

## Lower Loch Linnhe

Updated 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022



Sailing up Loch Linnhe on a good day is tremendously dramatic. Wonderful mountains closing in all around with beautiful broadleaf woods along Upper Loch Linnhe, particularly on the east side. John McLintock put it well: *'In Loch Linnhe one is not at sea at all. Surrounded by great hills, green valleys, and pleasant woodlands, the loch is more of the land than of the sea. Not the ocean, but the bens are masters here'*<sup>1</sup> However, there are surprisingly few anchorages north of Lismore, at least delightful ones, even up Loch Leven which gets even more dramatic with views up to such well-known mountains — Bidean, the Ballachulish horseshoe and so on.

<sup>1</sup> 'West Coast Cruising'. John McLintock, Blackie and Son, Glasgow, 1938 is a between-the-wars

There are some pretty impressive places around Loch Linnhe to eat, and one could even construct a rather good week-long gastronomic cruise taking in the Pierhouse and Airds Hotel in Appin (one on the way there, the other on the way back), the Holly Tree House Hotel in Kentallen, the Loch Leven Seafood café, and the Crannog and the Lemon Tree in Fort William.

### Ardmucknish Bay

I doubt if many people bother anchoring in this wide-open south-facing bay. And I can't say I blame them. Although there is a splendid sandy beach, it can be very crowded because there is a large caravan site as well as holiday lodges at the back of it (mid-week out-of-season should be good though). Mind you, the site is quite discrete because it is set back from the dunes, indeed you hardly notice the lodges from a distance because they are painted green. This is in marked contrast to the huge eyesore on the east side of the bay which you can see from miles away — from a distance, the white caravans look like tomb stones.

On the west side of the bay there is a prominent stately-looking home — Lochnell House<sup>2</sup> — where the Earl of Dundonald<sup>3</sup> and his family live. Sailors should know that the 10th Earl was Thomas Cochrane, a famous naval commander in the Napoleonic wars and later founder of the Chilean Navy. Patrick O'Brian used him as the model for his wonderful Jack Aubrey historical novels, including his false imprisonment. As you sail closer, the house begins to look a bit tatty, especially the battlemented Victorian add-on bit which is I think no longer lived in. There is also a 17th century bit and a Georgian bit. Apparently it is being gradually restored which is nice to hear. I don't think it is open in any shape or form to the public, except as a wedding venue. Sadly there seems at first sight to be nothing in the large walled garden, but I am told there is a vegetable garden and fruit trees (it would be nice if the owners of wonderful enclosed spaces like these would rent them out for allotments if they were not using all of the space, but maybe here in the country there is no call for veggie patches).

About a kilometre southwest, on the hill, you can see Lady Margaret's Tower — erected in 1754. It is accessible by foot with permission from the estate manager (ph 01631 720413, I think).

### Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe (Saulmore) and South Connel Bay

These are two adjacent bays and although there is more tide in the one to the east (South Connel Bay) it does have more to offer ashore. The one to the west (Camas Bruaich Ruaidhe) really has nothing other than a main road to see (although a golf course is under construction). Of course the eastern bay has the main road too but across that road is quite a cosy 18th century pub. The old appropriate name of the Ferryman's has been changed to the Oyster Inn<sup>4</sup>, but the bar is still known as the Gluepot. There are bar meals (a bit pricey I would say), and Deuchars IPA (a decent Scottish real ale). Attached to the bar is a blue excrescence, which holds a busy and reasonable restaurant, with close-up views of the road (ph 01631 710666).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/22997/lochnell-house>

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl\\_of\\_Dundonald](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl_of_Dundonald)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oysterinn.co.uk/>

Just outside across the road is the old ferry slipway. It must have been quite a ride across the tide to the other side with the ferryman pulling on his oars, and maybe on his bottle too at times. From here walk up onto the bridge<sup>5</sup> to view the tide roaring through the Falls of Lora, and also the views out west. The bridge was opened in 1903 to carry the Callander and Oban Railway over the falls. It is said to be the second largest cantilever bridge in the world. Within 10 years of its opening it was carrying motor vehicles too<sup>6</sup>. But, in 1966, the cars won, and the railway closed (most of the track will reopen as a Sustrans long distance cycle path to Ballachulish).

