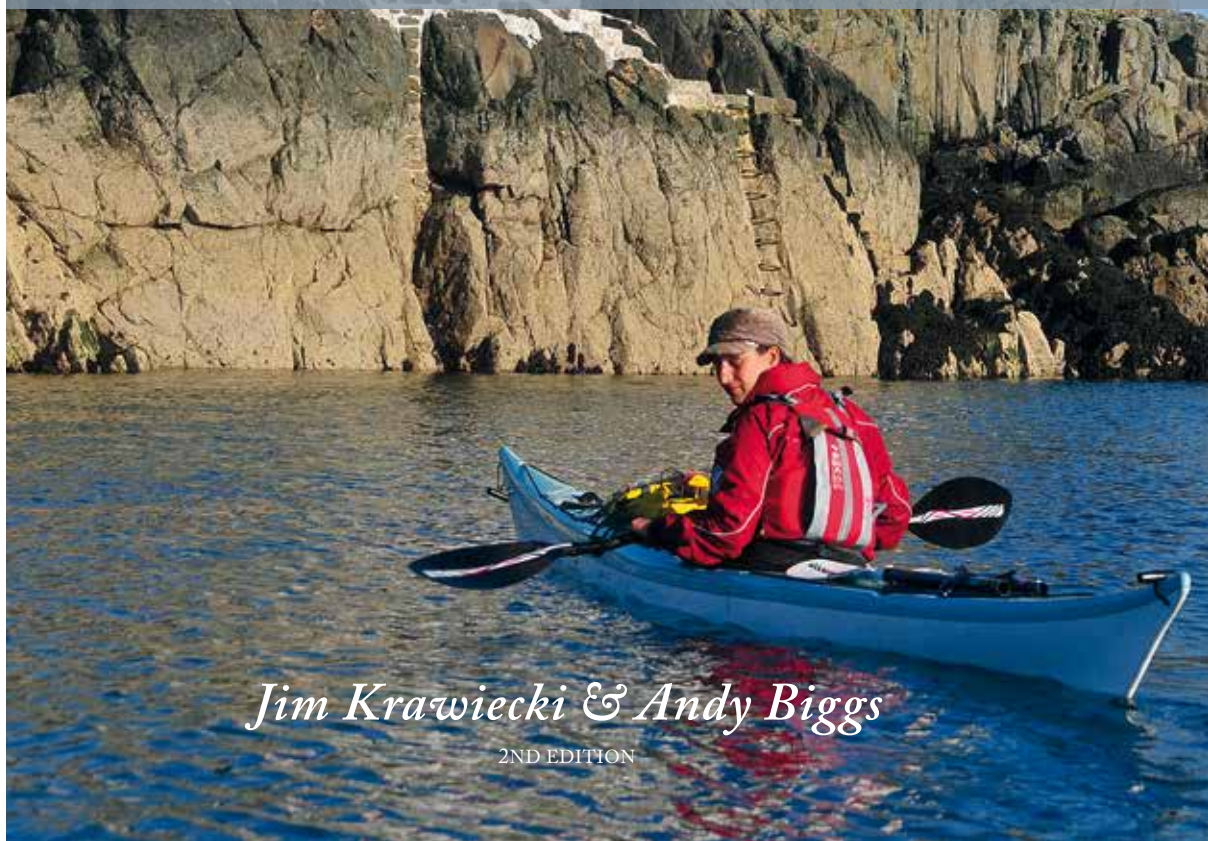




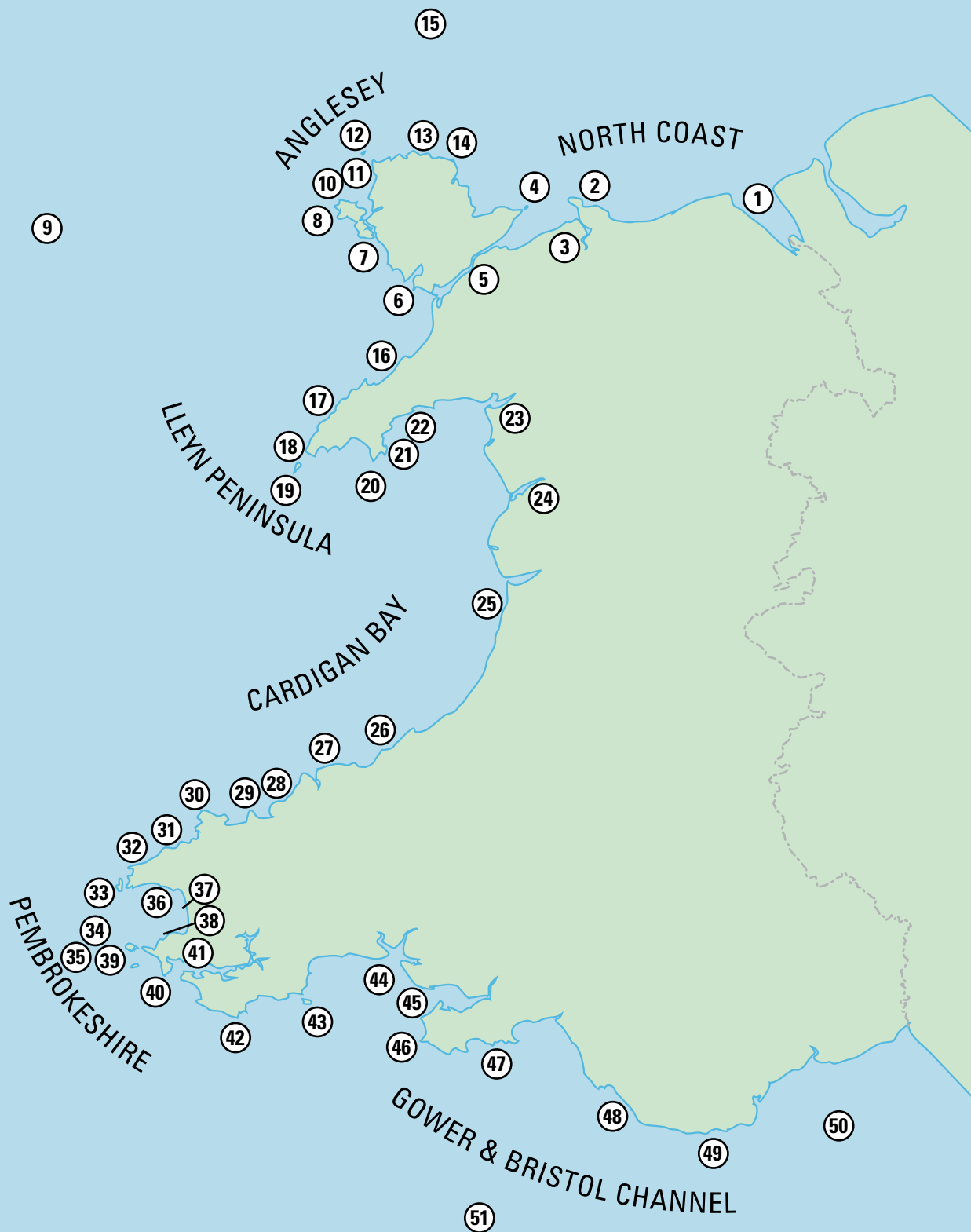
# Welsh Sea Kayaking

FIFTY-ONE GREAT SEA KAYAK VOYAGES



*Jim Krawiecki & Andy Biggs*

2ND EDITION



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0 N. Miles 50

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2nd Edition

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## Foreword

When this book was first published it had been a long time coming! Wales has a spectacular coastline with the added complication of strong tides. Rugged coastlines often make access difficult and expeditions exposed to the elements. This guide certainly goes a long way in providing essential information, making the planning of trips less stressful, and is within the reach of all.

The severity of the trips often depends on wind strength and direction. Being on neap or spring tides may turn a benign expedition into a mini-epic, so local knowledge of the kind that helped compile this book can be essential. The book will provide you with a lot of valuable information so if you plan to paddle our coastline it is an essential read. I only wish I'd had the benefit of this guide in my early days as it would have certainly made life easier and probably safer.

Jim and Andy have added stories and tales intertwined with historic facts. This makes the book more than just a guide; it is an interesting and motivational read as well. The photographs are of high quality and the book has been designed for ease of reading and referencing, to include essential information on tidal streams, launch and landing spots, places of interest, campsites and friendly hostelrys.

I would like to take this opportunity of congratulating the authors for all their hard work. I can think of no better way to spend hours of research time. 'Welsh Sea Kayaking' will be of great benefit to sea kayakers. It is wonderful to have such enthusiastic people who are prepared to impart valuable information and experiences to fellow paddlers. With updated information, new photographs and an inspiring additional route, this guide is more essential than ever. Fantastic!

*Nigel Dennis*

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to the memory of Peter Hatt – initiator, and motivator of North West Sea Kayakers ... 'Hattie' enjoyed paddling with others to discover the sounds, views and moods of the sea. I hope that this guide will encourage all its readers to share and develop those ideals and in doing so be a fitting tribute to a memorable character.

*Peter Roscoe*



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# Coastal Access in Wales

Access to the outdoors in Wales is becoming increasingly encouraged and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act of 2000 brought access to many additional areas of coastal land. While engaged in sea kayaking it is rare to encounter access problems. Most of the routes described in this book start and finish at beaches or small harbours where public access to the foreshore is already established. Areas of the coast between the high and low water mark are often described as 'foreshore', and most of this is owned by the Crown Estate. Neither the Crown Estate nor any other owners normally restrict access to the foreshore.

Access on the sea is restricted only in rare and extreme cases and information is given by the coastguard during regular maritime safety information broadcasts. Access is frequently restricted in the vicinity of artillery firing ranges. These areas are often patrolled by staff from the Ministry of Defence. Further information and firing times can always be obtained from the coastguard.

At the busy ports of Holyhead and Milford Haven permission should be sought from the relevant authority, either by VHF or mobile phone, before entering or crossing harbour entrances.

The coasts of Anglesey, the Llyn Peninsula and Pembrokeshire have greatly improved public access due to the development of coastal footpaths. Following on from the success of these paths, the Wales Coast Path was developed. It was officially launched in 2012 and runs the entire length of the Welsh coast from Chester to Chepstow.

