

Introduction

Contacts

Marina Office 01475 729838 VHF #80

James Watt Dock was built in 1886; the worthies of Greenock spotted an opportunity to poach trade from Glasgow which, further up the Clyde, was restricted by the shallow approaches beyond Dumbarton. This turned out to be a very successful exercise and Greenock flourished; it captured a sizeable share of the imports into the Clyde whilst also developing some industries of its own such as sugar refining which continued until nearly the end of the 20th

Another mainstay in the area was ship building but, for various reasons, that slowly declined as did the import/export trade along with the other smaller dockyards of the country. (One remembers the empty "bottoms" rusting at buoys in the Holy Loch in the fifties) The Tate & Lyle sugar refinery closed just before the end of the 20th C and all that remains are a few listed buildings and the huge crane which you will see in your approach to the dock.

Like many coastal authorities, Greenock found itself with a white elephant for which it needed to find a use and so the James Watt Dock Marina came into being and was opened in time to host a Tall Ships Event in the summer of 2011. Since then all the usual marina facilities have been installed and now, in 2015, the marina can be said to fully up and running

The marina consists of two basins either side of a central pier around which pontoons have been installed. We have supplied a marina plan (courtesy of the marina) which shows the berths and their numbering.

Their website can be found at <http://www.jameswattdockmarina.co.uk>

August 2022. Work has started on a completely new amenities and office building on the opposite side of the dock to the sugar warehouse so by next year (2023) that should be complete. It's going to be a two story building and the staff hope to be able to overlook the whole marina from their office.

Approach

The approach is straight forward, though distinguishing the entrance from.....

..... the other dockside buildings may be a problem from a distance. Basically, once you've crossed Gourrock Bay, proceed SE along the coast until you are approaching Control Tower (see our gallery); There is an SHM a cable and a half NNW of the control tower but that is for cargo ships; if you potter along the 5 metre contour you'll be well out of trouble. You should report to Clyde Estuary Control on #12 as you pass this mark

As you pass the Control Tower look across to port and try to pick up the first of the port hand marks lining the edge of a notorious sand spit called the "Tail o' the Bank". The channel is between those PHMs and the shore which is steep to as far as yachts are concerned. To starboard you'll see the Ocean terminal (which will normally have at least one large ship tied up) followed about five minutes later by the large, square Customs House building.

By this time, in halfway reasonable visibility, the docks/shore will be seen curving across your path from starboard and, in the middle of that, a single huge gantry crane (it's a listed "building" so they will have eradicated that endangered species, the haggis, before that is pulled down) The marina entrance is just to the left of the large white shed over which it is peering. The port side of the entrance channel is marked by a yellow buoy. There is a sand spit associated with this yellow buoy; check the chart and be aware of where it is as quite a few yachts have gone aground on it trying to pass the buoy on the wrong side. It is especially important if departing the dock and going further upstream towards Glasgow; do no cut the corner.

Berthing

Once you've ascertained your berth number it should be easy.....

..... to locate using this [marina plan](#) and the numbers of vacant berths can be seen as you approach them. That's the theory; in fact some berth numbers are concealed by their occupants (who also conceal their names!) and we were unfortunate in that our berth was given as "beside yacht" which had left the dock just as we arrived. It might be an idea to have fenders out on both sides. The marina is open to Northerly winds which will make some yachts difficult to turn around in the narrow space.

Their charges will be £3.00 per metre, per night that includes water and electricity. (c/f Rhu at £3.25 pm pn with a minimum of £20.50)

Access to the berths and the showers is by code which will be issued on arrival. If you intend arriving in the middle of the night make sure you obtain that code from the marina office during working hours.

Facilities

The marina provides all the usual facilities but as well as diesel, joy of joys, they retail petrol (from the berth at the end of the central pier). They also supply refills for both Calor Gas and Camping Gaz.

It may be a good place to unstep your mast before going through the Forth/Clyde Canal, especially if you arrive too late to get to Bowling to do it the evening before you transit the Canal. But remember they have full facilities for this inside the sea basin at Bowling and it's free there.

In the next couple of years they will be building on the dock beyond A pontoon. There will be an amenities building within that and they hope to open a chandlery.

For resupplies there is a Tesco's up the road and a Morrisons towards Greenock; both are about the same distance and within about a 20 minute walk (take the shopping trolley – unless you have a crew in which case you'll just need the whip as usual!!) If you take the bus you will be surprised at the fare (£2+ single minimum)

For small provisions if you walk up Sinclair Street (opp the marina gate), under the railway bridge to the next main junction there are a few small shops a couple of which do basic supplies.

What To Do

James Watt Dock lies close to Greenock which has numerous pubs and restaurants or you can travel a little further to Gourock and sample the Royal Gourock Yacht Club. The nearest facility is "The Point" which can be reached by walking along the basin to the West end or using your dinghy to row down to it (it has landing steps); it does breakfast. There is also a mobile cafe on the dockside.

Closer, just across the road, is a fast food joint for pizzas, kebabs and burghers and also a wee cafe (the Cottage). Along the road towards Greenock there is now a Macdonalds.

Further afield there are buses and trains to Glasgow which is jam packed with cultural attractions and some not-so-cultural ones as well!!
Unless you are just passing through you could take advantage of the marinas reduced weekly rate and have plenty to do everyday.

History