Also Connel Bay is a place to lurk while assessing which way the tide is running under the bridge if you are seized by a crisis of confidence on the approach. You might consider changing crew here if they are using the train — Connel Ferry station is very close

The Falls of Lora have been a tourist attraction for more than 200 years. The Hon. Mrs Sarah Murray, a widow in her 50s, came here in 1796 and described the falls as "...a cascade, as wonderful, if not more so, than any other in the world".<sup>7</sup> She seems to have been addicted to waterfalls, and was firmly in the Romantic tradition, hence the overdone hyperbole.

### **Camas Chrònaig**

The coastline of Morvern, north from the Sound of Mull, is wild, uninhabited and beautiful, enhanced by the rocky outcrops and deciduous trees. From a distance there look to be a series of sandy bays, but do not be deceived. The beaches are of stone, they are steep-to, and hardly ideal anchorages. But on a calm day there are a couple worth stopping at, even if just for lunch. Camas Chrònaig just south of Glensanda, is incredibly isolated. No access from the land, not even a path. Just bracken, stones and trees. Good for a barbecue though. Robinson Crusoe would have felt at home here.

### **Camas Eigneig**

Camas Eigneig is south of Glensanda, about a mile further on past Camas Chrònaig. You can anchor off the stony beach towards its north end. There seems to be a mooring but, as ever, you will have no idea what it is attached to, and how strongly. So don't touch it, anchor like a proper sailor. And beware of the adders if you do go ashore.

### **Camas Nathais**

An easy anchorage in a wide-open bay, ideal for a hot summer's day in northerly weather. But no one else seems to think so, the place always appears deserted. The arms on each side of the

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<sup>5</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/23278/connel-ferry-bridge>

<sup>6</sup> <https://movingimage.nls.uk/film/5122>

<sup>7</sup> The Hon. Sarah Murray. 'A Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland and the Hebrides' Volume 1. 1799

bay are covered in lovely deciduous woodland, close enough to the shore for barbecue supplies. Not much in the way of pine plantations to spoil the effect. There is a grey sand beach, not very good for sandcastles the children tell me, but nice walks in surprisingly pastoral surroundings — cows, sheep and so on

### **Camas Shallachain**

This large and wide-open bay has its scenic charms, in northerly weather. Apart from walking about on the very green grass and the extensive foreshore at low tide, there is nothing to do in particular. But wrong! About half-way towards Corran Point, you will find Ard Daraich gardens<sup>8</sup>. They are said to be spectacular — I think you need to book to visit (ph 01855 841384). The walk up the glen towards Strontian is also pleasant.

At low tide there is a bit of sand for sandcastles, and certainly children can find a lot to amuse themselves with. There is loads of driftwood so on the right evening good for a barbecue. The beacon guarding the way to the Corran narrows is an odd kind of art deco concrete structure (I wonder who designed it, there is nothing quite like it elsewhere as far as I know).

### **Creag islands**

This archipelago of small islands and rocks off the east shore of Lismore is a perfect spot for a picnic on a hot and windless summer day. There are lots of seals, a small sandy beach on the north end of Eilean nan Gamhna which is ideal for sandcastles, snorkelling and with spectacular views up Loch Linnhe and down the Firth of Lorne. The undergrowth in the summer is incredibly thick and so it is not easy to get around. It is all an SSSI — Site of Special Scientific Interest — and so care is needed to avoid disturbing the seals which are always in evidence, particularly it seems in the south-facing bay between Eilean na Cloiche and Eilean Dubh which is a peaceful place to anchor in quiet weather (in southerly weather you can of course anchor on the north side of the isthmus where there is a shingle beach). There are also a lot of birds — oystercatchers, terns and geese. Trees are being planted on Eilean na Cloiche, but by whom? Who owns this place I wonder?

### **Cuil Bay**

Another wide-open bay facing south, but not with a sandcastle sort of beach, and with quite a few houses dotted around not very far away. Not much to recommend it really, just a passage anchorage probably. But I should imagine the walk between here and Kentallen might be rather nice.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk/inverness-shire/item/ard-daraich.html>

## Dallens Bay

Linnhe Marine<sup>9</sup> is a small and friendly family-run water-sports centre with moorings and a loading pontoon (ph 07721 503981). However, it could be more interesting to anchor on the other side of the sound by Shuna, then go for a walk there. Mind you I feel a bit guilty about that because the buoys to guide you into Shuna Sound from the south were laid by Linnhe Marine.