## Respect the Interests of Other People

Acting with courtesy, consideration and awareness is very important. If you are exercising access rights make sure you respect the privacy, safety and livelihoods of those living and working in the outdoors, and the needs of people enjoying the outdoors.

## Care for the Environment

Sea kayakers are able to access remote places others cannot. Many of these places have sensitive plant, animal and bird life. Be aware of, and respect, landing restrictions around nature reserves. Look after the places you visit and enjoy and leave the land as you find it.

Take responsibility for your own actions.

Remember that the outdoors cannot be made risk free and that you should act with care at all times for your own safety and that of others.

## Wild Camping

This guide provides information on many 'paddler friendly' commercial campsites. However, wild camping provides a special experience and forms an integral part of sea touring. There is no right to camp on the Welsh coast, and areas that lend themselves to wild camping for sea kayakers in Wales are few and far between. If you do decide to add a wild camp to your journey plan, be sure to choose a remote location away from dwellings, roads and paths. Always arrive late in the day and do not pitch your tent until dusk. You should take your tent down early the following morning. "Leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but photographs".

Further information on access to coastal areas can be had from Natural Resources Wales at [www.naturalresources.wales](http://www.naturalresources.wales)



# Important Notice

As with many outdoor activities that take place in remote and potentially hostile environments, technical ability, understanding of the environment and good planning are essential. The sea is one of the most committing environments of all, and with this considered it should be treated with the constant respect that it deserves. This guide is designed to provide information that will inspire the sea kayaker to venture into this amazing environment, however it cannot provide the essential ingredients of ability, environmental awareness and good planning. Before venturing out on any of the trips described in this book ensure that your knowledge and ability are appropriate to the seriousness of the trip. If you are unsure, then look for appropriate advice before embarking on the trips described. The book is purely a guide to provide information about the sea kayaking trips. For the additional essential knowledge of safety at sea, personal paddling, environmental considerations and tidal planning the authors recommend gaining the appropriate training from experienced and qualified individuals.

## Warning

Sea kayaking is inherently a potentially dangerous sport, and with this considered, users of this guide should take the appropriate precautions before undertaking any of the trips. The information supplied in this book has been well researched, however the authors can take no responsibility if tidal times differ or information supplied is not sufficient. Conditions can change quickly and dramatically on the sea and there is no substitute for personal experience and judgment when kayaking or during the planning stages of a sea trip.

The guide is no substitute for personal ability, personal risk assessment and good judgement. The decision on whether to go out sea kayaking or not, and any consequences arising from that decision, remain yours and yours alone.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their thanks to those who have contributed anecdotes and photographs which are credited throughout the book. Two people who are not mentioned by name are David Roberts and John Rowlands from pixaerial.com. Their spectacular aerial photography provides a unique perspective and we wish them all the best in their projects.

