Portavogie Harbour

7 The busy harbour was once known as St Andrew’s Bay, but when it was newly completed in 1810 it was deepened and improved in 1839, again in 1889, when Princess Anne opened it. The harbour size doubled, the depth was increased and a new entrance constructed. A lighthouse was also built.

8 Portavogie has a fine sandy beach, known as the South Shore. Approach from the village, behind the Queens Restaurant, or from along Cloughey Road. A sign on a bridge by Special Interest marks both entrances. In 1877, a lighthouse and foghorn were installed. The foghorn was once blown by hand. The foghorn was once blown by hand.

9 Portavogie has a second lovely beach, known as the South Shore. Approach from the village, behind the Queens Restaurant. This beach is one of the men commemorated on New Harbour Road. A fine public walkway runs along the seafront.

Skippers’ Row

10 Skippers Row is the right of the harbour; you’ll see the George Best mural. The famous footballer lived in Portavogie in the years before his death, and locals remember him well. The wall overlooks the seafront, the harbour entrance, the site of the village’s maritime heritage, as it is the mainstay of the local primary school.

11 The old Coastguard Station is on the right. Portavogie has a fine sandy beach, known as the South Shore. Approach from the village, behind the Queens Restaurant, or from along Cloughey Road. A sign on a bridge by Special Interest marks both entrances. Harbour size doubled, the depth increased and a new entrance constructed. A lighthouse was also built. The harbour size doubled, the depth increased and a new entrance constructed. A lighthouse was also built.

South Shore, Green Isle & Beachside

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The harbour is an important commercial hub of the fishing industry, and the village’s name is well-known as the home of the famous Portavogie prawn. The village became an important maritime centre because of its location and the rich supply of superb seafood in local waters. Stabilised was Portavogie’s original settlement, and marks the start of this heritage trail. Scottish settlers arrived in the area in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. They favoured Portavogie for its sheltered shore where they could beach their boats. As well as the influential Harrisons and Montgomerys, settling families included the family named Calley Palmer. Or and Daniel, to mention just a few. The 17th-century map shows Harrisons’s estate in 1625 show the houses or harbours, and simply features eight dots – this still has strong links to Ulster Scots heritage and language.

Fishing heritage
In the early 1800s, Portavogie had a large fishing flotilla. Three boats followed the fish as far as Kilmallock in the south of Ireland, and to the west coast of Scotland and England. Portavogie keeps its strong Ulster Scots identity and fishing is still an art of its core. Shellfish is the main catch of local people, particularly prawns and lobsters. The fish currently stands at around 80 boats. Many of these boats are small, instead of potting boats, targeting crabs and lobster around the coast. Others provide work for up to five fishermen each. Strong family connections mean that Portavogie means that many crews have ties that go back for generations. It’s not unusual to see groups of fishermen stretching out their nets along the seafront and in the car park for a mending session.

From port to plate...
Once the catch is landed at the harbour, it’s either processed locally by one of several Portavogie businesses, or transported to local plant hire and chandlers, which in turn sells marine equipment to businesses across the region. Fishing supports many different shoreline jobs, including boat repairs, plant hire and charters, which in turn boosts retailing and business in the village. Boating is a strong tradition, its strength drawn from decades of local expertise. Seafood is one of County Down’s most highly praised exports. The celebrated Portavogie prawn features on many highly-prized exports. The celebrated Portavogie prawn features on many of the village’s home-grown and local restaurants.

Exploring the heritage trail
This heritage trail runs from the northern end of the village at Stabilised and The Prom, to the South Shore, and beyond to Keating’s on the Cloughey Road. Two public car parks are useful for visitors – the Community Centre on New Harbour Road and the Anchor Car Park on Springfield Road. Both have children’s play areas and the Anchor has public toilets.

From The Prom looking south towards Ballahubbey, you’ll also spot Stabilised’s most easterly point. This is called Burr Point, and Burial Point. Richardson’s Wharf and Fiddler’s Wharf were used to build a sea-defence wall, stones from it are still visible at the edge of the gardens.

The Prom (or East Shore)
At the northern end of Portavogie, you’ll find a sign for Puddle Dyke, at the junction with Warnocks Road. Walk down the narrow Puddle Dyke and find Stabilised close to the sea. Formerly once brought their boats here, collecting seaweed to feed their fish. The Cove is also visible from Stabilised. There is a small cluster of houses. These are close to the rock known as Butterlump. Stories many years ago, another small boat, with the wearer could be identified if they had a unique pattern, ensuring that relatives. Poignantly, each garment worn by founding fishermen in the choir all worn black sweaters, knitted by Palmer, who set up the Fishermen’s Society recently. Villagers also celebrate Eileen Palmer’s boatbuilding contributions in Portavogie. The Old Pump, or via Springfield Road. This car park has plenty of room for visitors’ vehicles, as well as public toilets, a fantastic children’s play park, and picnic area. You can access the Anchor Car Park on foot from The Prom, or on Springfield Road. The Old Pub
Along The Prom, you’ll find the last remaining water pump in Portavogie. Notice the inscription showing it was made in nearby Portaferry. The village pumps were once a real centre of social life, and locals got all their water from them. Portavogie Culture and Heritage Society recently restored this pump.

The Prom (or East Shore)
A public footpath runs along the beach at The East Shore, known locally as The Prom. From here, on a clear day, you can see the coast of Scotland, and the island of Man if you turn south-west. On particularly fine days, even the Scottish islands are visible. Notice the dip in the Isle of Man coastline – this is the site of Peel harbour.

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