You could just about take the dinghy across to the privately owned 15th century Castle Stalker,<sup>10</sup> or walk from the mainland if the tide is low, something I have never done. There are limited tours (vital to book well ahead) and a welcoming website (ph 07721 503981). It appears on so many Scottish calendars because of its ridiculously romantic position in the middle of the sea (at high tide at least).

There is quite a nice café and gift shop called Castle Stalker View<sup>11</sup> up on the road above the castle, unsurprisingly with a view of the castle. 'The Old Inn',<sup>12</sup> is ten-or-so minute walk along the cycle path to the south of the marina, it has a good reputation, but I have yet to visit.

## Loch a'Choire

You really feel in the mountains here. The surrounding hills seem so close that they positively invite you to jump up them directly from the deck. An evening stroll around the head of the loch is a delight. Kingairloch House and the surrounding estate<sup>13</sup> seem mysteriously affluent, and everything is very trim for such a remote part of the mainland, even the little roads are well surfaced. I imagine loads of money was made from the Glensanda coastal quarry<sup>14</sup> which the estate sold to Aggregate Industries in 2006. There are a lot of self-catering cottages<sup>15</sup> as well as catered accommodation (if you want it) in the big house itself. Way back, in the Second World War, the Royal Navy had a secret testing site here for two-man torpedo-like craft with detachable war heads, and for mini-submarines.

There is an old broken down graveyard by the moorings, but with some more recent cairns mostly to members of the Strutt family who must have been big round here. Indeed Mrs Patricia Strutt was one of the most formidable deerstalkers in Scotland it seems. Shot her first stag in 1930 at the age of 19, and her last shortly before her death in 2000.

There is a walk to Kingairloch village<sup>16</sup> along the road, but it is a very minor one. There you will find a surprisingly well-looked-after church, right on the beach (Camas na Croise). Mid 19th century. A fabulous view too. I wonder who keeps the brass so gleaming bright. I gather all the cottages are now holiday homes. Sad, but realistic.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://linnhemarina.co.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.castlestalker.com/wp/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.castlestalkerview.co.uk/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/theoldinnappin/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://kingairloch.co.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glensanda>

<sup>15</sup> <https://kingairloch.co.uk/self-catering/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/strontian/kingairloch/index.html>

## Dunstaffnage

Our boat has been kept here for more than 30 years, not because it is of huge interest to the cruising yachtsman, but because it is the closest place to Edinburgh to keep a boat on the West Woast (and you can get here by train as well as car). What is more, it is quick and easy to get in and out with no tidal problems — turn right for Lismore and Loch Linnhe, straight ahead for the Sound of Mull, turn left for the Firth of Lorne. But don't try and enter under sail unless there is a reasonable wind or you have the engine on, because the wind dies at the entrance and there is more often than not a strong tide against you.

For the visitor there are some pluses. First, it is a convenient place to change crew who can get here by train, bus, car, or even private plane to Oban airport (a rather grand name for a mere airstrip at the mouth of Loch Etive in North Connel). But, from 2017, the pontoons at Oban are probably more convenient. Second, there is a bar, with real ale, and a restaurant which goes up and down in quality — The Wide Mouthed Frog<sup>17</sup> — (ph 01631 567005). The views across the bay from your dinning table are great, and they have rooms too if any of your crew want to sleep in a proper bed for a night. Third, you can stock up with anything you need in Oban, just a ten-minute taxi drive away. Or walk by the path over the cliffs via Dunbeg and Ganavan Bay through very pretty oak and birch woodland — it takes a bit over an hour. Fourth, Alba Sailing<sup>18</sup>, a charter company, has a good selection of chandlery, and is very helpful. Finally, the marina<sup>19</sup> should be able to help you out with water, electricity and repairs. The one negative is the sound of the traffic on the main road, but even this does not drown out the seductive cooing of the eider ducks in the spring, and certainly not the oystercatchers.