Throughout the time it took to compile information, take and source photographs, and write text for this guide the authors have had the benefit of help and support from others without whom this book would not have been possible. The authors would like to acknowledge the efforts of, and extend special thanks to: Penny Excell, Chris Krawiecki, Simon Fenton, Kirstine Pearson, Peter Roscoe and Trevor Shepherd. Their continued practical support and encouragement throughout the project has been invaluable.

Finally, thanks are due to Franco Ferrero and his team at Pesda Press. Franco's patience, and dedication to this project has been immeasurable and the team at Pesda Press have worked together to produce a publication of the highest quality that meets the aspirations of the authors.

For the 2nd edition a special thanks to Mark Rainsley for the Grassholm chapter and numerous photographs, Eurion Brown for his photographs, and to Mike Mayberry for his piece about The Smalls.

## Photographs

All photos by Jim Krawiecki and Andy Biggs except where acknowledged in the captions.

# How to Use the Guide

To use the guide all that you will need are up-to-date tide timetables of the relevant area, the appropriate Ordnance Survey map and the knowledge to use these. There is also a Trip Planning Route Card at the end of the book that can be used to help plan your chosen trip. There is a full explanation of how to use this alongside the route card. Each of the fifty trip chapters is set out into six sections:

**Tidal & Route Information** - This is designed as a quick reference for all the 'must know' information on which to plan the trip yourself.

**Introduction** - This is designed to give the reader a brief overview of what to expect from the trip and to whet the appetite.

**Description** - This provides further detail on the trip including coastline information, launching / landing information, about the wildlife and environment, historical information and the views to expect.

**Tide & Weather** - Giving further tidal information and how best to plan the trip, taking the tides, weather and local knowledge into consideration.

**Map of Route** - An outline of the route's start / finish points, landing places, points of interest and tidal information.

**Additional Information** - Further information that will help complete the trip, or is of interest if in the area.

## Using the Tidal & Route Information

Each route begins with an overview of pertinent details beginning with the following information; **Trip name; Trip number; Grade of difficulty** - (Colour scheme indicated)



**Grade A** - Trips from 6 – 20 kilometres in distance. Relatively easy landings with escape routes available. Offering relative shelter from extreme conditions and little affected by ocean swell. Some tidal movement may be found, but easy to predict with no tidal races or overfalls.



**Grade B** - Trips from 10 – 30 kilometres in distance. Some awkward landings and sections of coastline with no escape routes should be expected. Tidal movement, tidal races, overfalls, crossings, ocean swell and surf may be found on these trips. They will also be exposed to the weather and associated conditions.





**Grade C** - These trips will have difficult landings and will have no escape routes for the majority of the trip. Fast tidal movement, tidal races, overfalls, extended crossings, ocean swell and surf will be found on all these trips. They will be very exposed to the weather and conditions, therefore requiring detailed planning. With this considered they will all require good conditions for the trip to be viable.

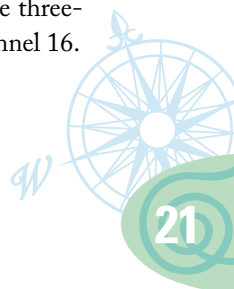
- Distance** - Total distance for the trip.
- OS Sheet** - Number of Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Landranger map required.
- Tidal Port** - The port for which tide timetables will be required to work out the tidal streams.
- Start** - Map symbol, name, six-figure grid reference and postcode of starting point.
- Finish** - Map symbol, name, six-figure grid reference and postcode of finishing point.
- HW/LW** - The tidal time difference from the tidal port of high water and low water for the local port nearest to the trip.
- Tidal times** - Position of tidal stream movement; followed by the direction to which the tidal stream flows and the time it starts flowing in relation to the tidal port high water.
- Tidal rates** - The areas in which the tidal streams are fastest and the speed in knots of the average spring rate.
- Coastguard** - Name of relevant Coastguard Station. Telephone number and the time the three-hourly weather forecast starts being announced on the VHF radio on Channel 16.

Below is an example:













## St Tudwal's Islands

**No. 21 | Grade A | 10km | OS Sheet 123 | Tidal Port Liverpool**

<b>Start</b>	 Abersoch Beach SH314277 – LL53 7EF
<b>Finish</b>	 Abersoch Beach SH314277 – LL53 7EF
<b>HW/LW</b>	are around 3 hours 20 minutes before Liverpool.
<b>Tidal times</b>	The south-going stream starts around 3 hours before HW Liverpool. The north-going stream starts around 3 hours after HW Liverpool.
<b>Tidal rates</b>	Tidal streams are generally weak, less than 2 knots maximum at springs.
<b>Coastguard</b>	Holyhead, Tel. 01407-762-051, VHF weather 0150 UT repeated every 3 hours



### Map Symbols Used

	- Start		- Castle
	- Finish		- Building or Built-up Area
	- Described Route		- Possible Rough Water
	- Landing Place		- Tidal Stream Direction
	- Campsite		- Time in relation to High Water of Tidal Port
	- Lighthouse		- Average Spring Rate
	- Beacon		

# About the Authors

## Jim Krawiecki

Jim's involvement in the outdoors and in particular the Welsh coastline started on family holidays spent at the unique Polish ex-servicemen's home near Pwllheli. Beachcombing, investigating the sea life in rock pools and walks along the dramatic headlands of the Lleyn developed an interest in the outdoors. An introduction to canoes and kayaks at school led Jim to join a local canoe club in the mid 1990s, predominately a white-water club, as members suggested that sea kayaking was both dangerous and boring! Undeterred, and finding better-informed company through North West Sea Kayakers, a passion for the sea was rekindled and encouraged. In return Jim is now a prominent member of that group and regularly organizes meets and sea trips.

Sea kayaking in Scotland, Brittany, the Greek Isles, Norway, Iceland and Greenland as well as numerous excursions to Wales have prompted him to share his enthusiasm for sea touring by putting pen to paper and hopefully opening up opportunities for others to enjoy the delights of North Wales.

Jim is also a passionate mountaineer, which in turn led to his current employment at the offices of the British Mountaineering Council.



## Andy Biggs

Andy has always had a strong affinity with the sea. Those who have paddled with him comment on, and benefit from, his understanding and analysis of tidal movements and anomalies, often ensuring the most efficient and enjoyable trips with the tide and wind being allies rather than obstacles.

Fascinated by the journeying nature of sea kayaking, Andy has completed many memorable trips around the UK, including trips in Ireland, Scotland and extensively in Wales. He has circumnavigated the islands of Skye and Mull and recently paddled multi-day trips in Alaska and New Zealand.

