



Largs Sailing Club Cruising Group

Cruising Notes

May 2017

These notes are a collation of comments and experiences of our members over many years of cruising the Firth of Clyde, and beyond, and the Crinan and Caledonian Canals.

The notes are intended to supplement (not replace!) the relevant pilot books and charts, and the excellent (and free) "Welcome Anchorages" booklet, which is updated annually, and is widely available in marinas and chandlers. Note however that rather contrary to its title, Welcome Anchorages does not include many anchorages where there is no commercial outlet ashore.

The notes are by no means comprehensive - we can't cover every destination and anchorage in this wonderful sailing area!

Compiled by Ann and Gordon Cochrane, Maxi 1100 "Night Owl", from contributions by numerous members of the cruising group.

**Further contributions (and any corrections) and are very welcome
- largssc.membership@gmail.com**

**Chart snips courtesy of Welcome Anchorages, by permission from HMSO.
All information given is based on the personal experience of LSC cruising group members, and is not intended to represent the view of Largs Sailing Club.
All information is given in good faith, but skippers are responsible for the safety of their vessel and crew, taking into account wind, weather, tide etc.**

TEMPORARY PAGE!

Since we sent out the first draft in August 2016, we've had over 90 contributions from members, which is fantastic.

It's rather invidious to single out anyone in particular for their contributions, but a particular mention has to be made of Freddie Moran, who has passed on a huge amount of information from his and Hilary's long experience of cruising the west coast and Irish Sea in "Arctic Tern" and their previous boats. Still some of your info to add e.g. Isle of Man, southern Ireland, Freddie!

Great stuff, everyone - many thanks for all the feedback so far! More welcome!

I also have a proper index to do, and numerous photographs to insert, as time permits.

Happy cruising in 2017!

Ann and Gordon, 30.5.17.

Largs SC has an active cruising group, sail and power, with weekend cruises in company during the season, plus longer cruises - in June, to Tobermory and beyond, and September, "round" Kintyre.

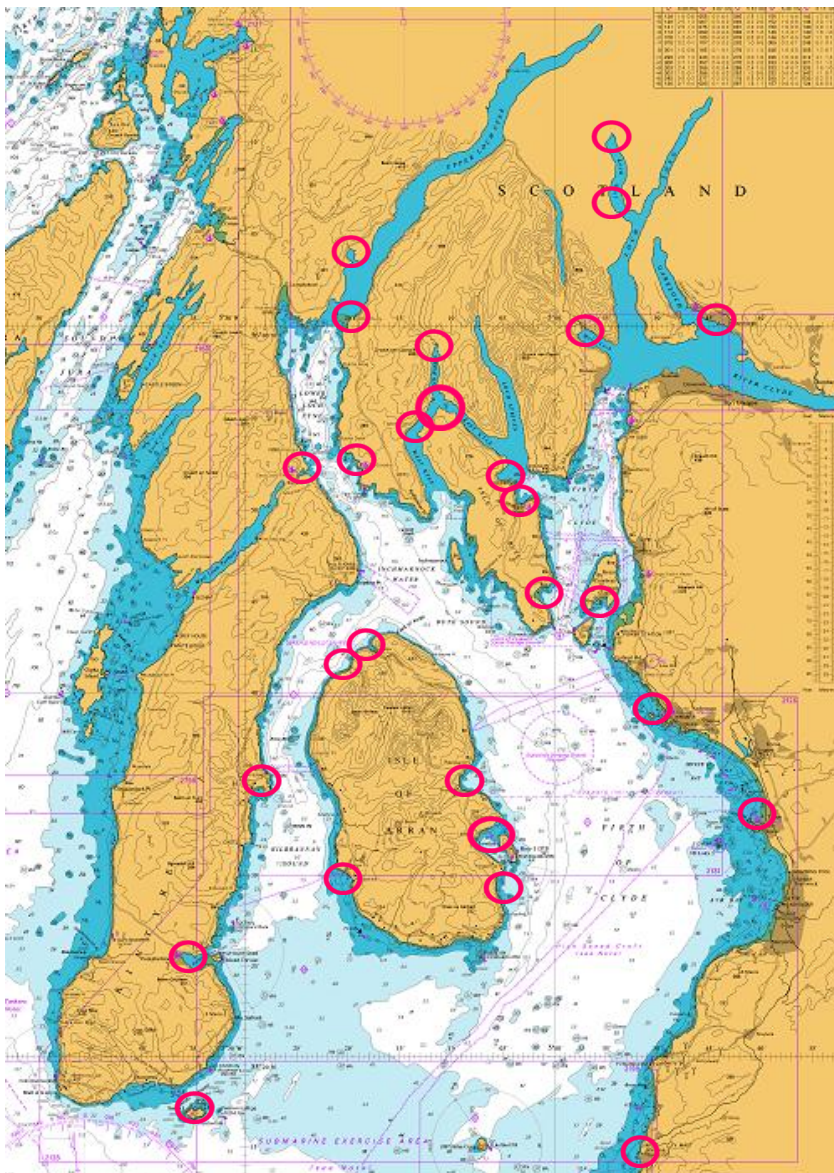
Join us going around the Mull, or whatever - share experience, and good company!

More information on the Largs SC web site - www.largssc.co.uk, and the dedicated cruising group page, www.largssc.co.uk/cruising

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1 - Firth of Clyde



Lochgoilhead
 Carrick Castle
 Rhu Marina
 Holy Loch
 Rothesay
 Port Bannatyne
 Colintrave
 Burnt Isles
 Caladh Harbour
 Loch Riddon
 Tighnabruaich
 Kames
 Portavadie
 Tarbert
 Otter Ferry
 Loch Gair
 Carradale
 Campbeltown
 Sanda
 Island of Arran -
 Lochranza, Brodick,
 Lamlash, Holy Isle, Whiting
 Bay, Blackwaterfoot,
 Pirnmill
 Portpatrick, Stranraer
 Girvan
 Troon
 Ardrossan
 Millport, Cumbrae
 Watersports Centre
 Kilchattan Bay

Firth of Clyde - approximately "anti-clockwise" from Largs

RHU MARINA

Marina. Watch for submarines and naval vessels entering / leaving Gareloch. Royal Northern Yacht Club nearby.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's famous [Hill House](#) is nearby, in Helensburgh ([National Trust for Scotland](#) property). Also [Glenarn Gardens](#) in Rhu.

KNOCKDERRY HOUSE - EAST SIDE OF LOCH LONG, NEAR COVE

Six moorings off "boutique" hotel - see web site (<http://www.knockderryhouse.co.uk/>), also video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yeom7NCd0Dk>), and drop down tab (<http://www.knockderryhouse.co.uk/things-to-see-do/knockderrys-moorings/>). Anyone actually been? A place for calmer weather?

