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Lancashire

& North West magazine

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Yachting in the North West

Andrew Harris describes an activity not always associated with our region



“The North West is a
good place for yachting”

The national centre for yachting may be the Solent - between Hampshire and the Isle of Wight - but many are surprised by the facilities, services and attractions to be found along our coastline and in the Lake District. Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside have six major coastal marinas at Maryport, Whitehaven, Glasson Dock near Lancaster, Fleetwood, Preston and Liverpool - see the chart - and many lesser facilities. These marinas offer more than 1,500 berths and enable yachties (shorthand for yachtsmen and yachtswomen) to 'harbour-hop' along the coast as well as sail to Irish Sea destinations and beyond. We lack the double tides and ease of movement of the Solent. Maryport and Whitehaven offer direct access to the sea for a limited time each side of

high water. Glasson Dock is found via the Lune Estuary and times to enter and leave are limited to an hour or less. Fleetwood Dock and Marina are next to the Wyre Estuary with fast-running tides which limit movement to three hours or less around high water. Preston Dock and Marina are nearly 10 miles beyond the Ribble Estuary through which the old channel is now re-established and self-scouring but this may change. Visiting yachts should find the offshore Cut Buoy then the 13-mile perch and just follow the run of perches along the Ribble: it's easy. The Dock and Preston Marina can be entered during a three hour period provided high water is between 0700 and 2200 hours. Preston Marina then offers the unique advantage of almost 40 acres of water for boat testing or leisure as pictured. Liverpool Marina offers easy movement through a lock to

“Yachting isn't just for the rich”



ABOVE: New facilities at the Ferry Nab Marina, Windermere. Photo: Andrew Harris.
BELOW: Sailing at sunset in the Irish Sea. Photo courtesy of the Bay Sea School

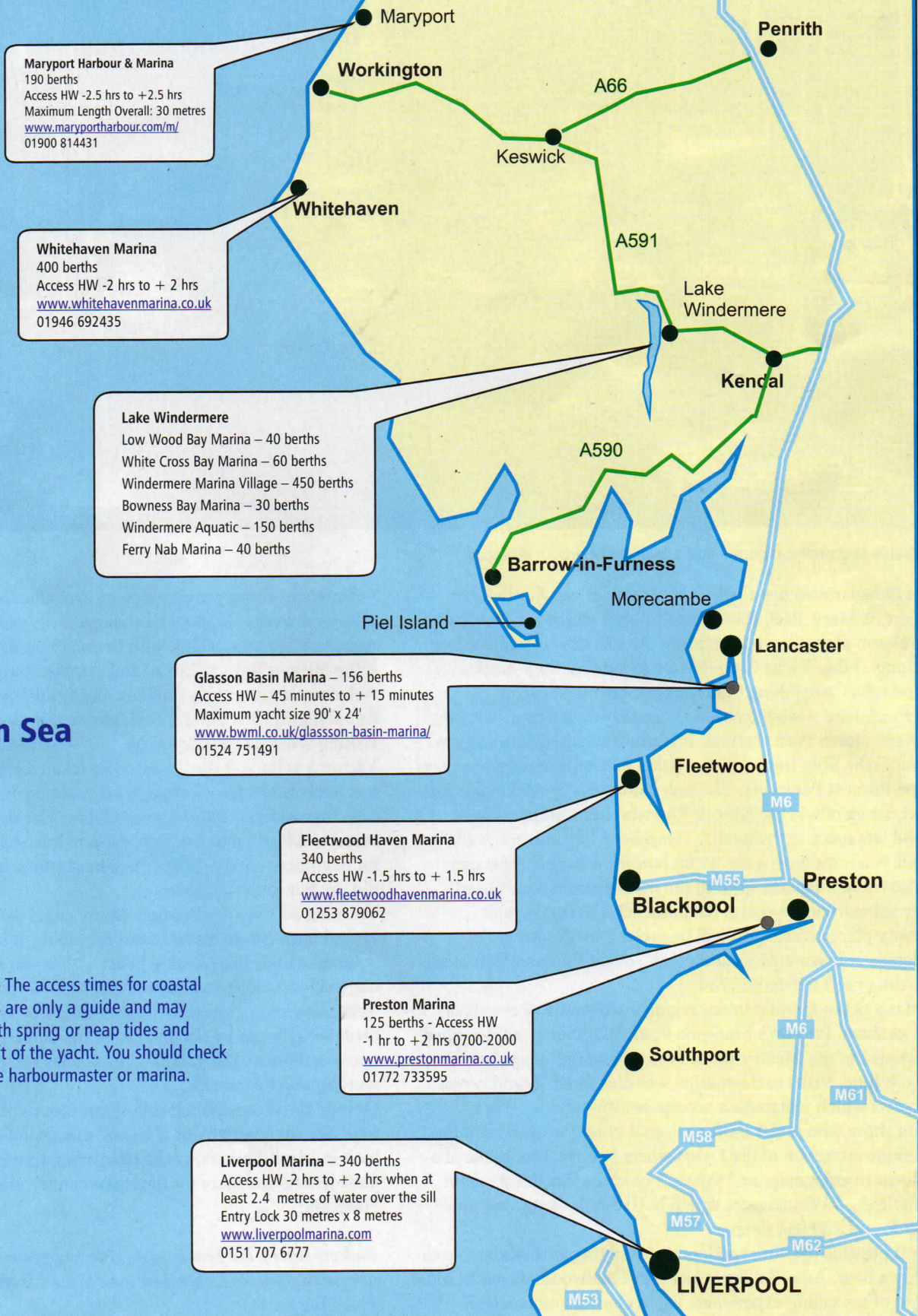


and from the Mersey during a four hour period provided there is enough water over the cill.

