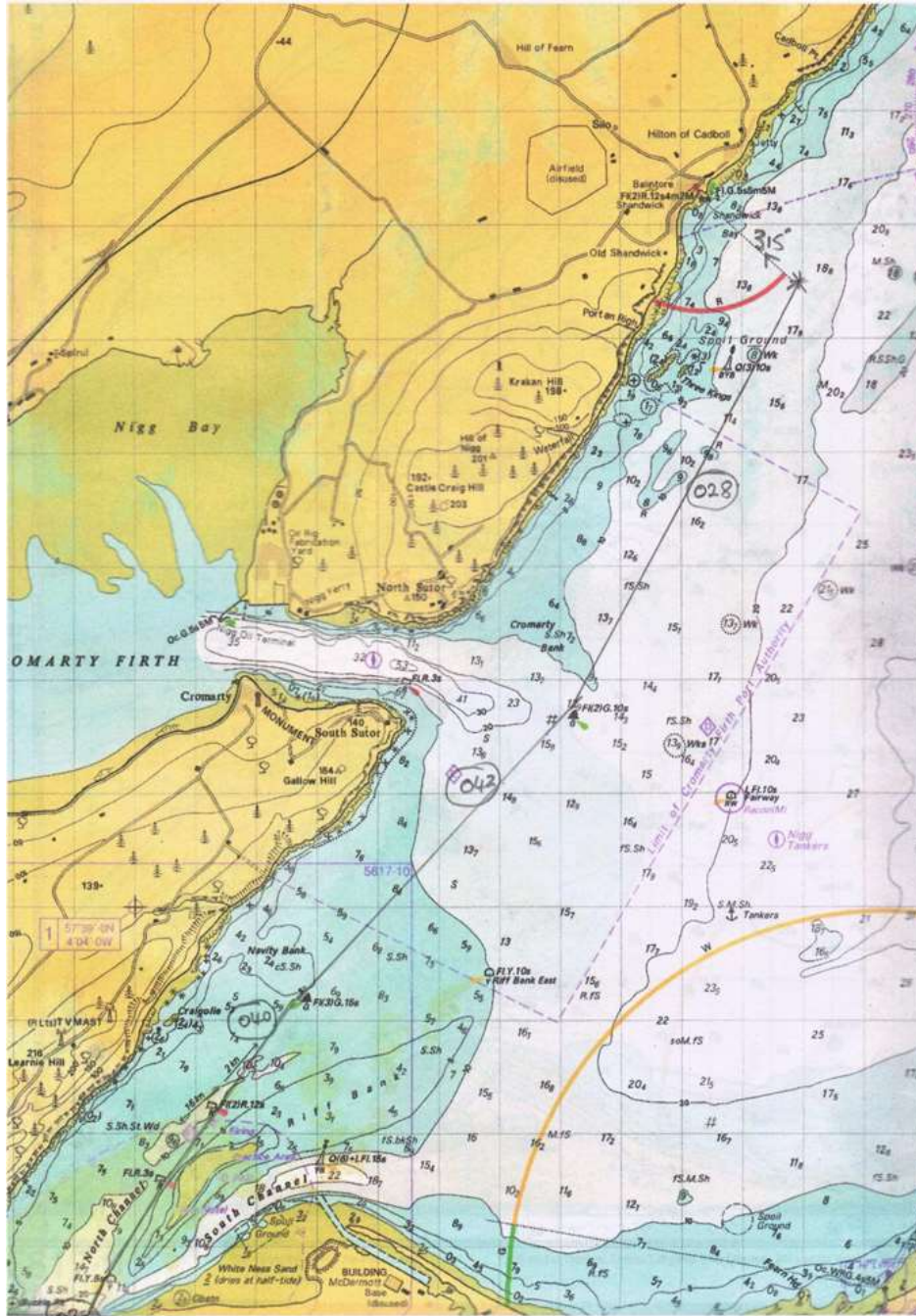


# Wisp to Balintore August 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>

Tides (FORTROSE) LW 11:20, 1.2m. HW 16.07, 4m.

Balintore tides approx. 5 mins difference from Fortrose



1. Leave Avoch harbour at Approx. 09:00 head to CRAIGMEE, **RED** channel buoy.
2. CRAIGMEE via RIFF BANK W. (**YELLOW**) to RIFF BANK NW (**Red** 3 s) bearing 030.
3. RIFF BANK NW to RIFF BANK NORTH (**Red** FL (2). 12s. bearing 030.
4. RIFF BANK NORTH to NAVITY BANK (F (3). **Green** 15s. bearing 040.
5. Look out for and leave RIFF BANK EAST off to Starboard (**Yellow**).
6. NAVITY BANK to CROMARTY BANK (F (2). **Green** 10s. bearing 042.
7. CROMARTY BANK to THREE KINGS (Q (3). **BYB** 10s. bearing 028. Leave THREE KINGS to PORT.
8. Continue on until bearing 315 to **RED** light at Balintore harbour entrance?