LOCHGOILHEAD

Very scenic loch. Deep – anchoring difficult. Visitor moorings (honesty box at garage); pontoon for dinghies.

Shore House Inn, and Goil Inn – good food. Small shop. Walking, sundial etc

CARRICK CASTLE

Two 15t moorings just to the north of the castle. £10/night - pay via PayPal on web site, www.carrick-castle-boat-club.co.uk/. This web site also has excellent local information, including the history of the area, Carrick Castle, the Admiralty installations in the loch, and 8 walks, not including the shoreside walk.

HOLY LOCH

Marina, or anchor in loch - but many moorings. Usually plenty of space in marina, particularly on long pontoon that encloses marina. Can be uncomfortable in easterly.

Holy Loch Inn reported (2016) to be open again for bar food. Small shop. Taxi or bus to Dunoon for other facilities. Benmore Botanic Garden and Arboretum - see [here](#).

ROTHESAY

Marina, in outer and inner harbour (moorings removed some years ago). Quite tight - outer harbour finger pontoons rather short, limited draft on promenade side.

Amazing Victorian loos! Showers in loos. Good facilities ashore - excellent fish and chips at Black Bull. Rothesay Castle. Bus to [Mount Stuart](#), an amazing country house. Check web site for current opening days/times.

PORT BANNATYNE

Relatively new, small marina, very friendly. Anchor to N of marina if necessary. Port Inn has food, and occasional live music. Rothesay is short bus/taxi ride away, or 1/2 hour walk. Walk to Ettrick Bay - good café.

COLINTRAIVE

Hotel moorings, to N of ferry pier. Best place to go ashore is immediately south of pier, on shingle - the beach alongside the moorings is very stony and seaweed covered.

Very good food at Colintraive Hotel. Small shop.
Walks. Sculpture garden to N of village.

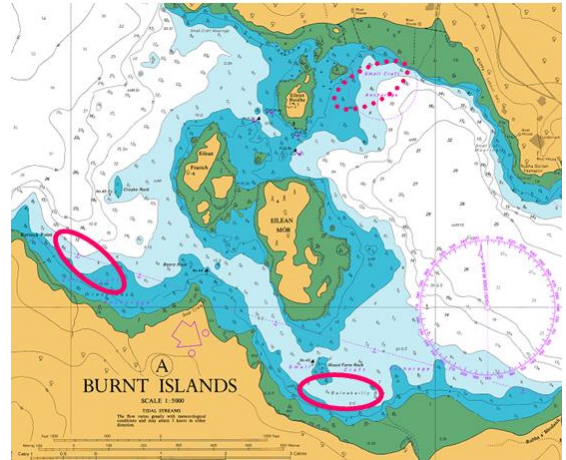
BURNT ISLES

Wreck Bay and Balnakailly Bay - anchor out of navigation channel, where depth permits.

In Balnakailly Bay, anchor S of Home Farm Rock perch (note - perch is much more difficult to see than previous buoy!).

Strong tides – will turn you around your anchor.

North bay on E side of Kyles ("east" of Narrows) not recommended?



CALADH HARBOUR (right)

Very attractive but rather tight anchorage. Great shelter in most conditions. Enter from the South and stay to the middle. Anchor in the 5m pool if possible with 20m of chain to avoid too much swinging. Holding is in mud and excellent. Great walks ashore both N and S on paved tracks. A favourite local anchorage, and over the years has got quieter as the "bigger" yachts now rush by to the fleshpots beyond!



LOCH RIDDON

Very quiet. Anchor to E of moorings in NW corner. Good holding. Exposed only to south. Do not go too far north - head of loch dries a long way! Steep sides of loch mean no sun early and late in day.

Can also anchor in **Fearnoch Bay**, on east shore, at south end of loch. Deep (~15m), good shelter in E'ly winds. Keeps sun until late in evening.

TIGHNABRUAICH

Moorings. New "floppy" dinghy pontoon at lifeboat shed.

KAMES

Hotel moorings. (Text required)

PORTAVADIE

Marina, on site of old oil rig construction facility. Usually plenty of space. Excellent facilities ashore. New [spa](#) is fantastic, apparently. Apartments and cottages.

Ferry to Tarbert, Local bike rides.

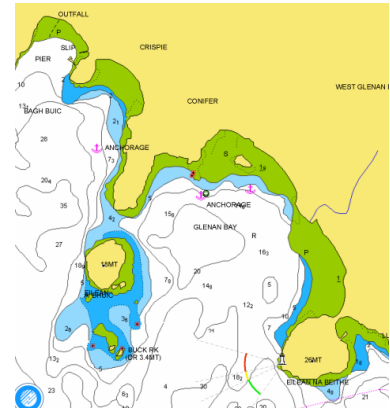
GLENAN BAY

Just N of Portavadie. Deep (use plenty of chain), quiet, not in marina.

TARBERT

Marina, in traditional fishing village. Care required with entrance, particularly at night. If normal visitor berths on A pontoon are full, use long finger pontoon, including shore side - plenty of depth. Chandlers. Previously award winning showers now showing their age - new shower block promised for 2017.

Many eating and refreshment places ashore e.g. Starfish, Victoria Hotel. (Scott's are no longer doing evening meals.) Seafood sales at Prentice's, to east of fish market (see [here](#)) - 16 scallops in a plastic container for £10! Walks to castle overlooking harbour, West Loch Tarbert, Kintyre Way (can get bus to Skipness, and walk back etc).



BARMORE ISLAND / STONEFIELD CASTLE

South Bay - good shelter in W to N winds, away from buzz of Tarbert and Portavadie. Anchor in ~ 6m, avoiding shallows off island. Good walking on island, and around castle.

Stonefield Castle - two hotel moorings, close in, in very sheltered location, but (2016) some doubts about condition. Perch on rocks to N of island hasn't been there for years.



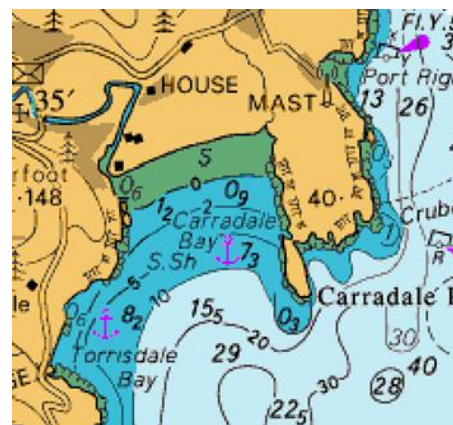
LOCH GAIR

Very secure anchorage, even in strong SE winds - narrow entrance protects. Excellent holding in soft (but clingy!) mud. Food at hotel, but foreshore rather muddy.

CARRADALE / TORRISDALE BAY (right)

Small harbour (busy fishing port). Moorings in bay to north, or anchor in south bay, in 6m, in sand. Nice walks on beach. Popular transit stop prior to / after rounding the Mull - avoids long drag up Campbeltown Loch. Leave 3 hrs before HW Dover to get tide at Sanda.