Andy loves remote places and has completed many challenging trips, either as a solo traveller or with his long-suffering college friend, Simon. These adventures have included trekking in the Himalayas, alpine climbing, cycling across Iceland and also crossing Eastern Europe soon after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc.

Andy has been a free-lance photographer and has in the past enjoyed teaching students. Recently he has returned to his previous passion of sailing.



# Anglesey/Ynys Môn

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## An Introduction

Anglesey / Ynys Môn is the largest of the Welsh islands and was all but isolated from the Welsh mainland by the turbulent waters of the Menai Strait. The isolation came to an end when the engineer Thomas Telford built what was the largest suspension bridge of its time in 1826. Robert Stephenson's Britannia railway bridge followed and in more recent times was adapted to carry the island's main A55 road and rail link.

Evidence of human habitation on Anglesey has been found dating as far back as the Stone Age. Standing stones and hut circles such as those at Porth Dafarch date back to the Bronze Age. During the Roman occupation of Wales, Anglesey remained a stronghold for the Celts and Druids. Following a prolonged and bloody battle along the shores of the northern Menai Strait, the Celts were defeated and Druids' sacred groves destroyed as the Romans marched on to occupy Anglesey. In medieval times the Celtic Christian Church flourished; this is when the monasteries of St Gybi at Holyhead/Caergybi and St Seiriol at Puffin Island/Ynys Seiriol were established. Many other churches were built during this era such as the Church of St Dwynwen on Llanddwyn Island and the Church of St Eilian at Llaneilian, close to Point Lynas.

The 200km of coastline is immensely varied, most of which can be accessed on foot by means of the Anglesey Coast Path. The tidal races and towering cliffs of Holy Island provide committing paddling of an extreme nature. The north coast of Anglesey has a challenging combination of steep cliffs, strong tidal streams, offshore islands and intriguing bays. Tidal streams on the east and south-west coasts are weaker, making the paddling there much more suited to short easy day trips and introductory sessions. Trips to Puffin Island and Ynys Dulas are popular for wildlife enthusiasts, whereas Llanddwyn Island and Porth Cyfan provide trips that offer more in the way of historical interest. Anglesey's island status means that during periods of inclement weather there is usually enough sheltered coastline for a day's paddling in the lee of the land. These attributes have led to Anglesey becoming extremely popular for sea kayakers the world over. There are a number of excellent guiding outfits offering instruction and courses. There is also a well-stocked paddling shop called Summit to Sea in Holyhead.

The following chapters describe the paddling around the Anglesey coastline and include information on the major crossings to Ireland and the Isle of Man. Another major undertaking is the circumnavigation of Anglesey. Guided trips are often completed in 3-5 days but circumnavigations have been completed in less than 24 hours. When this book was first published, the record (what then seemed an amazing time of 11 hours 30 minutes and 15 seconds) was held by local paddler John Willacy. The current time is well under 10 hours! Clockwise is generally the direction of choice. This is because the south-west going ebb stream in the Menai Strait is more powerful than the north-east flood. On the north and west coasts the north-east going flood is stronger than the ebb.

## Background Reading

Cruising Anglesey and Adjoining Waters, Ralph Morris, Imray, 2021, ISBN 9781786791825





*The above charts are intended to give a general overview. Consult the relevant chapters and other sources for more precise information.*





# Puffin Island

**No. 4 | Grade B | 22km | OS Sheet 114 & 115 | Tidal Port Liverpool**

**Start**  Moelfre Beach SH 512 863 / LL72 8HP

**Finish**  Trwyn y Penrhyn SH 627 795 / LL58 8RW

**HW / LW** are around 30 minutes before Liverpool.

**Tidal times** The SE going stream turns S through Puffin Sound, and starts around 5 hours 30 minutes after HW Liverpool.  
The north-going stream runs through Puffin Sound then runs NW, and starts around 30 minutes before HW Liverpool.

**Tidal rates** Tide streams are strongest in Puffin Sound and reach 4 knots during spring tides.

**Coastguard** Holyhead, Tel. 01407 762051, VHF Weather 0150 UT repeated every 3 hours

## Introduction

Most of this trip can be seen from the beach at Moelfre. Blocky limestone cliffs dominate the scenery along the east coast of Anglesey and provide both shelter and good potential for exploring. The main focus for this section is Puffin Island / Ynys Seiriol. Its ease of access and plentiful wildlife has made this island a popular destination for kayaking trips for many years.





Curious grey seal | Mark Rainsley

## 4

## Puffin Island

### Description

Moelfre is a charming, sleepy town on the east coast of Anglesey, just off the A5025, 4km north of Benllech. There is a car park by the beach for which there is a charge during the summer months. The sea front is overlooked by the Kinmel Arms and there is also a kiosk which sells hot drinks and snacks. The car park by the sea front is small and quickly fills up. It is easy enough to unload kayaks and kit beside the beach and park in a larger (free) car park, clearly signposted and less than a 5 minute walk up the hill. Paddling south from the beach is mostly beneath limestone cliffs amongst which small rock ledges are exposed at low water. Just over a kilometre south of Moelfre is a small sheltered beach called Traeth Bychan. There is a car park with public toilets, and a campsite nearby with direct access to the sea. Either Traeth Bychan or the Nant Bychan Farm campsite can be used as an alternative start or finish.

