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Milford Haven

At first glance, the commercial port of Milford Haven appears to offer little to the visiting yachtsman, but a closer look reveals the ‘haven’ aspect of this expansive and scenic cruising ground. Cameron Snell guides us in and around

Milford Haven is a large commercial port that is busy with tanker traffic handling 29% of Britain’s seaborne trade in oil and gas. Once inside the haven entrance, however, the great expanse of unspoilt sheltered tidal waters of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park provide ample and scenic cruising grounds for visiting yachtsmen.

Natural hazards are few, but mariners need to familiarise themselves with the nearby Castlemartin Range Sea Danger Area and the MOD Aberporth Range situated in Cardigan Bay, north of the Milford Haven Waterway beyond Strumble Head. Web links providing details of live firing can be found on the Port of Milford Haven website www.mhpa.co.uk by

clicking on Marine Leisure Services.

As with any commercial port, there are rules to follow. All small craft must keep a minimum distance of 90m away from all ships, terminals and ships at anchor. All ships on the move should be considered as having a moving exclusion zone around them and especially forwards of them. Continuous watch must be maintained with the Port Authority on VHF Ch12. Green-and-white patrol vessels are deployed throughout the summer and peak periods to assist leisure users.

Facilities

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park consists of approximately 23 miles of sheltered inland tidal waterways. There are many tributaries that are home to an abundance of breeding habitats for



Dale Yacht Club’s Moorings restaurant has a rooftop terrace and great views

a variety of birds and other wildlife.

The local authority provides seasonal pontoons where small boats can moor to explore villages offering waterside restaurants and family pubs. A designated Water Ranger undertakes regular patrols, providing information, advice and assistance to all waterway users. The Water Ranger can be contacted using VHF Ch16 or Ch12 and can be approached for advice on and off the water.

The excellent Milford Haven Waterway Leisure User Guide is produced annually and can be downloaded or free from www.mhpa.co.uk/uploads/PoMH_LUG_2014.pdf.

With almost 200NM of coastline it’s difficult to cover everything in one article, so we’ll concentrate on Milford Haven Marina, Neyland Yacht Haven and Dale.



Delightful Dale

Just to the west of the entrance to Milford Haven is Dale, an unspoilt village in the heart of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The area has an abundance of wildlife including birds, seals, dolphins and porpoise. Dale Bay lies in a sheltered valley: anchoring is safe in all but an easterly. Peace and tranquillity are foremost here, and 'dead slow' speed restrictions apply. Anchor outside of local moorings.

Dale is a local centre for sailing. Windsurfing is taught in Dale Bay, along with sailing and boat handling courses. Dale is also often the location of sailing galas. Seasonal pontoons for visitors (ideal for trailer-sailors), stretch out into the bay. Fresh water is piped to the inner of these pontoons. One delightful pub and a friendly yacht club with restaurant complete this heavenly village.



PRPA/Patrick Roach

Dale is found just to the west of Milford Haven entrance

Getting in to Milford Haven and the marina



1 The seaward entrance to Milford Haven is divided into two shipping lanes to the east and west of Chapel Rocks. It is advisable to keep clear of these channels as there is sufficient space and depth to approach outside of them. Larger ships will always use the west channel: all other craft are advised to use the east channel.

My approach was from the south, crossing the Bristol Channel from Cornwall, and a southerly Force 8 began to blow as I arrived. This image shows the confused seas at the approach to Studdock Point and the rock of Sheep Island on the eastern side. In calmer conditions it is safe to pass outside of the buoyage.



2 The plateau of Thorn Island Fort is easily distinguished from seaward. This approach is from the eastern side. East Chapel port-hand buoy can be seen in the foreground. Conspicuous chimneys on the mainland of Grey Castle Head can be seen between the red buoy and Thorn Island.



3 Shipping will pass to the west of Thorn Rock West Cardinal. With careful consideration to the chart a safe route can be found between this cardinal mark and Thorn Island. The white building on the mainland accommodates the light of Grey Castle Head. A white sector light illuminates from here at night.