(Shore facilities?? Several restaurants??)



CAMPBELTOWN

Common transit stop for Mull roundings. Several options:

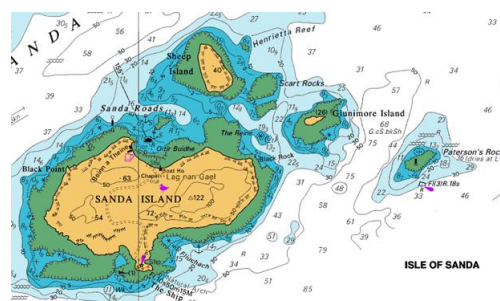
- marina - original long finger pontoon (so rafting was common) now has "proper" individual finger berths
- moorings - from Campbeltown Sailing Club
- anchor to east of town, on south side, under war memorial. Quieter, free (!), and saves a mile each way to entrance to loch.

Royal Hotel revamped in 2012 and reopened.

SANDA

Anchorage, only tenable in winds from SW through south to east. Strong tides outside; infamous Paterson's Rock to east.

Walk to lighthouse - great views. Used to have restaurant, but this closed some years ago, and was converted to "boutique hotel". Visitors discouraged from approaching buildings. Hotel now closed?? Any recent information??



ISLAND OF ARRAN

Arran now has a good number of moorings, but many are quite exposed, so due regard needs to be paid to wind direction and forecasts!! Honesty boxes ashore in several cases.

- **Lochranza** - NAC moorings (honesty box); dinghy and small vessel pontoon. Excellent venison pie at Lochranza Hotel. Distillery.
- **Brodict** - moorings to NW of pier, and now (2016) reported to be landing pontoon on south side of the bay. Quite open bay – can be prone to swell, but variable. Well stocked Co-op. Many eating places e.g. Brodict Bar. Walking – Glen Rosa, Goat Fell etc.

- **Lamlash** - take visitor mooring, or call Jim on xxxxxxxxxxxx if all moorings taken, and he may allocate a private mooring. Pay at ferry hut. Exposed to east (and south) - go and anchor off Holy Isle if wind is easterly. Food at Pier Inn (which often has live music), and Glenisle Hotel. Drift Inn reported (May 2017) closed - in administration. Passenger ferry to Holy Isle (see below).
- **Holy Isle** - anchor off big building in NW corner. Dinghy pontoon, café. Excellent walk down west side of island, to Buddhist sanctuary (please respect their privacy), round to lighthouse on east side, and northwards over ridge (bit of a scramble in places), back to north end. Spectacular views from summit.
- **Whiting Bay** - 3 NAC moorings - honesty box. Excellent food at Felicity's, 1/2 mile south of old jetty. Café at old jetty, with Sunday buffet, and home baking.
- **Blackwaterfoot** - Kinloch Hotel - small swimming pool, good food. Moorings - but quite exposed - pick your weather!
- **Pirnmill** - food at pub.

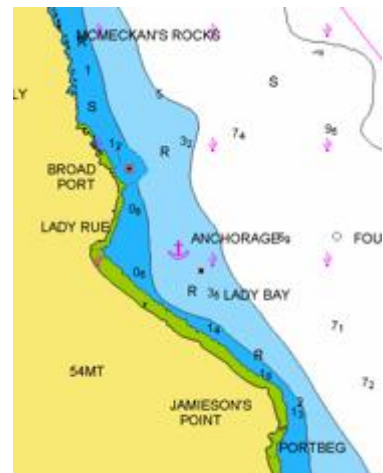
PORTPATRICK

Follow transits into harbour, minding Half Tide rock on port side (*may* - or may not - be buoyed). No pontoons (apparently wouldn't survive storm swells), so moor against wall. May have to raft. In 2016, it was reported to have fixed ropes down harbour walls, so you attach your lines to these, and slide up and down with the tide (check ropes are attached at bottom first!).

At low tide the depth is not as claimed on their website. A member reports recording 2m abeam Half Tide rock, with their accurate depth sounder. The website claims '3m below chart datum'. Not sure about that one! The pubs on the harbour front all do food which is standard 'pub food'. The Waterfront Hotel was fine.

LOCH RYAN - LADY BAY

About a mile in and a half way stop to Peel if you want to avoid the bustle and noise of Portpatrick, but avoid if any North in the wind! Anchor as shown in about 5m and be prepared for the odd rock and roll as the ferry goes by. Leave about an hour or so before LW Dover to get the best of the tide to Peel, however you will not manage to carry the tide all the way.



LOCH RYAN, STRANRAER

Small pontoon system in the town. Further information required.

GIRVAN

The mobile number in the new CCC sailing directions is missing a digit. Welcome Anchorages has the correct number. The mega chatty harbour master will tell you how much water there is over the bar at the entrance - can be 1.7m at LW so this is probably the only place in the Clyde where a bit of care with tidal heights is required. There are 6 or

7 pontoon berths reserved for visiting yachts on 9m fingers with very wide clearance between the fingers so easy turning in plus the chance to pop another yacht down the centre. There are more 7m fingers and the HM will usually move small motor boats and fishing boats around to accommodate. Depth at pontoons can be as shallow as 1.8m, but the bottom is described as a few metres of very soft mud so deep keelers will settle down softly and then rise out again without issue. Majority of yachts are Irish and on transit.

Pontoons are from 2013 with new shower block from this year (2016 - with lino still to be relaid). New swimming pool/gym and arts space under construction next to shower block. The marina is actually the river basin with the main river flow diverted around by a training wall. The basin is close to centre of town with pubs, fish & chips, ice cream, beach, putting etc all very close. Nice place to spend some time on a sunny day, plus the coast to the north gives nice views of Culzean castle and Turnberry hotel and golf. Good views to Ailsa Craig and sunset on a clear evening.

TROON

Sister marina to LYH, so free berthing. Scotts restaurant at marina, also "[Wee Hurry](#)" fish and chips take-away, and Oyster Bar seafood restaurant at seaward end of harbour. Seafood sales. Lido restaurant (also Buzzworks) in town.

Troon is a commercial port (superfast ferries, and tugs towing timber barges etc), so watch pierhead lights, and call HM / listen on Ch 14.

ARDROSSAN

Marina, in controlled port - beware ferries! Chandlers (branch of Largs Chandlers), large Asda supermarket very close to marina, quite frequent trains to Glasgow from nearby station. Cecchini's Italian [restaurant](#).

MILLPORT

Numerous moorings off pier, or in Kames Bay to east. Some mooring buoys have shackles that are too small for the mooring chain many of us use. Moorings now run by Cumbrae Community Development Corporation. £5/day, £10/night. Exposed to south. Various eateries ashore. Interesting small museum in Garrison House. Bike hire. **Kames Bay** is great anchoring spot, on sand. Avoid in S'lys, but excellent otherwise.