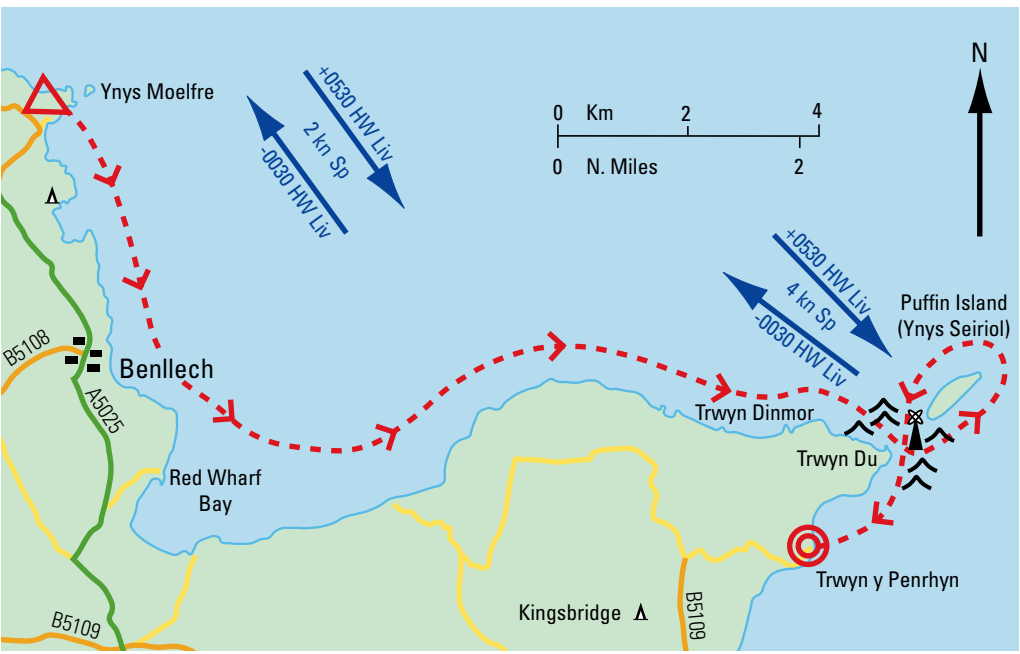
As you continue along the coast, the limestone cliffs become more dominant, rising to almost 30m, but any illusions of wilderness are short-lived along this coast. Before long the popular holiday resort of Benllech will be within reach and during the school holidays Benllech fizzles to the relentless sound of motorboats and jet skis. The cafés beside the beach can provide a short, sheltered break on a cold day and there are also local shops in case you are in need of supplies. Trwyn Dwlban is little more than 1km along the coast and divides Benllech Sand from the huge expanse of Red Wharf Bay. Before crossing the 4km of the bay you may wish to stop for replenishment at the Ship Inn beside the moorings at the village of Red Wharf Bay. The pub grub and hot chocolate here are excellent. The wooded slopes of Mynydd Llwydiarth dominate the east

side of the bay. The slopes break to limestone cliffs with small coves and secluded pebbly beaches. The coastline continues like this for another 7km until Trwyn Dinmor is passed and the beach at Penmon can be seen.

The Trwyn Du Lighthouse was completed in 1838 and marks the narrow channel between Trwyn Du and Puffin Island. The clang of the fog signal bell along with the boldly written words, “No Passage Landward”, on the side of the tower will send a shiver through anyone approaching the Puffin Straits for the first time. Paddling here in the gloom of a misty morning can be a most haunting experience.

The steep shingle beach to the west of the lighthouse is a convenient place to land but can be tricky close to high water or in rough conditions. If you paddle round to the eastern side of Trwyn Du there is a more sheltered landing close to the old lifeboat station. A path, initially hidden amongst wild rose bushes, leads from the beach past some cottages to a small café with a sheltered garden on the headland.

Puffin Island has steep rocky shores and rugged slopes with coarse vegetation and, when viewed from the north-western side, has a distinctive whale-back shape. The Vikings called the island Priestholm. The Welsh name, ‘Ynys Seiriol’, refers to St Seiriol who established a monastery here during the 6th Century. There are many and varied stories about Seiriol walking to meet his good friend St Gybi who lived at Caergybi / Holyhead. The two friends often used to meet in the middle of Anglesey. Seiriol would walk west in the morning, and then return home walking east in the afternoon. With the sun on his back for most of his travels his face never tanned and he became known as the pale saint. St Gybi walked east in the mornings and west in the afternoons and always had the sun in his face and became known as the dark saint.



The only buildings visible from the sea are the remains of an old telegraphy station at the north-east end of the island. With little disturbance from man, life on the island was perfect for seabirds, especially puffins. However, in the late 1800's a plague of rats decimated the population of breeding birds and puffins were no longer to be seen in the area. This remained the case for nearly two centuries until the late 1990's when the Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) undertook a programme to rid the island of rats. Puffins are now beginning to make a return and can be seen in small numbers around the island once more. The seal colony on the north end of the island provides by far the most special reason to come here. Over years of close contact with man, possibly through the local boat trips from Beaumaris, the seals have become less timid than in other places. If you have the patience to sit still in your boat for a while you may be surprised how close these curious creatures will come.

To the south of Puffin Island is the entrance to the Menai Strait. The nearest convenient landing with public road access is along the Anglesey shore, where there is a substantial lay-by on the road to Penmon Priory. The lay-by is at Trwyn y Penrhyn, which is a low headland with boulders on the beach and can be seen across the bay beyond the last of the quarried limestone cliffs.

## Tide & Weather

The cliffs along the east coast give good shelter from the prevailing south-westerlies but in these conditions Red Wharf Bay creates a wind tunnel effect. You may be lulled into a false sense of security in sheltered conditions beneath the cliffs and paddlers have been caught out by unexpected offshore winds whilst crossing the bay.

The tidal streams between Moelfre and Red Wharf Bay are weak and insignificant. The effect of tidal streams is felt most strongly in the vicinity of Puffin Sound where there can be overfalls and confused seas when wind opposes tide. The north-western side of Puffin Island is exposed to more wind and swell than any other part of this section and can be rougher than you might expect.

## Additional Information

There is camping at Nant Bychan Farm with direct access to the sea 1km south of Moelfre, Tel. 01248 410269. There is the added advantage of a fish and chip shop, bakery and the Kinnel Arms close by in the town. There is an extensive but charming campsite called Kingsbridge Caravan and Camping Park, Tel. 01248 490636, just off the B5109, north from Beaumaris. In good weather the Ship Inn at Red Wharf Bay is a pleasant place to stop for a refreshing beer. In bad weather the hot chocolate and warming fire are hard to resist. The beach beside the lighthouse at Trwyn Penmon can be used for access to the water; the charge for using the toll road to the headland and car park is not extravagant but paddlers might also be asked for launching fees here.

## Variations

A trip round Puffin Island that starts and finishes at Trwyn y Penrhyn is a popular choice because, at around 9km, it is relatively short and affords some shelter from westerly winds.



# The Skerries

**No. 12 | Grade C | 16km | OS Sheet 114 | Tidal Port Liverpool**

**Start**  Cemlyn Bay SH 335 931 / LL67 0EA

**Finish**  Cemlyn Bay SH 335 931 / LL67 0EA

**HW / LW** are around 45 minutes before Liverpool.

**Tidal times** The SW going stream (ebb) starts around 45 minutes before HW Liverpool.  
The NE going stream (flood) starts around 5 hours 15 minutes after HW Liverpool.