Milford Haven Marina

Milford Haven Marina has 328 berths, diesel fuel, a great range of shops, restaurants and cafes as well as other standard marina services. To obtain a berth call the friendly Marina Control on VHF Ch37 or tel: 01646 696312. www.milfordmarina.com

Access to the marina dock basin is via the entrance lock. Times are available by calling marina on the number above or online at www.milfordmarina.com.

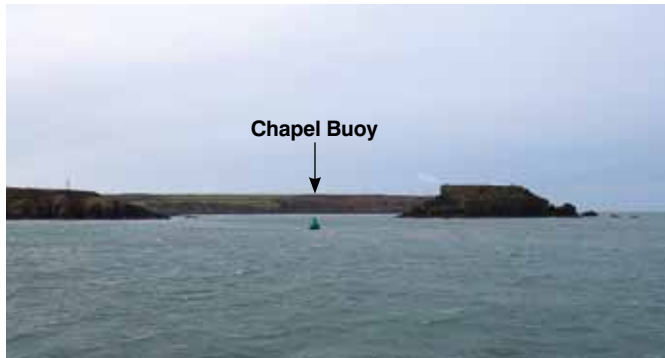
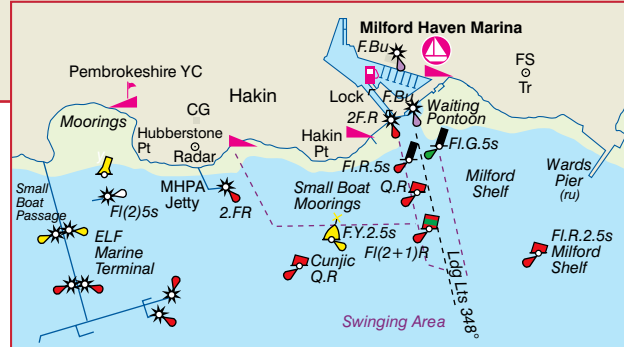
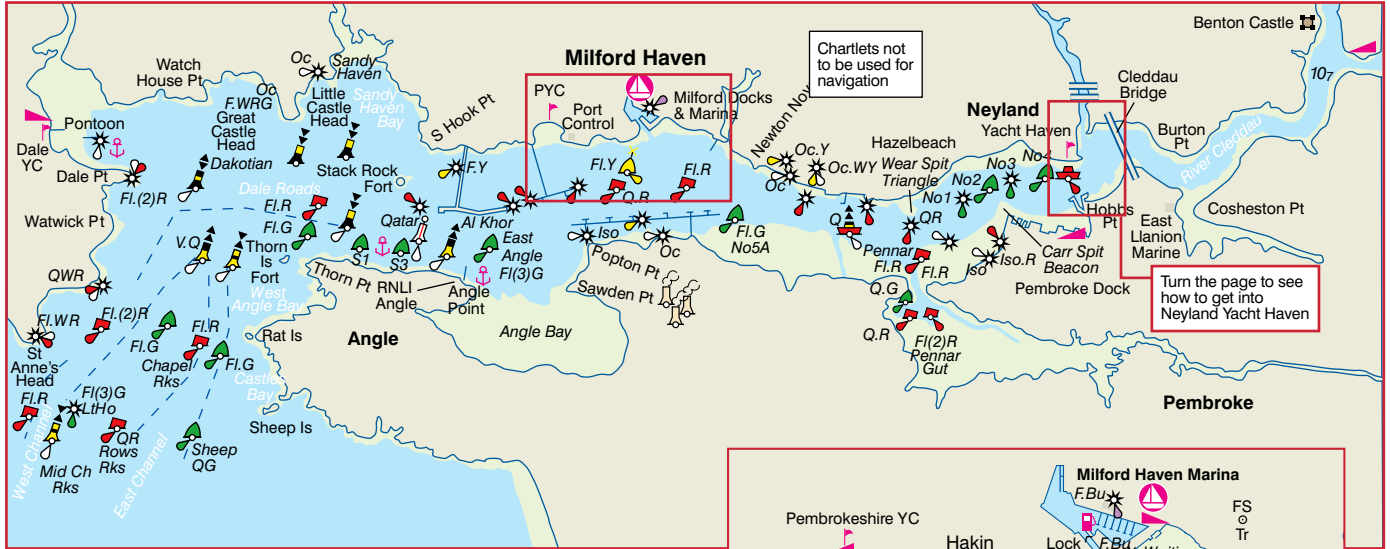
A freeflow period operates two hours before high water, until high water. All traffic using the lock is