CUMBRAE WATERSPORTS CENTRE

Pontoon can be used by visiting boats, daytime and overnight. Risk of storm damage has forced disconnection of outer pontoons, so have to use dinghy to get ashore, and to bar.

KILCHATTAN BAY

Anchorage. Care - west end of bay shelves *very* quickly! Hotel on seafront closed some years ago. Nearest is [Kingarth Hotel](#), a mile or so inland.

CALLUM'S HOLE

Small day anchorage on SE corner of Bute - with an unfortunate rock in the middle!

2 - Mull of Kintyre to Crinan

Going around the Mull - essential to go with the tide! Do your own research with the tidal stream atlas, pilot book etc, but as a guide:

- **Outbound** - tides are westgoing from HW Dover -1 to +5, so leaving Campbeltown (~10 miles from Sanda) at HW Dover -3 is a fair plan.
- **Inbound** - leave Gigha or Port Ellen 6 hours before HW Dover is good starting point for passage planning.

Inbound or outbound, stand off the Mull by 2-3 miles to avoid the overfalls, which can be pretty vicious.

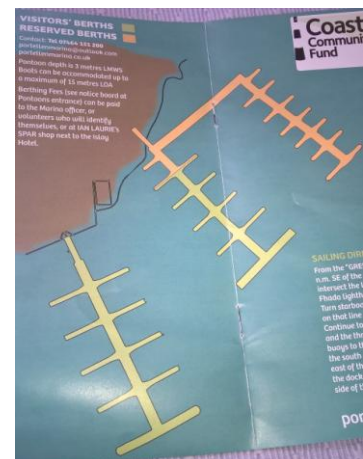
- **Gigha** - numerous moorings, or (2016) a long pontoon, with between 0.8 and 2.0 metres above CD available. (Generally there is more depth than this, as Gigha has only a 0.8m tidal range at springs. This also applies to other places in the Sound of Jura, as it is an amphidrome. However, the tidal flows are strong, so it is much better to go with the tide!)

New in 2016 is an excellent long pontoon, with LW depths at the inboard end of 1.6m (neaps) and 1.4m (springs), and at the outboard end, 2.9m (neaps), and 2.7m (springs):

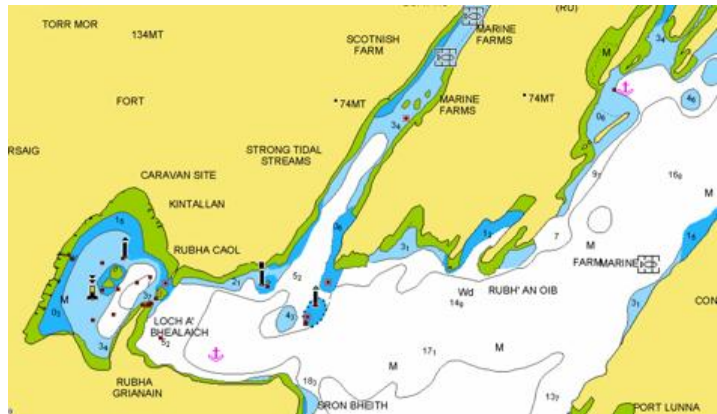
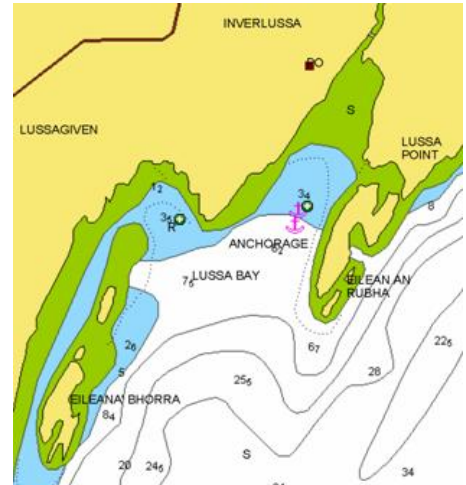
Pontoon No.	Depth (m) at tidal condition						
	CD Chart Datum	LAT Lowest Astronomical Tide	MLWN Mean Low Water Neaps	MHWN Mean High Water Neaps	MLWS Mean Low Water Springs	MHWS Mean High Water Springs	MSL Mean Sea Level
1 - centre	0.8	1.2	1.6	2.1	1.4	2.3	1.7
2 - centre	1.0	1.4	1.8	2.3	1.6	2.5	1.9
3 - centre	1.2	1.6	2.0	2.5	1.8	2.7	2.2
4 - centre	1.4	1.8	2.2	2.7	2.0	2.9	2.3
5 - centre	1.6	2.0	2.4	2.9	2.6	3.1	2.5
6 - centre	1.7	2.1	2.5	3.0	2.3	3.2	2.6
7 - centre	1.9	2.3	2.7	3.2	2.5	3.4	2.8
8 - centre	2.0	2.4	2.8	3.3	2.6	3.5	2.9
	2.1	2.5	2.9	3.4	2.7	3.6	3.0

Gigha is best avoided if there is any east in the wind (can anchor in bay on west side). Boathouse Restaurant at jetty is excellent - but in 2016, did not take payment cards. (There are new owners in 2017, so this may have changed.) Can do bank transfers, but cash is best. Hotel has bar food, and restaurant. Hotel does cashback. Small shop. Walk south to Achamore Gardens. The Gigha music festival, the last weekend in June, so should be 24-25 June 2017 (TBC) is brilliant (<http://www.gighamf.org.uk/>).

- **Port Ellen** - good pontoon system (an additional pontoon was installed in 2016 - see right). Limited shoreside facilities. Good Co-op (the best shops in the west of Scotland are generally the Co-ops). The [Islay Hotel](#) is very good. Some live music. Distilleries nearby.



- **Ardmore Islands** (SE corner of Islay) - interesting anchorages - make sure you follow the pilot book! Otters and seals.
- **Craighouse, Jura** - plenty of moorings, dinghy pontoon. Small shop. Hotel good. Distillery.
- **Lussa Bay, Jura** - Half way down the east shore of Jura and a real gem of a find - most people just sail by without noticing. Nice half way stop between the Sound of Mull and Gigha holding favourable tides. Great shelter in N and W winds. Good holding in 4/5m on a sandy bottom, most unusual for this side of Jura.
- **Tayvallich, Loch Sween** - pretty village, now (2016) has small pontoon system, which will take two keelboats, maybe three. Only three visitor moorings - often lucky to get one ... Can also (a) ring the shop and ask if they know if any of the private moorings are available, or (b) anchor outside the entrance to Tayvallich pool, or (c) anchor in the Fairy Isles, towards the head of the loch. Excellent food (and wi-fi) at coffee shop, and Tayvallich Inn. Walk over to Carsaig Bay - views of Jura. Loch Sween is very pretty, once you are past the caravan sites. Well worth the trip up the loch.



