

Introduction

Contacts

Harbour Master 01766 512927, or mobile on 07879 433147

Madog Yacht Club 01766 512976,

Situated two miles up the River Glaslyn Estuary, Porthmadog is a very popular visitor location at the bottom of Snowdonia. It is the terminus for both the Ffestiniog Railway and the Welsh Highland Railway. The town owes existence to the slate quarried in the hinterland though the causeway was built much earlier to reclaim the land behind it for agriculture.

The causeway forced the drainage water down the north side of the estuary which scoured out both the harbour and the approach channel thus it became the "natural" place from which to export the slate. This industry thrived until the end of the First WW when the lucrative German market declined and with it the industry.

That left a township full of ancillary services for the export of slate (they had had a thriving ship building industry) and it reinvented itself as a tourist town serving the Black Country. The narrow gauge railway which had brought the slates down from the quarries closed and was rescued by enthusiasts of steam railways in the 1950s and is a national, if not international, treasure.

It, and its neighbours, are off the beaten track so to speak and, as part of a Cardigan Bay cruise, would make an ideal destination.

Approach

The Red and White Fairway Buoy is in the position marked on the 2022 UKHO chart.....

..... The UKHO chart soundings bear no relationship to reality and the approach channel is over what were drying sandbanks.

From the South West you will have to skirt round the Sarn Badrig before heading NE towards the Fairway buoy of the estuary or from the West it's just a matter of heading towards the estuary located between Criccieth Castle (a couple of miles NW) and Harlech Castle (a couple of miles to the SE).

If you are coming up Cardigan bay from, say, Barmouth, the East Passage (inside Sarn Badrig) is eminently doable from about half tide onwards in fairly settled conditions, the lowest sounding is 1 metre and we're told that the local boats use it all the time.

Once you have located the Fairway buoy you should look East for the Port and Starboard lateral buoys marking the entrance to the channel which is buoyed all the way up to the harbour. Make your approach in the last 2 hours of the flood and, if you have more than 1.5 metres draft it is recommended that this be reduced to one and a half hours either side of HW.

We have included a chartlet of the approach with the approximate positions of the channel buoyage; these buoys are moved on a regular basis as required by the drifting sandbanks so this chartlet should not be used for navigation. (this proviso is for real, not just to cover our legal rear!!) The course from the Fairway Buoy is basically East turning NNW in the vicinity of the No3 buoy and parallels the coast before turning NNE towards the White house on the UKHO chart where it then turns NE and skirts along the North shore of the estuary to the harbour.

<

Berthing

Your choice here depends on what you like; the Yacht Club owns.....

..... and services the pontoons on the left as you enter the harbour proper and they have electricity and water with the club close by for showers etc. They are charging £20 a night for those berths in 2022.

If you are happy to tie up against the quay or moor on one of the harbour's deep water moorings then that will cost you £8 a night. You will not have shore power or water and will have to walk round to the yacht club to use their toilets and showers (Coded entry which you will need to avail yourself of when they are open)

If you intend using a YC berth you will need to contact them on their phone, or by email, to arrange a berth before your arrival, otherwise just call the HM on 12 or 16 (office hours) to be allocated a spot.

The yacht club website is at <http://www.madocyc.co.uk/>

Facilities

On the YC pontoon you have all the facilities of a marina; shore power, water, showers and toilets. On one of the harbour moorings you will only have water which has to be collected in containers; you pay your money and take your choice! The harbour has its own diesel supply on the quay but petrol has to be collected in cans from the petrol station just over the road from the harbour. Calor gas and Camping Gaz is obtainable from a source close by (ask the HM).

This is a good place for restocking the food locker there being several supermarkets with outlets here.

What To Do

A visit to Porthmadog would not be complete without a visit to the Ffestiniog Railway. This was the first railway to be "preserved" and, over the years has had much publicity. At the moment they do not require bookings for their "Standard" coaches but you would be advised to book for their "First" class. Obviously at the weekend you'd probably have to queue for tickets though they have told us they may be introducing on line booking. They have a website

<http://www.festrail.co.uk/>

The harbour has a Maritime Museum just by the HM's office which comes recommended. Other than that, the steam railway has vitalised the local tourist industry and there are plenty of pubs, restaurants and hotels to choose

from.>

History