In 2010 a very pretty garden centre called Poppies<sup>20</sup> opened just next to the marina (in the green shed north of the big house). It does excellent café-style food (great meringues, the best in Scotland) but sadly not in the evenings. Unfortunately you do have to walk round to it by the main road with no pavement, or perhaps better take the dinghy straight there (ph 01631 565718). It is buzzing which goes to show what enthusiastic people can do with this sort of establishment. Not surprisingly it is now winning awards.

However, what people are in danger of missing is on the other side of the bay. Dunstaffnage Castle<sup>21</sup>, originally another MacDougall stronghold but owned by the Duke of Argyll since the late 15th century. It is a small but splendid semi-ruin, its massive and almost complete stone walls seeming to grow straight out of a huge plug of volcanic rock — as John Knox described in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century: 'The castle is built upon a rock, at the mouth of Loch Etive, whose waters expand within, to a beautiful bay where ships may safely ride in all weather'<sup>22</sup>. It is

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<sup>17</sup> <https://widemouthedfrogofficialsite.co.uk/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.alba-sailing.co.uk/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://dunstaffnagemarina.co.uk/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.poppiesgardencentre.co.uk/>

<sup>21</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunstaffnage\\_Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunstaffnage_Castle)

<sup>22</sup> 'A Tour through the Highlands of Scotland and the Hebride Isles in 1786'. John Knox, James Thin, Edinburgh, 1975, is what it says on the tin. This was not the John Knox, but a Scottish philanthropist eager to set up fishing stations to exploit the untapped — at the time — potential for fishing. He clearly had huge sympathies with the impoverished local population, constantly thinking of ways to improve their lives.

surely worth a visit, especially for the views from the castle walls overlooking the bay — "*a most splendid prospect*" according to Walter Scott in 1814<sup>23</sup>. Also plenty of latrine chutes to amuse the children, and they will also enjoy playing hide and seek too. It was begun in the 13th century and, as usual, various bits have been added and fallen down over the centuries until it was more or less abandoned after a fire in 1810. It is now lovingly looked after by Historic Environment Scotland. The 16th century crow-stepped harled house on the top is owned by the hereditary keeper, the so-called Captain of Dunstaffnage, who lives near by. He had allowed it to fall nearly to pieces, perhaps because of lack of cash, until in 2012 Historic Environment Scotland gained some sort of control, nicely restored it, and in 2014 opened it to the public. A small triumph. At the moment it is empty but it is a useful place to shelter from the rain. In the future there are plans to mount exhibitions here. Personally I reckon it would be a great place for a party, but I doubt if the Captain would allow it. Above the ticket office there is a room with a nice model of what the castle might have looked like in its prime.

Very near by, in the woods, is the now roofless 13th century Dunstaffnage Chapel<sup>24</sup> which is also worth a visit. Bits of gothic architecture remain, but the burial aisle to the east is an 18th century addition for the Campbells of Dunstaffnage. All this is surrounded by delightful deciduous woodland with loads of bluebells in the spring, and rabbits anytime. A wander around here on a warm sunny day is a definite highlight of any Hebridean tour — views of the bay with Connel bridge and Ben Cruachan in one direction, and the Firth of Lorne in the other.

The not completely unattractive modern building in the corner of the bay hosts the Scottish Association for Marine Sciences (SAMS)<sup>25</sup>, Scotland's only fundamental marine research institution. For the many scuba divers keen to explore the wrecks and underwater scenery, it has the advantage of the adjacent decompression sickness (the bends) treatment facility, hence the coming and going of rescue helicopters, although less often than in times past — maybe the divers are getting safer, or have moved off to warmer waters. At least they were until 2019 when 37 divers were treated. The Ocean Explorer Centre<sup>26</sup>, an outreach facility of SAMS opened in 2013, a marine visitor centre definitely worth a visit, and it's free. It may be small but it has plenty of stuff to ponder over, and good for children too. You can play at being a marine scientist by donning a white coat and then peering down a microscope at various algae, examine the mapping of the seabed of the Firth of Lorne, look at pictures from the under-water camera in the bay, the three dimensional globe, and the moving picture showing the ocean currents of the world. All good interesting stuff, plus a small café. This is all part of the University of the Highlands and Islands. Only 20-25 undergraduates a year, so terrific contact with the scientific and teaching staff. Very unlike some well-known universities where classes of 200-300 are lectured at.