3 - Crinan Canal

(below is mainly from Ann and Gordon Cochrane, *Night Owl*, June 2016, and other transits)

These notes should be read in conjunction with the excellent general information in the skipper's guide, which includes a very good "chart" of the canal, available on Scottish Canal's web site, <https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/activities/boating/crinan-canal/>. You will get a paper copy of this invaluable document when you lock in.

Apart from the sea locks, which are operated by the canal staff, it's DIY on sluices and lock gates. Most of us cruise as couples, so this can be hard work, and slow. Often friends or family join just for the canal passage, or there is the option to **hire a pilot** for assistance. The assisted passage scheme of a season or two ago has been dropped, and Scottish Canals suggest Yotspot. Initial reports of their services were mixed, but later in 2016, there were much more favourable comments. 2016 charges £60 for one boat; £42 for two boats, with less for more boats. They also have a very good restaurant and café at Ardrishaig, next to the canal offices, which has showers (£1 for 4mins & £2 for 8 mins) & toilets – very clean and new. Bike hire. They also have washing and drying machines and

are working on getting some moorings on the commercial pier, depending on an arrangement with the timber shippers.

Many members of the LSC cruising group use Hugh Kirk, with his colleague Joe etc. They will take lines, operate the sluices and gates, and prepare / reset locks as necessary, so you just drive straight in, and out. Hugh (a sprightly 79 year old - 80 in late 2016!) can be contacted on 07717 396755.

Note that the pilot will work with you between lock 2 at the Ardrishaig end, just above the sea lock, and lock 13, the bottom of the Dunardry flight, which is 2-3 miles short of Crinan.

It is possible to transit the canal in a day, but it's very pretty, and the licence is for four days, so it's a shame to rush. Most people spend at least one night in the canal, usually at **Cairnbaan**, and the [Cairnbaan Hotel](#). If Cairnbaan is crowded, another good place to overnight is at the top of the Dunardry flight, lock 9, where there is a small toilet and shower block right next to the pontoon. Many members also have a night at **Crinan**, before leaving the following morning (tides permitting!). Newish shower block at Crinan.

The coffee shop at the lower basin in Crinan has wi-fi.

Midges - can be a bit of a menace in the canal, and even in the locks in daytime - use protection.

A few comments on **handling** in the canal (also applies to the Caledonian Canal):

Fenders - lots! We have an old scabby fat fender we only use in the canal, positioned at the boat's widest point, so it takes the majority of the rubbing up and down the walls. (Remove fender socks if you have them, or they will be damaged.) You can minimise the rubbing by steering the boat slightly away from the wall, in the flow from the sluices - other boats in the lock permitting, of course. Don't let the bows get too far off the wall, though - this can get out of control. (Curiously, in the bigger locks on the Caledonian Canal, the current past the boat was from astern, so you have to steer the "wrong" way!) Going up has much more turbulence in the lock than going down. Be careful of the height of your fenders - they need to be high enough when low in the lock, but lower when the locks are full. If you have enough fenders, set them in pairs - one high, one low.

Fender planks - these seem more trouble than they're worth, and can snag.

Shore lines - we take our shore lines through our mooring cleats, not just under the horns, so it is impossible for them to come off the cleat (obviously this depends on the design of your mooring cleats). The person on the bow controls the line with a turn or two around the cleat. At the stern, the line is taken from the mooring cleat to a winch, which leaves a hand free for the wheel and engine controls. We don't have a bow thruster, so I always ask for the stern line to be released last, as I use this to pull the stern in, for a clean exit from the lock. The person on the bow can also push off the wall (or fend off other boats!) as required.

Other members (including a member who sails single handed - he uses Yotspot) use a long line from the bow (through a pulley if necessary) back to the cockpit. 20 metre line required.



Boathooks - two boathooks are very useful, for passing lines up to the pilot in the deeper locks, and for pushing the bows off when leaving the lock. (Also use the stern line, as above.)

Engine - it is courteous to turn your engine off in the lock - much quieter, and less pollution.

4 - North of Crinan, to Ardnamurchan

Where to begin? Just a fantastic number and variety of destinations .. First, some **passage planning** comments:

For travelling north from say Ardfarn/north end of Sound of Jura to Sound of Mull worth noting there is approximately a 2 hour difference between the start of the local north/west going flood at Dorus Mor and the main Oban north going flood. Means can carry the tide for 8 hours almost up to Tobermory. Problem is lose the 2 hours when going south hence the need to think about the Duart Bay counter flow if say at Lochaline.


Sound of Mull, Eastern end - When, for timing reasons, we need to think about pushing the tide for say arriving at the North end of the Sound of Luing to catch the start of the local south going ebb, there is a counter current that sets into Duart Bay from Craignure end. Almost carries right up to a point below Duart Castle. Then hit the remaining part of main west going flow. Have little option but to push that until well round the corner and eventually get into slacker water.

Destinations - starting from Crinan, and going north and west, roughly "anti-clockwise":

- **Gallanach Bay** (immediately N of Crinan sea lock) - nice anchorage if you leave Gigha later in the flood and want an easy night. Well sheltered except from the S, also saves the distance up to Ardfarn and back. Anchor in about 4m in sand, but avoid the kelp, off the island at its head. Little used . Views over to Crinan and Jura.
- **Dorus Mor** - go with tide! There is an interesting tide flow when going west. There is a west going counter current under Craignish Point on the last of the east going ebb tide. At least an hour or more before local low water. Tidal flows can be observed from up on the point.
- **Ardfarn** - just "round the corner" from Crinan, and over the hill from Craobh Haven (not a very exciting walk - mainly in the trees). Good marina, excellent boatyard and facilities. Clean diesel. Hotel is ok. Very good small shop.
- **Craobh Haven** - marina. Good showers, small chandlery. Slow wi-fi - better in Lord of the Isles. Shop has very limited stock, and is only open on request - ask in Lord of the Isles.
- **Asknish Bay (Arduaine Gardens)** - just N of Craobh - right. Good stop when on passage Tobermory - Gigha, via Cuan Sound, and keeping the tide most of the way. Watch reefs to

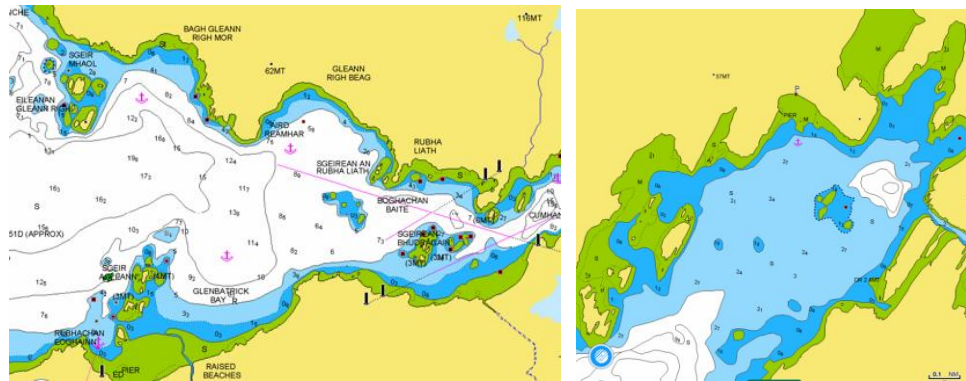


W side of bay. Pick up hotel mooring, or anchor just off them in sand. Arduaine National Trust gardens.