**Tidal rates** The spring rates can reach 6 knots around the Skerries and in the vicinity of Carmel Head.

**Coastguard** Holyhead, Tel. 01407 762051, VHF 0150 UT repeated every 3 hours

## Introduction

The Skerries / Ynysodd y Moelrhoniaid lie no more than 3km from Carmel Head and 13km north of Holyhead. There can be no doubt that the journey to the Skerries and back from Cemlyn Bay is a serious undertaking. This trip ensures a good test of navigation skills. On both the outward and return journey you will be ferry gliding across the strong tidal streams and overfalls of the exposed north-west corner of Anglesey. The crossing and arrival at the Skerries affords wonderful



📷 Holyhead viewed from The Skerries | Mark Rainsley

views of the Anglesey coast from Wylfa Head to the east, through to Carmel Head, and ‘The Stacks’ to the south. The name of the Skerries in Welsh is ‘Ynysoedd y Moelrhoniaid’, which translates as the islands of the bald-headed grey seals. Your arrival will be carefully observed from the rocks above, and almost certainly from within the waters below by the many Atlantic grey seals for which the Skerries are home. There is also a bustling colony of Arctic terns on the islands, which makes this place incredibly noisy during the spring and summer months.

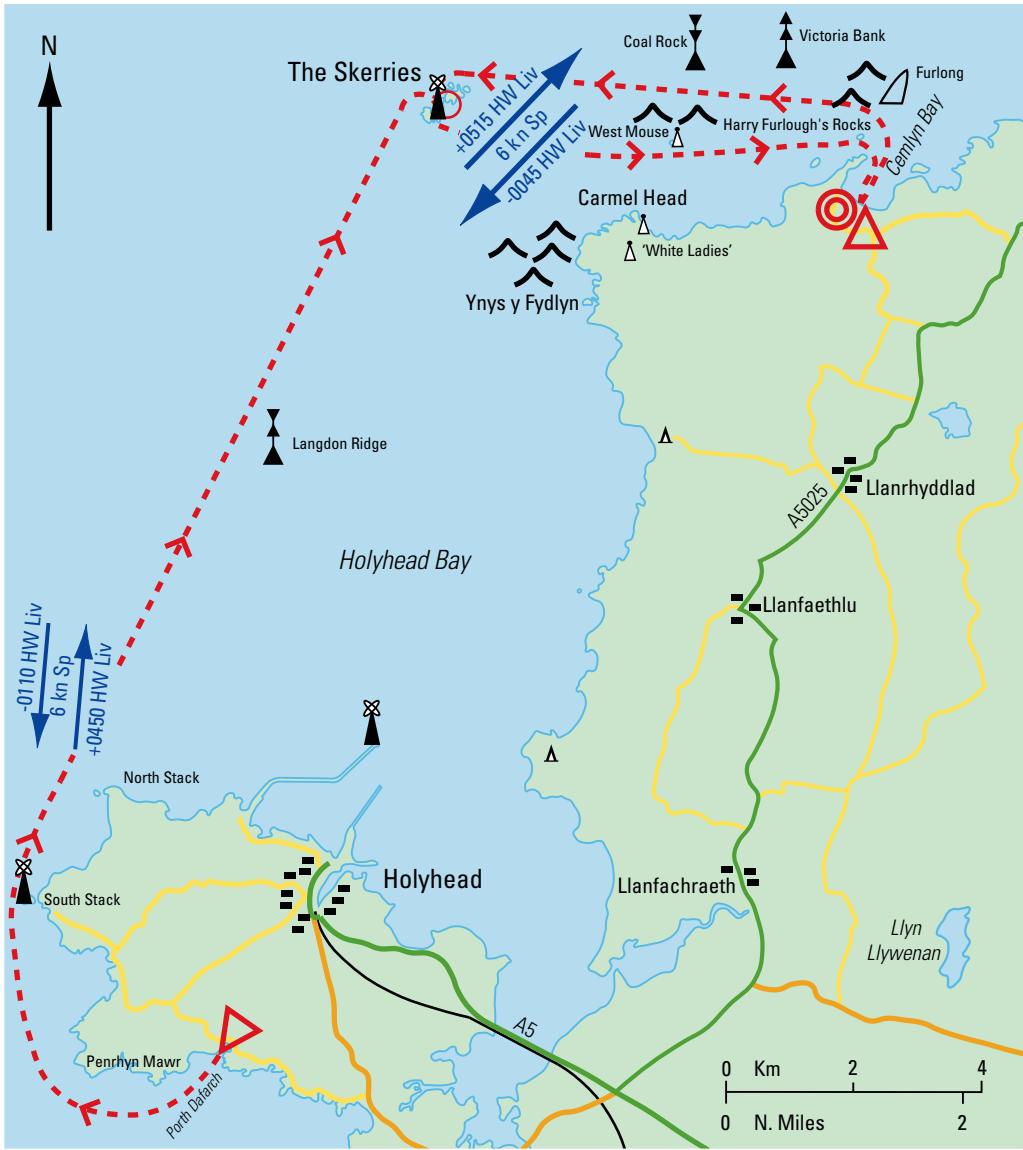
## Description

Cemlyn is signposted from Tregele and Caerdegog Uchaf on the A5025 between Valley and Amlwch. There is a car park at each end of the bay, but the one at the east is closer to the water. Cemlyn has a steep shingle beach, almost 1km long, between low rocky headlands.

You should begin your journey in the last 2 hours of the ebb so that you arrive at the Skerries shortly before the stream dies away. You will feel the effect of the south-west going ebb stream as soon as you pass Trwyn Cemlyn at the western entrance to the bay. There will almost certainly be some rough water as you pass to the west of the green buoy that marks the seaward extremity of Harry Furlough’s Rocks. From here onwards you should get used to paddling with the bow of your kayak pointing well to the right of your destination. You should pass close to the south of the north cardinal buoy at Victoria Bank and around 1km to the north of West Mouse. West Mouse is a small rocky islet and has a conspicuous white beacon on the top. You will have completed half of the crossing when the 2 beacons or ‘White Ladies’ on the hill to the east of Carmel Head line up with the beacon on West Mouse. As you get closer to the Skerries the direction of the tidal stream becomes more south-westerly. If you keep an eye to the south towards Holyhead you will

see South Stack appear beyond North Stack. At this point there will be less than a third of the crossing to go and you should keep the northernmost tip of the Skerries to your west. Once you get round the north of the islands you will find the west shores are more sheltered from the tidal stream. With relief you can paddle into a lagoon and land on the pebbly isthmus beach that links the largest island with the smaller Ynys Arw (rough island).

