

Introduction

Contacts

Harbour Master tel no 01237 431549 mob 07975 501830

This is a favourite destination for yachties cruising the Bristol Channel. It is very small, can only be entered a couple of hours either side of HW and dries completely. The walls are of rough stone and have unfinished tree trunks rigged vertically against the sides. The harbour lies on the South shore of Bideford Bay between Hartland Point and the curve Northwards toward the entry to Appledore and Bideford.

The village clings to a 400 foot cliff and has only the one cobbled "street" which drops almost vertically down to the harbour and is inaccessible to vehicular traffic. Deliveries are done on wooden sledges which used to be hauled back up by donkey though nowadays there is a "back road" which is used by Land Rovers owned by the Estate to carry those visitors unable to make the climb back up to the top. Day trippers have to leave their cars and charabancs in the car park at the top of the hill and proceed downwards on foot.

The owners of the Clovelly Estate, who have had it for generations, have ensured that although it is a popular tourist destination it remains as it was centuries ago, a small fishing village. The fishing business is very small these days consisting of a few boats engaged in laying lobster pots; in fact, if you can't get hold of the HM on the phone it's probably because he's out tending his own pots!! Other than that there are a couple of boats who take out anglers for the day and another couple which take visitors out for a run round the bay with the possibility of sighting the odd seal.

A stranger to Clovelly, arriving by yacht at the weekend, may take one look and wonder why local yachties love it so much because it will be overrun by tourists; never fear because at five o'clock they all wend their way back up to the top and the harbour goes delightfully quiet, the birds in the woods on the cliffs, unheard during the day, fill the evening with song and it becomes a small outpost of paradise and remains so until about ten o'clock the next day.

The harbour has a website at <http://www.clovelly.co.uk>

Approach

The approach is either from the North across Bideford Bay or

..... round Hartland Point. If you are coming from the North you just head about 190 from Baggy Leap Buoy and you'll eventually pick out Clovelly nestling in the cliffs. A word to the wise here; you'll be running down on the ebb having come through the gap between Lundy and Morte Point but as you cross the middle of the bay the tidal stream surges around the bay and leaves a sort of nul point in the middle of the bay which will tempt you to point your boat straight at Clovelly; DON'T, because the tidal stream ebbing westwards past Clovelly will pick you up and take you half way to Hartland Point; it's best to shape a course for the SE corner of the bay towards the point where the shore curves northwards to the east of Clovelly and let the current in the last couple of miles of the approach take you up to the harbour entrance.

Coming from Hartland point you'll be on the flood so timing is not so critical; your only problem is how close you go to the Point; those rocks are not called "Tense" for nothing, they stick up like the teeth on a saw, each one slightly smaller than the one inboard of it and your worry is that there might be one you can't see below the waterline! To be absolutely certain give the Point about 4 cables clearance from the light itself but don't go too far out or you'll end up in the overfalls which can be quite an experience in rough weather.

The final approach should be made towards the Lifeboat slip with the right hand edge of the slip just open from the pier head – otherwise you'll end up on the shingle bank.

Over the winter the shingle bank to the East of the harbour wall tends to get dragged across the harbour entrance and, until they have had the contractors in to clear it, the harbour is inaccessible so if you intend visiting there in the Easter holidays it would be wise to check with them before setting out.

There is a sketch chart of the entrance to Clovelly in our images section which has been downloaded from their own website with kind permission

Berthing

Clovelly can only take boats of 12 meters or

.....under and you need to be able to take the bottom as it dries completely . If you are fin keeled you'd be better not to go in to lean on the wall, 'tis terrible rough! Remember when tying up that the boats taking the day trippers out will want to use the steps until there's not enough water to operate there.

If you arrive in a bilge keeler about two hours after HW you'll just be able to tuck in past the steps and will take the ground almost before you've got the ropes ashore. You'd be wise to use fender planks here but, if you happen to have a couple of really large, rough, old fenders they would be better as they won't get tangled up with your warps (the HM says they normally have a couple of old buffs ready for visitors) Whatever you use, you need to take into account the tumble-home of the wall, those rough timbers and the tidal range. Harbour dues for visitors are now (2022) £15.00 a night payable at the Red Lion (we're told)

If you can't get inside then, in settled southerly weather, you can anchor off; the holding is good and will match the tidal stream here. It would be a good idea to do your sums carefully and anchor as close in as you dare because you are going to have to row back out when the pub shuts and you wouldn't be the first to need them to launch the lifeboat because the tide has take you off to Hartland Point.

Facilities

There are showers and toilets ashore and they now boast electric hook ups on the quay. We're reliably informed that you no longer have to take a Phillips screwdriver to the showers to operate the temperature control!

The Post Office/ general store is halfway up the hill and is good for things like the newspaper, bread and milk in the morning (but not too early on Sundays!!) Petrol is a hefty walk away, up the hill and out to the A39 (T junction on AC 1164 about 0.8 miles SSW of Clovelly, and 700 feet higher)

What To Do

There are two pubs at Clovelly: The Red Lion on the harbour and the New Inn at the top; both have excellent galleys and serve good food both in the bar and in their restaurants. For other ideas of what to do visit their website at

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

And if the photos on that don't tempt you nothing will.

History