- **Loch Melfort** - good moorings in NE corner. Showers and laundry ashore. Shower of Herrings restaurant in "village" is good.
- **Ardinamir Bay** (just S of Cuan Sound) - right. Very sheltered, from all directions. If drawing over 2m, wait for an hour after LW. Go in slowly, between perches. Anchor in mud. White water rafting, great walks over to the Sound of Luing.

- **Cuan Sound** - you need to go through either here or the Sound of Luing to get north. Get your tides right - can be 5-6 knots, with fantastic mini whirlpools! Watch the submerged rocks off the north corner of the island of Luing. At the "elbow" in the Sound, aim to be about a boat length north of the perch that marks the rock.
- **Sound of Luing** - go with tide! Easy navigation. Great tidal swirls! See also Cuan Sound, above.
- **Black Isles** (Eilan Dubh Mor - about 1 mile W of the Sound of Luing) - small, secure anchorage. *Night Owl* had a night in there in 2016, having come out of the Crinan Canal at lunchtime. Seals and otters on the shore.
- **Puilladobhrain** - tight but pretty anchorage. Can be busy. Notoriously ferocious midges ashore if you walk to the pub over the hill.
- **Kerrera ("Oban") marina** - has been closed, but now (May 2017) is back in operation, run by a boating couple, who are keen to make it work better for visitors. Ferry running every 2 hours, 0800 - 2230. Fuel available. Restaurant should be open from Friday 26.5.17, then open every day except Mondays, for the rest of the season. Water still seems to be quite a big problem, as the island's very limited supplies are from springs. "New pump on order" - late May 2017.
- **Heather Island**, just south of Kerrera marina - 5 moorings. See Welcome Anchorages booklet.
- **Oban "transit" marina (north of the North Pier)** - the spring edition of Yachting Life reports that this will open during 2017. Member report late May 2017 - now jetty on North Pier; marina will open in July. Maximum stay 3 days?
- **Oban moorings** - off the sailing club - day or overnight use, dinghy pontoon. Rather exposed to west, but excellent place to shop (large Tesco etc), and eat.
- **Dunstaffnage marina** - good reports of marina, and handy location, on main road. Strong tidal flows in some parts of the marina.
- **Port Appin** - hotel moorings. Very good food at the Pierhouse Hotel. Noisy and wash producing workboats transfer workers to superquarry across Loch Linnhe at 0630, returning around 1800.
- **Shuna Island / Dallens Bay** - moorings. We sailed through there, just for a look-see, as we know people who keep their boat there. They say the Old Inn is excellent.

- **Port Ramsay** (north end of Lismore) - very sheltered anchorage, good holding. Tall perches mark entrance. Use your plotter to get in between offlying rocks.
- **Loch a'Choire (Kingairloch)** - lower west side of Loch Linnhe, more or less opposite Port Appin. Lovely place - like a wilder Lochranza. Excellent moorings, lovely walk ashore to wherever e.g. the collection of houses and tiny church at the entrance to the loch. Also interesting small graveyard near moorings. We had a very good meal at the Boathouse restaurant, run by a young couple who have taken the lease from the estate. Limited menu, but well cooked, nicely presented, and good value (NB - only open Thursday lunchtime to Sunday lunchtime). There is a jetty extending from the Boathouse that you can take your dinghy to.
- **Loch Aline** - small pontoon system, with very good facilities ashore. Also now (2016) have mooring buoys, or anchor in N of loch. Maybe don't anchor in SE corner, despite pilot book suggestion - bottom is foul with old moorings. Mal and Alex on Carpe Diem caught an old mooring some years ago, and had to get a diver to free them. Excellent food at the White House, but not cheap. Good village shop. Pub with food at old pier.
- **Tobermory** - pontoons and moorings. Pontoons prone to swell in strong NE'lys - may be better on a mooring. Anchoring room limited. Everyone going up/down the west coast passes through! Has everything. Good Co-Op. Excellent restaurants, particularly Café Fish on ferry pier. Resourceful engine repairs! Clean diesel - operated by garage, so need to go and ask for service (or take gerrycans). Car hire. Walks to west lighthouse, or east to Aros Park. Highland Games - 20th July in 2017. See below for boat trip to Lunga and Staffa.
- **Loch Drumbuie** - watch Stirk Rock as you go across the north end of the Sound of Mull! Narrow entrance, to secure anchorage inside, or interesting looking (tight?) anchorage on north side of Oronsay, the north "arm" that encloses Drumbuie.
- **Loch Sunart / Salen** - nice small pontoon system at Salen (ring to book place, which will then be reserved), and good food at hotel. We had two nights there in 2015, and had an interesting motor to the head of the loch (Strontian), through the narrows, then back to Salen, on our full day there.
- **Kilchoan** - four moorings, protected from north, so a good option instead of Tobermory, which can be uncomfortable in a northerly. Cycle to visit Ardnamurchan lighthouse.
- **west side of Mull** - quite a lot to see, but can be a bit tricky:
 - **Coll** - moorings. Hire bikes and cycle round the island. Avoid in SE'ly.
 - **Ulva** - new (2017) pontoon. Good, with water, power, and fuel. Portacabin loos. No shop or buildings, virtually no transport out to any town, WiFi maybe late summer, Boathouse Restaurant closes 4pm. So have enough food on board! Otherwise beautiful, otters playing around the boat, walks on Ulva.
 - **Staffa** - Fingal's Cave - day anchorage only. Do not leave boat unattended, at anchor - weather can change very quickly. Go ashore / into cave in dinghy. (Can cheat and take the tripper boat from Tobermory, via Lunga - great for puffins, and often basking sharks).
 - **Iona** - no recommended overnight anchorage.

- **Bunessan** - anchor here, and get the bus and ferry to Iona. Anchor to east of approach to pier, which is used by fishing boats at all hours of the day and night. Go ashore near pier - beach in front of village dries.
- **Tinker's Hole** - interesting place - absolute rockery to get in. Tight - need shore line to reduce swing. Rings on rocks ashore (still there?).
- **David Balfour's Bay** - use Antares Charts for guidance.
- **Torran Rocks** - must have been really tricky in bad weather, or poor visibility, before plotters ...