There has been a light on the Skerries since 1717, which at that time was probably no more than a well-fuelled open fire in a brazier. Over the years the light was improved and by 1804 had taken a more traditional shape of a masonry tower with an oil-burning lamp. Trinity House took over the responsibility of maintaining the light in 1841 and further improvements were made. The light was converted to run on electricity in 1927 and automated in 1987. Since automation





the only permanent inhabitants of the islands are hundreds of feral rabbits and the grey seals. The only minor interruption occurs when lighthouse maintenance crews visit the islands about once a month. During the spring, common and Arctic terns come to nest on the Skerries and the old lighthouse keepers' quarters are used by the enthusiastic volunteers who monitor the tern colony until the birds leave in late summer.

Timing the return is a matter of choice. Once the flood stream has begun, the sooner you leave the smoother the passage will be. In the early stages of the flood it is possible to paddle west from the lagoon and round the south-western shores before beginning the return crossing via West Mouse. Although there is no place to land, the eddy to the east of West Mouse can provide a welcome respite from the increasingly fast-moving tidal waters. The mainland shores to the west of Cemlyn are of great interest. There are wave-cut platforms with gullies and shallow kelp-infested lagoons that can provide some entertaining rockhopping within the last 2km of the journey back.

## Tide & Weather

The Skerries are exposed to winds from any direction and lie in the midst of some of the most powerful tidal streams in the UK. There are numerous overfalls around the islands and, as both ebb and flood streams are used for this trip, wind is likely to oppose tide at some point.

## Additional Information

Church Bay Cottages Camping and Touring site, Tel. 01407 730496, has direct access to the sea via a sheltered slipway to Porth Tywyn-mawr, but can be a little awkward close to low water.

Ty Newydd campsite at Church Bay, Tel. 01407 730060, is fairly basic and quiet and is a short walk from the beach. There is a charming seafood restaurant called The Lobster Pot just across the road and the Church Bay Inn is 1km up the road.

## Variations

Another popular route to the Skerries is from Porth Dafarch on the south shore of Holy Island. This route is nearly 20km in each direction, and is a far more exciting and committing prospect. The major headlands at Penrhyn Mawr, South Stack and North Stack must be passed before crossing over 12km of open sea. After you pass South Stack your route should be around 1km offshore west of North Stack. This is a good time to call Holyhead Port Control for advice regarding traffic in and out of the harbour. It is vitally important that they know your plans when you are between North Stack and Langdon Ridge.

As you get closer to the Skerries the north-going flood stream becomes more north-westerly and you should pass the west cardinal mark at Langdon Ridge (SH 242 901) at least 500m to its west and keeping the Skerries well to the right of your bow. South Stack should always be visible, well out from behind North Stack.

As you approach the lagoon from the west on the last of the flood, the isthmus beach will almost certainly be submerged but there is a small rocky landing beneath the lighthouse. You may wish to paddle back to 'The Stacks', aiming to pass to the east of the Langdon Ridge cardinal mark as the south-west going ebb stream will tend to push you offshore.



## An Introduction

Pembrokeshire has one of the country's most beautiful coastlines. Dramatic cliffs are interspersed with small secluded sandy beaches. At many locations along the coast you can see wonderful rock formations showing different layers and folds, which were formed over 300 million years ago. There are offshore islands and fast-moving tidal streams. All this amounts to a sea kayaker's paradise. Although it is a national park, formed in 1952 and a popular holiday destination, it is still possible to find some quiet spots. Many of these are accessed via a network of narrow lanes that link the picturesque coastal villages, and your navigation skills may be tested just to find the point of departure. The economic centre for the area is Haverfordwest, with its Georgian architecture and where you will find the county offices, as well as a good range of shops and other services.

There are plenty of options for accommodation, as well as other activities when you or the family want a break from kayaking. For the enthusiastic rock climber there is plenty of scope and it is possible to combine both activities. However there are still military firing ranges along the coast and these need to be taken into consideration when planning a trip.

Although this area is covered by the Milford Haven coastguard, along the north coast you can receive VHF reception from the Holyhead coastguard. The shipping weather forecast areas for Pembroke are Lundy and Irish Sea. Be aware that mobile phone network coverage can be limited in the small harbours and bays that make up the coastline; this can also affect VHF reception.

The Pembrokeshire Coastal Path was opened in 1970 and is designated as a National Trail, so the public may have access along its route. There have been several guides written about the route and these can also provide valuable information for the sea kayaker. The development of the path can be of assistance to the sea paddler as a good range of accommodation and other amenities have built up along its length. One of these is the Pembrokeshire coastal bus service. The service is aimed at walkers who want to complete one stage of the walk and then use public transport to return to their starting point. However it is equally useful to the sea kayaker, as it removes the need to run a shuttle or for a group who want to complete a multi-day trip. There are three buses a day during the summer and a reduced service operates during the winter.

## Background Reading

Pembrokeshire Coast Path - National Trail Guides, Brian John, Aurum Press, 2017, ISBN 9781781315729

The Pembrokeshire Coastal Path, Dennis Kelsall, Cicerone Press, 2016, ISBN 9781852848156  
Exploring the Pembrokeshire Coast, Phil Carradice, Gomer, 2002, ISBN 9781843231257

## Other Useful Contacts

[www.visitpembrokeshire.com](http://www.visitpembrokeshire.com) – [www.pembrokeshirecoast.org](http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org)

Tel. 01437 764551 for information about the Pembrokeshire coastal bus service.





*The above charts are intended to give a general overview. Consult the relevant chapters and other sources for more precise information.*




# Cemaes Head



**No. 28 | Grade B | 19km | OS Sheet 145 | Tidal Port Milford Haven**

**Start**  Gwbert SN 163 486 / SA43 1PN

**Finish**  Parrog, Newport SN 051 396 / SA42 0RW

**HW / LW** at Gwbert is 1 hour and 30 minutes after HW Milford Haven.

**Tidal times** The tide starts to flow NE approximately 2 hours before HW Milford Haven and then SW 4 hours after Milford Haven.

**Tidal rates** The tidal flow is low and normally does not exceed 1 knot.

**Coastguard** Milford Haven, Tel. 01646 690909, VHF 0150 UT repeated every 3 hours

## Introduction

This is a committing trip as there are few places to escape because of steep cliffs. This has in turn kept communities and hence the main road well away from the coastline. The cliffs rise to over 170m and are being slowly eroded by the ever-present movement of the sea. Passing 'The Witches Cauldron' you'll see more evidence of this erosion. Your starting point, the Afon Teifi, marks the boundary between Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire; it is also the starting place for the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path. The town of Cardigan has been a port since the Middle



📷 The Witch's Cauldron shower facilities | Mark Rainsley

Ages, and during the 1800s it grew considerably and became one of the country's largest ports for transatlantic emigration. However with the arrival of the railway and silting of the river it declined as a commercial port, finally closing during WW2. The town's history is well documented and effectively displayed at the Cardigan History Centre, which is situated on the south side of the river by the town bridge.