Whilst the sea can take yachts to the Hebrides, Ireland or around the world there are three popular sailing destinations nearer to hand –

- Conwy and the Menai Strait can be reached tide to tide. Conwy offers a choice of berthing arrangement including a major marina; the town and castle are well worth visiting. The Menai offers stunning scenery best viewed from the water and has many places where yachts can find a mooring or drop anchor. Yachts can berth at Beaumaris for a brief visit whilst a further voyage to Caenarfon is rewarding provided you only sail around high water as the half-tide race is notorious and the Menai empties near the bridges at low water!
- The Isle of Man has many attractions (See ‘The Mysterious Ellan Vannin’ – June 2015 Lancashire Magazine) and is only about 60 nautical miles from the Lancashire coast. The inner harbour

The Main Yachting Marinas in the North West



Maryport Harbour & Marina
 190 berths
 Access HW -2.5 hrs to +2.5 hrs
 Maximum Length Overall: 30 metres
www.maryportharbour.com/m/
 01900 814431

Whitehaven Marina
 400 berths
 Access HW -2 hrs to + 2 hrs
www.whitehavenmarina.co.uk
 01946 692435

Lake Windermere
 Low Wood Bay Marina – 40 berths
 White Cross Bay Marina – 60 berths
 Windermere Marina Village – 450 berths
 Bowness Bay Marina – 30 berths
 Windermere Aquatic – 150 berths
 Ferry Nab Marina – 40 berths

Glasson Basin Marina – 156 berths
 Access HW – 45 minutes to + 15 minutes
 Maximum yacht size 90' x 24'
www.bwml.co.uk/glasson-basin-marina/
 01524 751491

Fleetwood Haven Marina
 340 berths
 Access HW -1.5 hrs to + 1.5 hrs
www.fleetwoodhavenmarina.co.uk
 01253 879062

Preston Marina
 125 berths - Access HW
 -1 hr to +2 hrs 0700-2000
www.prestonmarina.co.uk
 01772 733595

Liverpool Marina – 340 berths
 Access HW -2 hrs to + 2 hrs when at
 least 2.4 metres of water over the sill
 Entry Lock 30 metres x 8 metres
www.liverpoolmarina.com
 0151 707 6777

Irish Sea

NOTE – The access times for coastal marinas are only a guide and may vary with spring or neap tides and the draft of the yacht. You should check with the harbourmaster or marina.



Yachts and pontoon berths at the Maryport Harbour & Marina

at Douglas now has a cill, so boats stay afloat. Castletown, Port St Mary, Peel, Ramsey and Laxey are all tidal but have a charm of their own. Exploring the island is recommended. Douglas Bay Yacht Club (01624 673965) is very hospitable and offers everything from meals to beer to showers.

- Piel Island – see the chart – is an easy destination from any of the North West marinas. It features a ruined castle and a pub – the Ship Inn – and lies half a mile off the southern tip of the Furness Peninsula. The pub landlord is Steve Chatterway who is ex officio the King of Piel who has a proper throne and lets space in the nearby campsite. Moorings are available but you must have a tender for landing ashore. Yachts can also anchor but stay clear of the main channel as it's used by submarines. A visit is recommended as there aren't many places where you will be greeted by the King! For details visit www.pielisland.co.uk, email shipinn@pielisland.co.uk or call 07516 453784.

Many of the marinas in our region are near major events or host them. Preston's Maritime Festivals are now mainly canal events but the Mersey River Festival remains a big attraction each June. Visits to the marina websites listed should reveal events which will make a voyage worthwhile.

For those who prefer more sheltered sailing we also have the unique attraction of the Lakes where bad weather is less of a threat to enjoyment and safety. The chart lists the six main marinas on Windermere which is 10.5 miles long, one mile wide and 220 feet deep.

It is possible to gain experience of yachting without having to buy a boat. Atlas Sailing is based at Fleetwood Haven Marina and offers sailing experience, yacht charter and practical sailing courses from beginner to Ocean Yachtmaster.

Leisure and corporate charters are available from half a day to several weeks. Atlas stress that previous experience isn't necessary to enjoy sailing with them. Their flagship yacht is the 50-foot Bavaria 'Atlas' and skipper Andy Dobson welcomes enquiries by emailing andy@atlassailing.co.uk or by calling 07976 322417. Full information can be found by visiting www.atlassailing.co.uk

Yachting is fun but does need to be taken seriously to ensure it is done safely. If you experience yachting and want to take it further various courses are available. The Bay Sea School is based in Morecambe and specialise in boat-handling courses for beginners using a 20-foot keelboat which handles like a dinghy but doesn't capsize.

Yachting isn't just for the rich. Many enjoy sailing keelboats 20 feet long. 26-33 feet is better for sailing at sea. Your columnist finds bilge keeled boats – with two keels – ideal for our shallow waters and most Isle of Man harbours as they can 'take the ground' when fin keelers would be at risk. Details of boats for sale can be obtained from the yacht brokers at most marinas, from all the yachting magazines and on the website www.apolloduck.co.uk

Despite the often difficult sailing conditions of the shallow Irish Sea the North West is a good place for yachting. We have marinas, brokers, yacht chartering, training, sailing destinations and lakes for those who prefer something calmer. Have fun!

Andrew Harris is a former yacht club commodore and has commuted from the Lancashire coast to the Isle of Man by sailing yacht.