- **West Loch Tarbert, Jura** (above) - wow! Choice of three anchorages "outside" narrows. Really interesting passage into inner loch, using multiple transits, as detailed in the CCC pilot book. These can be hard to pick up - don't confuse with the sheep (seriously!). Once you are successfully in, put waypoints on your plotter track, to make leaving and subsequent visits easier. Very isolated. Can anchor in S bay just after entrance, or in a few metres, off pier in N corner. Stunning scenery, dominated by the Paps of Jura. Great walks ashore - watch for the adders! Can also take the dinghy into the upper lochs - or your boat, if you are brave
Must go with tide in Sound of Islay.
- **east side of Mull - Loch Spelve** - interesting entrance - MUST go with tide. Lots of fish farms. Usual anchorage is in NW corner. Main road between Craignure and Fionnphort goes past here - bus and ferry to Iona.

5 - Caledonian Canal

(from Ann and Gordon Cochrane, *Night Owl*, June-July 2016)

These notes should be read in conjunction with the excellent general information in the skipper's guide, which includes a very good "chart" of the canal, available on Scottish Canal's web site, <https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/activities/boating/caledonian-canal/>. You will get a paper copy of this invaluable document when you lock in.

Charges - we looked at the 31 day pass, but this only makes sense if you do the Crinan both ways, and the Caledonian, within the 31 days, so we took separate passes - 4 days in the Crinan, £11.95 per metre, and 7 days in the Caledonian, £19.80/metre (2016 prices). There is also an Explorer pass, which gives you 16 nights, to be used at any time in the season, but that's quite expensive.

The Caledonian is much bigger than the Crinan, and all the locks and sluices (which are hydraulic) are operated by the canal staff. The staff were generally very helpful, being gentle with the sluices, and taking lines everywhere, except coming south, back up the flight of locks at Fort Augustus, which was manic on the Saturday afternoon, when we had six boats in the lock - too many for them to help. (Then Ann had to go ashore, and work our lines. With enough slack in the lines, she could carry both lines onto the next lock. She would then control the bow line from the shore, and I'd control the stern line from the cockpit.) Usually, the staff did very sensible things with our lines, but some of the younger/newer (temporary?) staff in the busier locks at Corpach, Neptune's Staircase, and the Fort Augustus flight were less clued up, and a couple of times, we had to ask them to move our lines (or the adjacent boat's lines) to another hook, or ask them to release the bow line first (I often use the stern line to pull the stern in, before driving out of the lock). They'll probably get it sussed later in the season ...!

There are two major motor boat hire fleets on the canal, based at Laggan Lock (N end of Loch Lochy), and Caley Marina, just S of Inverness. Their operating limits are between the top of Neptune's Staircase (south end), and the top of the Muirtown flight at Inverness. They aren't allowed down these flights, but there is no point, as they aren't sea capable vessels. A lot of their "drivers" and "crew" are totally inexperienced in boat handling, and we ended up with six boats in the Fort Augustus flight when coming south, on the Saturday - the major changeover day. The Fort Augustus flight is the first set of locks they come to going south, and it got a bit fraught, with a cruiser out of control (lines NOT round the hooks ... - a 8-9 stone human can't hold 4-5 tons of boat in the flow from the sluice gates ...), and we got a nice 2-3 foot long scratch almost through our gelcoat where we hit the wall after the fenders rolled out .. Going down this flight would be less of an issue, but maybe try to avoid Fort Augustus at the weekend.

More general information:

- **Nomenclature** - the canal staff talk about going 'east', and going 'west', where we might think north and south are more appropriate. I believe it stems from the canal being regarded as linking the east and west coasts of Scotland.
- All the **canal controls** are on the west side of the canal, so this is the preferred side for taking lines etc. With only a couple of exceptions, on the rare occasions we had more than two boats in the lock, we worked port side to going north (and surprise surprise ...) starboard side to coming south.
- The **height of the quays** is a bit variable - one of the contributing issues to our damage in the Fort Augustus locks was the low quay height, as a fender rolled out, so adjust fenders as necessary, or (if you have enough fenders) set them at different heights..
- We had to go on the waiting pontoons a couple of times at the **road bridges**, but it is the main A road up the Great Glen. We also got to the bridge just south of Inverness as the local school was tipping out, so were held for maybe 30 minutes. Time for a coffee!
- There are a couple of **hotel jetties** on Loch Lochy, but we didn't fancy either of them for an 11 metre yacht with a 2 metre draft. Anchoring is pretty much impossible in most places - too deep, too exposed. Loch Oich, the middle loch, and Loch Dufour, at the N end of Loch Ness, are much shallower, and anchoring would be possible. We didn't - we went for the convenience of pontoons overnight.

- **Loch Oich** is very different to the others, which are steep sided, heavily glaciated valleys. Loch Oich, the highest point of the canal, is more wooded, and is very pretty. It is quite shallow, so you need to observe the buoys and perches in places.
- The **on shore canal facilities** are pretty good - loos and shower(s) in most popular stopping places, and laundry at a couple - Ann used the laundry at Fort Augustus. Some pontoons have power - see the skipper's guide.
- **Shopping** - there is an excellent small Co-op in Caol (pronounced Cool), between Corpach and Banavie, near the bottom of Neptune's Staircase. We stayed the first night at Banavie, at the top of Neptune's Staircase, and walked down across the main road and railway, past the Lochy Bar, and then followed the road round through the housing estate. Don't be distracted by the sign to "shopping centre" - there is a rather run-down looking Londis, and a couple of other charity shops etc there. The Co-op is further down the main road, towards Fort William - it's on Google Maps. There is limited shopping in Fort Augustus. We had two nights in Inverness, on the wall at the top of the Muirtown flight (no point in going down for us, to come straight back up again), and did major shopping at the excellent big Morrisons and Lidl, in the shopping estate as you head into the city centre.
- **Fuel** - we got red diesel at Caley Marina, the motor cruiser charter base, on the left (west) side, just as you approach Inverness. Call them on the telephone for directions. The fuel dock is the very first dock you get to, coming from the south, and is at right angles to the line of the canal. Watch length/depth, as it's designed for their motor cruisers! We were nearly aground (we draw 2 metres), and our stern was just about in. I would guess there is fuel down in the Muirtown marina, but don't know.
- **Food** - good pub food at the Lochy Bar in Caol, and the Lock Inn in Fort Augustus. We didn't try the food in the Eagle floating barge pub/restaurant at Laggan Locks, but it looked ok. Some fascinating stuff on display! We had a pizza lunch in Inverness, otherwise we ate on the boat.
- **Inverness** is worth a day - nice small city.
- **Mobile signals and wi-fi** were a bit patchy. Our mobile phone is with BT, and we had a connection in most populated areas, but the broadband in e.g. the Lochy Bar or the Lock Inn was much faster. There is public wi-fi in a number of places, with a daily charge, but we never needed to use this - we found a pub or cafe instead! TV and DAB radio reception was OK at the fort William and Inverness ends, but patchy in the middle. Sometimes we had no FM radio either.