## Promontory forts

All along this section of coast you will find evidence, in the form of fortified camps, of previous Iron Age communities that lived here over 2,000 years ago. Built on prominent headlands, these forts gave protection to their inhabitants from tribal feuding. Some are quite small and would have been a place for a last stand, while others are quite large, where communities could have lived inside their protective walls, dykes and embankments. Good examples can be found at Martin's Haven, Westdale Bay, near Dale and on St David's Head.

Castell Henllys is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and one of many prehistoric promontory forts in the National Park dating to around 600 BC. The BBC 1 series 'Surviving the Iron Age' was filmed exclusively at and around Castell Henllys Iron Age fort in Pembrokeshire. It was home to the volunteers for seven weeks as they tried to survive conditions similar to those of over 2000 years ago. It is situated off the A487, 6km east of Newport. <http://www.castellhenllys.com/>, Tel. 01239 891319.

## Description

Poppit Sands is one of the most popular beaches in the area. There is plenty of space for parking, a café, toilets and a summer RNLI station. The area here is important for wildlife and there are projects in place to turn some of the land back to reed-bed. Launching from here does require a long carry; it may therefore be better to launch from the opposite side of the Afon Teifi at (SN 163 486) and park on the side of the road. There is a slipway here and launching 3 hours after HW Milford Haven will see you taken along the river and out into the main stream as it starts to head SW. If you are prepared to walk with your boat for the first 200m until you reach the Teifi Boat Club slipway you can launch at all states of the tide as there is always a small amount of water here. It is also possible to launch further upstream at the north end of St Dogmaels, where there is a slipway that gives easy access at all states of the tide (SN 164 468). However there is limited nearby parking. There are no toilets at either of these slipways.

Cemaes Head stands out in front of you, and makes a clear statement for the start of the Pembrokeshire coastline. There are several caves to explore near the headland. Rounding this and you'll see right down to Dinas Head which is over 15km away, and as you round Pen yr Afr look up; the cliffs above you represent the highest point on the coastal path. The cliffs are made up of alternative layers of sandstone and mudstone, which had been compressed over 400 million years ago as two continents collided and folded into the layers that are visible today. This is a spectacular section of coastline.

In an emergency you could land at Pwlllygranant but it is not until Ceibwr Bay could you safely land. The beach is stony here and the surrounding rock formations are wonderful. Fulmars can be





seen nesting on these cliffs and grey seals can be found in the area. Take a rest here because the next time you'll be able to easily get out of your boat will be at Newport and the end of the trip.

Ceibwr Bay is a sheltered spot and therefore makes a good place to launch from. However there is only parking for four cars, so arrive early. A round trip starting from here and heading north past Cardigan Island to Mwnt and back would make a wonderful alternative to the route described here.

Soon after leaving Ceibwr you'll be greeted with the sight of an arch and massive collapsed blowhole called Traeth Bach, "The Witches Cauldron". This was caused by the erosion and collapse of a cave, formed where the sea has been able to wear away the soft rock under the surface. Next to here is Castell Trerufydd, an Iron Age fort. From here the cliffs will remain high for the next 7km and when you finally turn the corner and pass the Carregedrywy rocks, then Newport Sands, your destination will come into view. You have a choice of two places to land, either at the north end of the sands, where there is a large car park and toilets near the golf club or continue parallel to the beach to where the Afon Nyfer enters the sea. You can then use this to paddle up to Parrog, where there is a car park, café, toilets and campsite. By now you will be pleased to get out of the boat and stretch your legs. The trip will have exposed you to some of the geological history of Pembrokeshire and illustrate just how this is still being shaped.

## Tide and weather

As there is little actual flow along the coast it is possible to explore this area at most times. However due to the exposed nature and length of this trip it is advised to ensure you have a settled weather forecast before leaving.

## Additional information

The campsite at Parrog, Newport (Morawelon Camping and Caravanning, Tel. 01239 820565) is next to the water and could be used for those wanting to link this and trip No. 29 together.

For those wanting accurate information about local offshore weather, you should look at the Met. Office website. The Marine Automatic Weather Station ID: 62301 Aberporth is 16NM north of Cardigan Island. Position: Latitude 52° 24' N, Longitude 4° 42' W.

If the weather forecast is not good or you want to combine some river paddling into your trip to the area, then the River Teifi flows into the sea at Cardigan and is one of the longest rivers to be found in Wales. It is ideal for either open paddling or playboating but is also one of the finest locations for salmon fishing, so please respect the access agreement. With some careful planning it is possible to travel upstream as far as Cilgerran and for those with an open canoe the gorge here and estuary would make an ideal area to explore. It is possible to launch from the car park near Cilgerran Castle and use the downstream flow to take you to the car park and slipway on the north side of the river, between the two bridges (SN 181 459) near the church on the edge of Cardigan where you can egress. While you are in the area take time to visit the Teifi Marshes Nature Reserve, where there are walks and opportunities to explore the nature found on the banks of the Afon Teifi. You can also hire open boats to explore the river from Heritage Canoes, Tel. 01239 613961 if you want a change.



# Dinas Head



**No. 29 | Grade B | 12km | OS Sheet 145 & 157 | Tidal Port Milford Haven**

<b>Start</b>	▲ Parrog, Newport SN 163 486 / SA43 1PN
<b>Finish</b>	● Fishguard / Abergwaun, Lower Town Quay SM 962 371 / SA65 9NB
<b>HW / LW</b>	at Newport is approximately 1 hour 15 minutes after Milford Haven.
<b>Tidal times</b>	The tide starts to flow E approximately 2 hours before HW Milford Haven and then W 4 hours after Milford Haven.
<b>Tidal rates</b>	A tide race may form off the NE corner of Dinas Head as the tide flows west out of Newport Bay.
<b>Coastguard</b>	Milford Haven, Tel. 01646 690909, VHF 0150 UT repeated every 3 hours

Dinas Head

## Introduction

With cliffs along the whole route, small shingle beaches, plenty of opportunities for rockhopping, natural arches and a dramatic headland, this stretch of coastline is an excellent location for an interesting day trip. Departing from either Newport or Fishguard, it can be split into two sections and provides shorter return trips for those who do not want to venture round Dinas Head. During





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📷 *Front Cover – Skerries Lighthouse (Route 12) – Photo Mark Rainsley*

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