controlled by the pier head staff and it is essential that they are contacted via VHF Ch14 before leaving a berth or entering the dock basin. Milford Docks Pier Head can be contacted on VHF Ch14, call sign 'Pier Head', or tel: 01646 696310.

The Port of Milford Haven is currently working on a £6million project to develop new lock gates that will allow more frequent access and secure Milford Haven's future as a top sailing destination. The gates are to be constructed inside the existing lock.

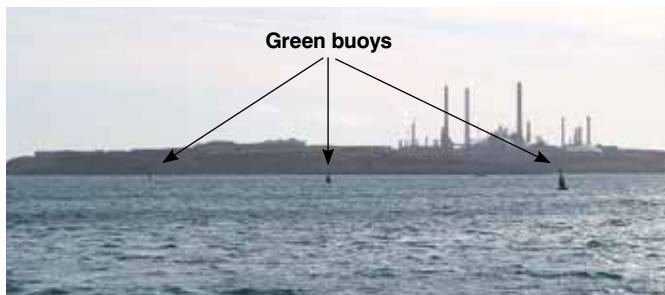


New lock gates will mean even better access to Milford Haven Marina



Chapel Buoy

4 Once around Thorn Island and heading west, the first green main channel marker will appear. This image shows the Chapel Buoy viewed from the main channel. There is sufficient depth to pass this buoy outside of the channel, in order to safely avoid the shipping.



Green buoys

5 A line of three green buoys leading up to the Al Khor north cardinal mark indicate the starboard side of main channel between Thorn Island and Popton Point. Pass between the Al Khor north cardinal and the RNLI Angle Lifeboat Station. The chimneys of the Valero Oil Refinery are distinctive by day and night. It is recommended to stay close to the buoys outside of the channel.



6 In the distance on your port side you'll see the Qatar RW Fairway buoy and Stack Rock Fort. Yachtsmen shouldn't be as close as this photo – you'd be in the centre of the main channel.



Valero refinery pontoon

7 When you reach the next green buoy named East Angle you will need to consider crossing the main channel if you wish to head over to Milford Haven Marina. If you are proceeding further upstream then it is essential that you maintain a 90m clearance from the Valero (formerly Chevron-Texaco) refinery pontoon to starboard. A leading line marked on the chart will direct you toward two large white leading markers on the hill above Newton Noyes.

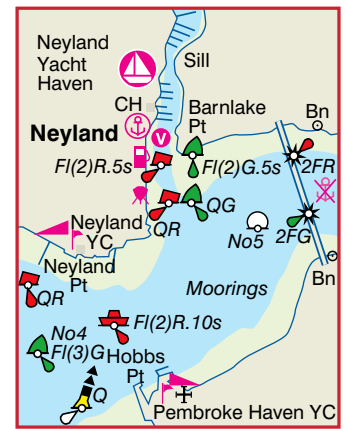


Waiting pontoon

8 Milford Haven Marina is located on the northern side of the channel. Entrance is via Milford Lock. A row of buoys, beginning with a preferred channel marker RGR, displays a clearly defined line to the lock entrance. A waiting pontoon is located on the starboard side of the lock.



