

## Introduction

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This is a small tidal harbour on the South coast of the Moray Firth between Lossiemouth and Burghead. It was developed during the nineteenth century with about three major redesigns over that period; the original village and harbour was built for the export of sandstone quarried nearby but then the fishing industry moved in and, to house it, subsequent redevelopment was required.

The railway came through in the late 1850s but the passenger service fell off before the Second WW and then the branch line was closed by Beeching and there is now a caravan site built over the old station (hence the name "Station" Caravan Park). As with the other small harbours on this coast the decline of the fishing industry has resulted in the harbour being taken over by the leisure industry and Hopeman is trying to catch up with that. The harbour is administered by the Moray Council which, two years ago, installed a central pontoon down the inner harbour now completely occupied by amateur anglers. Although this has almost doubled the available berths here, there is still a waiting list and very little provision for visitors' berths.

This is a small village, the harbour dries and safe entry is about three hours either side of HW depending on your draft and the state of the tide. The entry is interesting and is dealt with below, but, as a result of the convoluted nature of its entrance, the harbour gives good shelter in all winds and seas but it is dangerous to attempt entry in strong winds from WSW to NE.

The harbour entrance faces West by South and a half West, and consists of an East pier which turns and becomes the North pier, a West pier which turns inside and parallels the North pier to form the entrance channel. The central pier divides the harbour into two basins with a narrow entrance into the inner basin. Luckily the Admiralty provide a harbour diagram which shows the arrangement better than it can be described; the 180° turn into the inner harbour from the entrance channel is quite a sharp one.

On a sunny day this is a lovely spot and on a blowy day a welcome respite and, if you can take the bottom, a change from the regular Lossiemouth, Whitehills transit of this coast.. The Reeds Almanac warns of lobster pots (called "creels" on this coast) in the offings of this harbour; anyone who sails this coast knows that this is true of the whole coastline and if you are making a night transit you need to sail a good 3 or 4 miles off to be halfway sure of avoiding them!!

## Approach

There are charted rocks on the approach....

.... to this harbour and the approach bearing (081°T) with the leading marks dead in line appears to get very close to them but the author, who, as you can see from our photo gallery, stayed dead on the leading marks at half tide saw no sign of them. So, it would appear that, as long as you use those marks (which are lit), the approach is free of excitement.

The only problem is the turn into the inner harbour; it is very tight and once you are in the entrance channel it is impossible to see over the inner walls to identify any other moving traffic. That wouldn't be a problem except that to make the turn inbound you will have to go over to the port side of the channel and by the time you've completed the turn you'll be on the port side of the entrance to the inner harbour; so be careful.

Outbound it's not a problem as you will exit the inner harbour on the starboard side and end up going down the starboard side of the channel. You should also be careful because the beach in the outer harbour shelves towards the inner harbour entrance and there may not be much water to the South of it, if you overshoot the turn.

## Berthing

Inside the inner harbour there is not much room to manoeuvre....

.... now that they have a central pontoon and there will be no harbour staff on hand to advise you where you can moor. Any empty berths on the pontoon will have permanent owners so don't be tempted to tie up to those (their owners are likely to be fishing and want it when they get back!). Likewise the West wall is unlikely to have a spare ladder.

There are two possibilities; alongside the inside of the North wall (there are ladders) or, if you are lucky, the Gordonston School boats might be out of the water and the hammerhead on the pontoon may be free.

One of the best ways to see what you will be faced with is to look at the Google "Street view" on the link below. (The Street view is more up to date than the satellite view) But even that does not show the vessels now using both sides of the central pier which was the case when one of our members called in there in recent years.

[Street view, click here](#)

Remember that this harbour dries so berths closer to the South end of the pontoons are very shallow and there is also a shallower bank between the hammerhead and the North wall so that even if the boats on the hammerhead and the North wall are afloat you can still ground in between them.

Harbour charges are now (2022) about £20.46 per night; that is if the part time harbour master puts in an appearance. Or you can pay on line [HERE](#)

## Facilities

I'm afraid there is very little other than water and public toilets. The garage has closed so, petrol, diesel and gas have to be found further afield (at Lossiemouth; nothing at Burghead either). There are no services on the pontoon. If this is your first visit to a Moray Council Harbour you may be puzzled by the round baskets rigged on all the outboard engines tilted out of the water; it doesn't mean that the boat owners around here are particularly careless; it's the dreaded Health and Safety bods on the Council who have made it mandatory!

## What To Do

There may still be a tearoom on the main street and when we were there the Chinese takeaway was closed, although we were told it is still trading. There is a Post Office, a fish and chip shop, a butcher and a Costcutter store. The Station Caravan site has no services for yachtsmen.

[Restaurants & Places to Eat in Hopeman - Tripadvisor](#)

The pub here is called the Braemou Inn and does evening meals on a Friday and Saturday

## History