6 - beyond Ardnamurchan

Could rabbit on for ever (winter project!)

Canna / Rum / Muck / Eigg / Skye / Outer Hebrides etc

Port Mor, Muck - see <http://www.isleofmuck.com/> for useful information (click on "getting here". Reported in 2016 to have small pontoon - £5 / night, proceeds to local primary school.

7 - Northern Ireland

- **Rathlin** - interesting place, with good walks to the three lighthouses. Very good pontoon system, limited shore facilities.
- **Ballycastle** - marina. Slightly tight, but ok. Good facilities in harbourmaster's building. Eating ashore is better in main town. Spar store at marina is not licensed. Can take bus to the Giant's Causeway (slightly disappointing - Fingal's Cave is much, much more impressive, but rather less accessible!). Local buses finish early (5pm?), so watch times.
- **Portrush** - Harbour with private moorings and a long pontoon for visiting yachts. No power on pontoon but the harbour master will run a cable if asked. May have to raft. Good shelter but take a fender board as harbour master often asks yachts to tie up to harbour wall when there is a spring tide. Worth it just to enjoy the excellent restaurants at the harbour - Harbour Bar and Bistro, The Wine Bar (favourite of Rory McIlroy and Darren Clark). Otherwise holiday town with plenty of shops, golf courses etc. Sailing Club very friendly. Bus to Giants Causeway.
- **Glenarm** - good pontoon system. Limited dining ashore - more options in Carnlough, but don't walk along busy coast road - dangerous, as no pavement.
- **Carrickfergus** - text required.
- **Bangor** - excellent, full service marina.
- **Belfast** - Abercorn Dock - pontoon system, now with permanent showers and toilet facilities ashore. Fantastic location, almost in the heart of the city - Titanic Museum* is 300m back to seawards, city centre is 10 minute walk in the other direction. City Hall tour, and hop on / hop off circular bus tour (Stormont, Shankill, Falls Road etc), are very good. (* - Titanic Museum - can book "tour" on internet - but isn't a tour - it's just an arrival time, to space out the visitors.)
- **Strangford Lough** - very tidal entrance, with famous Routen Wheel whirlpool! Tidal power turbine now removed?? A great place to explore for 3/4 days but you do need good charts to avoid the Pladdies Rocks at the entrance. Going in is no problem with the tide, you may hit 14 knots! Good anchorage first night anchor off the Templecormick ruins - great walks ashore through the NT property.

Then Whiterock and Daft Eddies - anchor off in a few metres. Then the other Mount Stuart in NI, super gardens to explore, all dog friendly.

Getting out is the real challenge, try doing at low slack water, no east in the wind, if not you may experience the biggest overfalls you will ever do in your life, never to return again!
- **Portaferry** - best to arrive when tide is near slack or be subject to 2-3 k in marina. Stream in centre runs at 8k and slack for 15-30 minutes. Marina staff will help out if they are advised of arrival. Visit Mountstewart by bus. Nat Trust Property with fabulous gardens. Can be cycled 15 miles but busy road.

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- A map of the Port of San Francisco, California, showing various locations and depths. The map includes labels for 'N PIER', 'ANCHORAGE', 'S', 'DK', 'RU', and 'R'. It also shows depths such as '02', '27', '16', '19', and '14'. The map is color-coded with green for land, blue for water, and yellow for sandbars or shoals. Various icons represent different types of vessels and structures, including a lighthouse, a ship, a buoy, and a pier.

8 - Isle of Man

- **Peel** - easy access from the north and said to be best marina on the island. Good base for exploring the island.



Largs SC Cruising Group - Cruising Notes - May 2017

in Peel at low water, so plan accordingly! Leaving from Bangor marina, the journey time is approximately 7 hours at over 6kn, works well because the early reversal of tide just outside Bangor allows 7 hours of favourable tide; or from Ardglass, the passage across the tide is an hour shorter. A flap gate at Peel opens for 1 to 2 hours either side of high tide, so timing of arrival is essential. Three waiting moorings available but exposed - subject to swell in W to N winds. Call the harbourmaster to lift the footbridge over the flapgate, every half-hour on request.

If draft a concern, wait until near top of tide before entering. Variable depth in inner harbour, which has pontoons. Some of the berths shallower than expected, especially alongside the main walkway - less than 1.5m. Greater depth on east side, which is main fairway. Can lie on wall and power here too. Marina staff helpful but not always in attendance. Sill and swing bridge controlled from Douglas out of hours. Good public transport and car hire recommended for a few days.

A friendly place, adequate shower block in marina. Fuel available on request, no fuel berth. Ten minute walk to bus for all parts of the island, much to do. Excellent Manannan exhibition near marina (free to NTS members). Manannan is a [sea deity](#) in [Irish mythology](#). Restaurants in town variable. Ten minute walk to bus to all parts of the island. Much to do - electric railway, Snaefell etc etc.

- **Douglas** - marina inside a sill but looks tight for manoeuvring and a long way round the Island.
- **etc (to be added as time permits)**

9 - useful web sites

Weather - Met Office:

- [Inshore waters](#)
- [Synoptic charts](#)
- [Satellite](#)
- [Rainfall](#)

Weather - N and S Ireland - forecasts, and actual condition reports

- www.met.ie

Weather - other (these sites often load much faster than the Met Office ones):

- [XC Weather \(Largs\)](#)
- [Rain Today?](#)

Tides (Millport):

- [Hydrographic Office \(Easytide\)](#)

Webcams:

- [Largs SC / SSI](#) - view out from our clubhouse, towards Cumbrae
- [Largs Yacht Haven](#) - view over E/F pontoon

Other:

- [Largs Sailing Club](#)
- [Largs Yacht Haven](#)

10 - useful publications

There are many publications of greater or lesser interest, but here's a few of the better / more essential ones, in the experience of members:

- **Welcome Anchorages** booklet - indispensable. Revised annually, and available free from many marinas, chandlers etc. Also available on the web - see [here](#). Note that this publication doesn't really cover the more isolated anchorages etc where there is no commercial interest ashore.
- **Clyde Cruising Club pilot books** - invaluable companions - see [here](#).
- **Cruising Scotland - the Clyde to Cape Wrath**. Another CCC/Imray publication, with much background information. See same CCC [web page](#).
- **Scottish Islands - Hamish Haswell-Smith** - detailed information, history, geography and maps on every Scottish island, with basic sailing information. A great Christmas present!
- **Antares Charts** - fantastic, detailed, current, highly accurate, GPS based charts of many of the smaller anchorages etc - a lot of the Admiralty type charts we use are based on surveys dating back into the 1800's .. Downloadable to iPads and similar GPS equipped devices. Annual updates and additions.