Neyland Yacht Haven



Neyland Yacht Haven

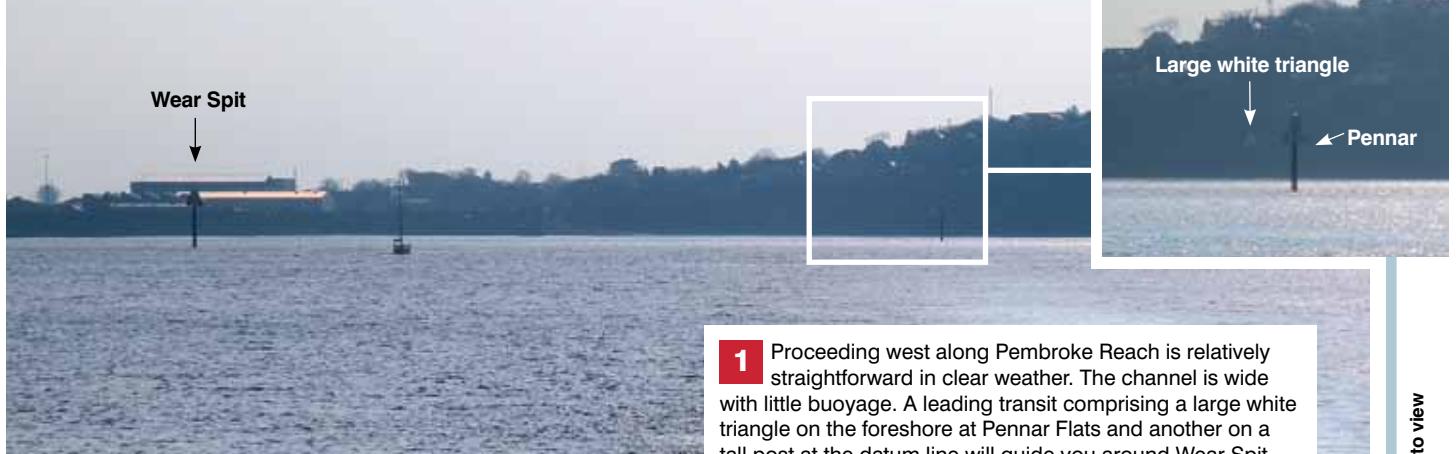
Tel: 01646 601601

VHF Ch80

Neyland Yacht Haven has 420 berths, all fully serviced with water, electricity and free WiFi, and offers full marina facilities. The Brunel Cafe, the Bar Restaurant, a chandlery and a laundry are on site. Diesel and petrol are operated by Dale Sailing.

Neyland Yacht Haven is divided into two basins: the lower basin is accessible at all states of the tide, while a sill retains the water in the upper basin. Tide gauges indicate the height over the sill.

Approaches to Neyland Yacht Haven



1 Proceeding west along Pembroke Reach is relatively straightforward in clear weather. The channel is wide with little buoyage. A leading transit comprising a large white triangle on the foreshore at Pennar Flats and another on a tall post at the datum line will guide you around Wear Spit before the river curves to the north-east. Tall masts sit beyond and above the transit. Follow the river north-east toward Pembroke Reach between Wear Spit and Pennar until you can see the tall Carr Spit green beacon.

2 As you come around Carr Spit, a distinct display of buoyage and beacons appears. The large Cleddau Bridge spanning the channel in the background is located just beyond the entrance to Neyland Marina. Follow the buoyed channel toward Cleddau Bridge, passing the last red buoy off Neyland Point. Continue toward the bridge, heading for the fixed vertical lights on the columns, until you can look north-north-west into the marina. This will ensure you clear the drying shores off Neyland Point.



3 The entrance to Neyland Yacht Haven is clearly defined with red and green buoys. A red brick building with two distinct chimneys should be directly astern of you as you make your approach toward the buoys.

The entire range of Cameron Snell's video pilotage guides is available to view online or buy on DVD from www.harboursonfilm.com