

Introduction

Contacts

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We have included this harbour because a) if you intend crossing St Brides Bay southbound you are likely to need it and b) it's a lovely place and those who sail this coast never pass it by!!

Our chart of Solva can be zoomed to show Jack and Ramsey Sounds because if you are coming here you will necessarily pass through them but we'll deal with that in the Approach section. The North coast of St Brides Bay is basically cliffs and this little cleft in them has provided good shelter for sailors since the Welsh took to the water although in very strong Southerlies the entrance becomes difficult if not impassable.

The entrance is guarded by a lump of unlit rock with a bit of steel angle iron on top; at high water you can pass on either side of it but, lower down the tide, the west passage is normally preferred. The first time you go through you'll be leaping anxiously from side to side peering down through the clear water at the very obvious rocks on either hand but, in fact, there is plenty of room and sphincter puckering is unnecessary!! Once inside, there is a deepish pool off to starboard with enough room for a couple of yachts to swing at anchor throughout the tide but further in the harbour dries completely to hard sand with the stream running down its western side (you need wellies to cross it)

The harbour bottom is leased by the Solva Harbour Society who have control of the moorings and the Quay but the day to day running is done by a harbour master who may or may not be in attendance depending on whether he has found something more interesting to do! (hence the mobile number above)

The village itself is a popular tourist spot and, at the weekend in the summer can get very busy - the Ship Inn has a very large car park and "welcomes coaches" but for all that, and especially in the evening it is a little paradise. It is a very useful place to have up your sleeve if transiting from Fishguard to Milford or vice versa; the reason being that you either transit through the Jack and Ramsey Sounds or go outside the Smalls and the Bishop lights and there are some horrendous overfalls and currents outside those. Once you have braved it for the first time the inner route is preferred as it is shorter and, generally, the sea conditions are better than the various sets of overfalls outside. Obviously, for the larger boat, fully crewed and standing watches, the outside route, well clear of the nasties, is better.

Approach

Tidal Streams in the Jack & Ramsey Sounds.

South bound (Bristol Channel Flood) Jack Sound starts at Milford + 0200 hrs

Ramsey Sd starts at Milford + 0330 hrs

North Bound (Bristol Channel Ebb) Jack Sound starts at Milford - 0430 hrs

Ramsey Sd starts at Milford - 0300 hrs

Making for Solva from Milford Haven you have some interesting calculations to make and it is probably easier to start from Dale at the western end of the Haven.

The north bound slack at the Jack is 0430 before HW Milford so you have the last hours of the Bristol Channel flood to peg to get there at that time. In settled weather you can take the first hour or so of the ebb through that Sound but the speeds through it can get up 7kts so you are probably best to accept the adverse tide until you get there.

Basically, if you leave Dale at LW Milford and make good five kts that generally works out OK.

Head towards the Blackstones and about 50m short of them put the helm over and head directly towards the Tusker Rock just off Wooltack point (keep an eye out astern to stay on that line between the Tusker and the Blackstones). There are alarming rocks both to port and starboard but the channel is about a cable wide so ample room for error.

When the point on the North side of Skomer opens from the North point of Midland Isle off to port you can then alter NW to clear any overfalls (remember you will be on slack water so they will hardly be noticed) and then you are clear to turn on course.

Your problem then is that, until you are within a couple of miles of Solva, Green Scar will not be distinguishable from Solva but, once it is, you can make your way round it and head towards the entrance. It will be about two hours into the ebb by this time so you're probably best to make for the western passage around Black Rock in the entrance - it's just a wee bit wider to look at than the eastern one. Go straight through the middle of this and then bear to port to follow the passage up the western/north western side of the harbour. Leave the first orange buoy to starboard (it only has light tackle so is not suitable for mooring) and just beyond it are eight yellow buoys marked with a "V" which you can moor on - but they dry at half tide.

