rock before making for the end of Porthcawl pier.

If the seas are too heavy to go through that passage you are in for a bumpy ride round the West Nash because going down the Bristol Channel on the Ebb against a West/South West wind is the classic wind over tide situation and should perhaps never have left Barry!! Anyway under those conditions Porthcawl is not a place to be going as you are going to have to sit at anchor exposed to the weather to await enough water to get in.

Be in no doubt, this little bit of God's ocean can be a nasty place and you don't want to be complacent in your planning for it; many have perished here through taking it for-granted.

Once you round the pier head you need to stick close to the South pier until you are abeam the perch with SHM on the top marking the end of the old breakwater; at that stage the inner harbour gate will be easy to identify. There is a cill at the tide gate which is 3.45 meters above chart datum so you will need at least that plus your draft to get in.

For lock gate operating time for the current month and the next click [here](#)

Berthing

It is a requirement of the harbour that you establish

..... VHF contact on #80 before you approach the lock gates when you will be given entry instructions. Once inside there are three hammer heads which can take six 10m visiting boats or three large ones; the harbour Master will allocate you a berth. The charge (2021) is £2.12 per m per night and includes the showers.

Facilities

Water and shore power (prepaid card) are available on the pontoons whilst there is an amenities block ashore for toilets and showers; laundrette facilities are available close by in the town. The marina has no fuel supplies but we are told that there are a couple of fuel stations and if you needed a couple of gallons to get you home the marina would be able to give you a lift. They do not permit refuelling in the marina; you will have to do that on the landing stage just outside the lock gate.>They now have 10 ton crane to shift boats ashore
There are plenty of shops nearby in the town including a Co-Op.

What To Do

This is a holiday resort so every effort is made to entertain the visitor; you'll find a pub on every corner and plenty of fast food outlets. They have a Grand Pavilion which has shows throughout the year.

History