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<sup>23</sup> 'The Voyage of the Pharos'. Sir Walter Scott, Scottish Library Association, 1968. An account of his 1814 cruise around Scotland as a guest of the Commissioners of the Northern Lights, on the Lighthouse Yacht, Pharos. Rather more readable than his novels

<sup>24</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/23047/dunstaffnage-chapel>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.sams.ac.uk/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.oceanexplorercentre.org/>

## **Eilean Balnagowan**

This is a nice anchorage, well protected from the west and southwest. There is some sort of ancient enclosure<sup>27</sup> on the north ridge. According to an email I got from Robin Watt: "*this was an iron/bronze age fort ... a medieval cemetery served by a coffin stance opposite on the mainland ... in the 18th century a local girl assaulted by a soldier from Appin barracks brained him with a boulder, and hid out on the island till the affair cooled down*".

There are loads of birds in the summer and loads and loads of brambles in the autumn. However, a new small house was built in 2014 so there may be fewer birds nesting in future, and fewer brambles. It faces down the loch and is well hidden from the mainland — not a bad position for all concerned. By the anchorage you will find a gravel beach at high tide, but no sand. There is traffic noise from the road on the mainland so it is not as remote as maybe it seems.

## **Eilean Dubh (Loch Linnhe)**

Not much here, the vegetation is so thick you can't get easily through it, and the cliff is so steep it looks unclimbable to me. But it is a pleasant enough anchorage with seals on the rocks towards Lismore and a lot of nesting seabirds in the summer. The beach is shingle — be careful not to step on any eggs.

## **Glensanda**

Not in the Sailing Directions, and distinctly unpromising industrial scenery. But there is a castle to inspect on a knoll overlooking the Lynn of Morvern. It is tricky getting ashore along this bit of coast, here there is a stony beach but a bit steep for comfort. I prefer to row up the burn that flows down past the south side of the castle and land there. Then scramble up to the quarry road, over a wall, round to the west side of the castle and another scramble up to it where you are confronted by the Glensanda quarry<sup>28</sup>. The only coastal quarry in the UK, the largest granite quarry in Europe. It opened in 1986, and is I fear a blot on the landscape. Six-and-a-half million tons of granite came out of it in 2014. And it won't all be taken out until 2100. You see it from more or less everywhere on the west side of Lismore, worse at night because of the lights. But, a big but, it does avoid the granite having to be driven out on roads, indeed it is inaccessible by land. And it does employ a lot of local people, about 200, with many more knock-on jobs locally. More good than bad I imagine. It looks pretty amazing when you sail close past it, a vast industrial complex with an almost cubist look to the buildings climbing up the mountainside. It would surely be a great location for a James Bond film.

The castle<sup>29</sup> is 15th century. There are two storeys, the walls have been stabilised, but there is no roof. It was a MacLean stronghold but they abandoned it around 1800. Given there is no access from the land by any sort of road, that it is not in the Sailing Directions, and landing is

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<sup>27</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/23331/loch-linnhe-eilean-balnagowan>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.scottish-places.info/features/featurefirst18859.html>

<sup>29</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/23081/glensanda-castle>

not that easy except in calm conditions, you are unlikely to have to share the view down Loch Linnhe from the front door.

## Kentallen Bay

I am not sure this has much to commend it, too near the busy Oban to Fort William road, too many moorings. But there is a small chapel tucked away in the woods, built in 1868, St Moluag's Church (locked but through the windows the inside looks a wreck). The walk between here and Cuil Bay looks good but I have not done it. You could also scramble up to the old railway line and try to walk along to the Holly Tree Hotel (ph 01631 740292)<sup>30</sup> about half-a-mile away. But much better is to pick up one of their five moorings, because the line has been cut by some new houses. The rather unattractive looking hotel with chalets was built around the old railway station, the remains of which are still visible inside. The hotel is said to be good for kids, there is a restaurant, and even a very small swimming pool.

A ferry to Fort William used to run from the small pier. You can stroll from the hotel towards the head of the bay along the old railway line but it is cut by the main road. This branch line from Connel to Ballachulish opened in 1903 and must have been a wonderful ride. It surely would still be an excellent tourist resource if it had not been swept away by the infamous Dr Beeching in 1966. Luckily Sustrans have converted the track as part of a long-distance cycle route, the Caledonia Way<sup>31</sup> — from Campbeltown to Fort William and Inverness. The section from the hotel northwards is now complete, and maybe more has been added.