(Bearings and Distances are approximate)

Distance 15 Nm. Time for journey @3Knts = 5 hours



On our way

Setting off at 0800, from Avoch, in Wisp, our Leisure 17. With a fair NW wind, Wisp was soon sailing along at 4/ 5 knots off towards the Craigmee buoy. We were on our way!! We soon rounded the point then passed Cromarty. NLV Pole Star, the ship responsible for maintaining marine navigational aids, passed close by as she was entering Cromarty.



Cromarty



Pole Star

We were unable to get in touch with the harbour master at Balintore, so could not obtain information about depth in Balintore harbour. Although there was a website, there was no useful information on the Internet about Balintore harbour.



Balintore in sight



Balintore harbour entrance

On arrival at Balintore we tried calling the number of the harbour master, but to no avail, so we tried calling "any boats in Balintore harbour" on Channel 16. One boat, "Happy Days", replied and based upon our draught of 1M, they were able to suggest that 16:00 might be the earliest we could safely enter Balintore harbour. As it was only 12:45, and low tide, we anchored off the harbour mouth to await a rise in the tide. The boat was tidied and lunch was eaten, whilst we waited.

Soon, a few small boats came out of the harbour noted that they all kept close to the East wall and avoided an area at the harbour mouth. We had performed a very cautious recce earlier, where Dave had spotted what looked like a shallow bank at this spot. These local boats confirmed to us that a sandbank existed at the harbour entrance, and was best avoided.

We watched the level rise, in the harbour, and reckoned we could have a try at entry. Wisp really only draws 0.6M. Time was around 14:00, some 4 hours before HW. Keeping close to the harbour wall and watching the depth sounder, we got to the first ladder on the harbour wall.



Safely in Balintore



Time for a brew

Dave alighted to have a word with a couple of local boaters. They pointed out that there was a spare pontoon for visitors, but to be aware of a sandbank in the middle of the harbour. We slowly, and cautiously, made our across the harbour and happily Wisp was tied up to the pontoon. Tea and biscuits were served, and the boom tent erected.



In Balintore



Prototype boom tent erected

As the weather was fair and sunny, we set off for a walk around the sprawling metropolis of Balintore/Shandwick/Hilton. A very pleasant experience! We walked along to the Mermaid of the North, a large bronze statue of a mermaid which I think looks every bit as impressive as that of Copenhagen, but with a lot less travelling involved. We then set off along the fine sandy beach of Shandwick, where a number of people were enjoying the water. Some with wetsuits, some without. Even if not coming by boat, I think the villages are well worth a visit.



Mermaid of the North



Balintore/Shandwick bay

Having stretched our legs, we returned to Wisp for a tidy up and a bit of relaxation. We had pre booked a table at the Balintore Inn for 19:00 and so at 18:30 we set off for our meal, and a pint! The Balintore Inn turned out to be very well appointed. Dave ordered the Fish Pie and I had the roast Lamb. Both dishes came with generous portions. The meal was well cooked and hot, and the staff attentive. There was a good choice of beer. Full marks! I would certainly recommend it.

After another pint off we went back to Wisp, and turned in at the heady hour of 21:30. Yes it had been a long but very enjoyable day. The plan was to have breakfast, bacon rolls and tea, and vacate Balintore before 09:00. This was accomplished, and we left Balintore around 08:00 with tide to spare.





Leaving Balintore



Navity Bank

The return trip, again in fair weather but with less wind, had us passing Cromarty in good time. The wind then, turning fickle, decided to head us, then die off altogether. We waited, and waited, but finally decided that the 'iron sail' was now necessary to get us moving.

Soon we were approaching Rosemarkie, where we had decided to have lunch and await the tide. We anchored off Rosemarkie beach, where a lot of people were in the water swimming, kayaking, and paddle boarding. So good did it look that I decided to go for a swim!

Off with the togs, on with the trunks and, oh what a refreshing experience! Yes, cold to start with, but beautiful after a few minutes. I couldn't persuade Dave though!!



Lunch over, it was time to set off again. So up anchor, but with no wind, the outboard was again brought into use. We rounded Chanonry point and, like magic, there was a brisk breeze. Sails set we tacked down towards Avoch, again passing Pole Star on the way.

Around Munloch buoy and, with the wind increasing, we reduced the genoa and headed for Avoch. A brilliant finish to a very enjoyable trip. We doused the sails and motored into Avoch, some 7 hrs after leaving Balintore. All tidied, and moorings checked, we left Wisp and headed off home. Well satisfied, happy, and thankful that our first overnight trip had been such a success. Roll on the next trip!



Safely home