For deep keeled boats you can anchor in the pool off to starboard as you clear the Black Rock or continue up to the Quay and lie against that -they even have an attachment on the wall of the Boat Club for a preventer from your mast (!!)

Coming from the North is probably when you will have more need of Solva, especially if you have dried out at Fishguard and have to wait for half tide before you can depart. The timing is up to you whether to peg tide or anchor in Whitesands Bay just south of St David's Head to catch the South bound flood 0330 before HW Milford. The problem here is that that the flood through the Jack starts 0200 hours before HW Milford so, if you try to do both sounds in one leap you will arrive at the Jack at the peak of the flood and that would really be pushing your luck. A night at the Ship in Solva is much to be preferred.

Ramsey Sound is a place of legend and most of you will have seen pictures of the water foaming over the Bitches; scary; but as you will be carooming through the middle you'll be well clear of all the dangers and back eddies. To put this little corner of Wales in perspective we know of one single hander who warmed the bell by about an hour going north through Jack Sound in a light Southerly breeze and neap tides, sailed through that, gybing at the Crabstones, spinnakered across St Bride's Bay and, arriving at slack water through Ramsey sound, spinnakered through the Sound to David's Head and points north. Those are the ones that stick in the memory!

Berthing

As has been said there are drying visitors mooring just off to starboard

.....as the channel alters NE towards the quay; the problem with those is that once you have dried out you have the stream to cross to get to the North side or you have to walk up past the limekilns to get across to the other side at the village. We would normally try for a berth on the quay (leave plenty of scope on your mooring lines as the range here at springs is nearly 14ft.) A night here in 2023 will cost you £20 and £15 on a visitors buoy.

The Solva Harbour Society has a good website at

[Solva Harbour Society | Solva, Pembrokeshire](#)

Notes from the Harbour Society, late 2023:

"Hbr dries to hard sand 100m inside entrance rock. Complete shelter for craft that can take the ground, though swell in extreme weather.

Hbr crowded. Entrance 50m wide. Black Rock 4m showing at HW lies in centre; it is steep-to on its E side, so leave close to port.

Beware spit of stones just inside entrance on W side at Trwyn Caws. Strong S winds render the entrance impassable. Leave Trwyn Caws spit to Port. Starboard markers on narrow river channel.

Drying (sand) visitor mooring area to E of channel. 2 buoy Yellow single point swinging (max 10Ton & 12m) and

Leave a central orange buoy to stb. This has light ground tackle and is unsuitable for mooring.

Immediately past this buoy there are 8 Red buoy bow & stern moorings visitors moorings, these each have two bow lines and a single stern line with a carabiner to split the span line if necessary. Max 8T. Do not use other moorings, even if vacant.

Alternatively proceed keeping to outside of bend and lie against wall on shingle at Trinity Quay or Sand Quay, both to port further on. Enter HW±0300. Book ahead, especially if wanting a long stay or a berth alongside quay (available HW±0200 for 1·4m draught). Showers, stores. Diesel 3M."

Facilities

There are complimentary showers and toilets in the Boat Club which also houses a licensed café;. Water is obtainable from a tap. After that it's thin pickings; there are shops in both Upper and Lower Solva which will provide for day to day needs and further afield some larger shops at St David's or Haverfordwest. The nearest fuel (both auto diesel and petrol) is at St David's (and, of course, you won't be able to take your cans on the bus) The hardware shop in Nun's street in St David's does Calor Gas and Camping Gaz refills. There is a good bus service along the coast from Haverfordwest to St David's

What To Do

The pubs in Lower Solva all do food and there are also three restaurants and a café;. Those of you who remember the butterfly farm will be sad to hear that that has closed but, of course there is still the "must" of a visit to the Cathedral at St David's. The younger members of the crew might like to go and play with the white water around the Bitches in Ramsey Sound and there is a lot of support for divers there as well. It's an idyllic spot early in the season but at the weekends in mid summer it can get a bit crowded.

History