A very creaky film was made of the railway line in the winter just before it closed<sup>32</sup>. Long ago one of my medical school teachers who when he heard I was moving to Scotland became quite nostalgic about this journey. When he had been demobbed after the war he was given a return rail ticket to anywhere in the UK. He chose Ballachulish as a suitably distant and peaceful destination.

## Onich

I can't see a lot of point anchoring off Onich. The views may be spectacular, down Loch Linnhe and up Loch Leven, but the main road is very intrusive — after all it is one of the main tourist routes in Scotland connecting the honey pots of Oban, Glencoe, Fort William and Loch Ness. But, if you do anchor here there is a bit of a walk on the shell beach and a lonely standing stone in a field to the west of the pier. And on the pier there is a strange metal fish gazing mournfully into the wind. The Onich hotel<sup>33</sup> looks quite nice but I have not been there (01855 432323).

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<sup>30</sup> <https://hollytreehotel.co.uk/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.sustrans.org.uk/find-other-routes/the-caledonia-way/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utLbJQnT7oE>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.onichhotel.co.uk/>

## Port Appin and Airds Bay

These two anchorages are on opposite sides of a small headland, within easy walking distance of each other. Both are exposed to the south. If you can stand the rolling about which can be a problem at Port Appin,<sup>34</sup> there are mooring buoys supplied by the Pierhouse<sup>35</sup>, a pretty good place for a meal as it happens with I am told an excellent seafood restaurant (ph 01631 730302). It also has a sauna, and washing facilities for yachties. It seems to be moving up market, but I have only had a bar meal and there were no real ales. Originally the building was a 19th century cottage for the pier-master when steamships used to call here. It was considerably improved and extended in the 1990s. New owners in 2019, so things may well be changing.

For the very serious foodie the Airds Hotel<sup>36</sup> beckons, just a few minutes up the road (ph 01631 730236). It has been in the Good Food Guide for over 40 years. Here you can get one of the best meals in Scotland (tasting menu at £95), and they don't mind too much if you are a wee bit scruffy off a boat (no ties are needed thankfully). But maybe the food is a better experience if you stay at the hotel, the effect is rather spoiled by a wet row back to the boat in a strong southwesterly wind. In 2014, a Michelin star, but no longer.

Just across the road from Airds you will find the very pretty top section of the old Sgeir Bhuidhe lighthouse (yes, another Stevenson). In 2002 the original lighthouse was replaced by one of those ugly modern low-maintenance eco-friendly solar-powered boxes designed by someone with no aesthetic sense whatsoever. Indeed, the proposed change was so resented by the local community that one day they woke up to find their dear old lighthouse had been repainted to look like Mr Blobby, a well known TV cartoon character at the time. Needless to say the Northern Lighthouse Board was not amused.

If you want to nip across to Lismore there is a passenger ferry<sup>37</sup> operating from the pier. And you can hire bikes in Port Appin.

Airds bay is a bit more sheltered than Port Appin, at least from the north and west. The fine big house overlooking the bay is 18th century Airds House, privately owned so you can't really get near it. However, the walk round the headland is good<sup>38</sup>. It takes about 40 minutes if you are not side-tracked by the two excellent eating establishments in Port Appin. Go ashore (with some difficulty) on the west side of the bay, pick up the track and turn left or right. To the left, near the headland is an impressive natural arch in the quartzite. A smaller more hidden one is to the right. The deciduous trees are lovely, clinging in some places to the limestone cliffs. In a short while you get to the Pierhouse. Further on, just before taking the path back off the road to Airds Bay, is the Airds Hotel. Also the village hall is near here where you can get local information, and there is a general store too. Plus the Lighthouse Craft Shop,<sup>39</sup> which is good and sells what it says on the tin. And a red telephone box converted to a book exchange. The Port Appin studio<sup>40</sup>, right by the pier, is run by Alex Gourlay, a landscape

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/appin/portappin/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://pierhousehotel.co.uk/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.airds-hotel.com/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/port-appin-point-lismore-ferry-timetable>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/argyll/portappin.shtml>

<sup>39</sup> <https://appincraftshop.co.uk/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.portappinstudio.co.uk/>

artist, and his wife Midge who is a textile designer. You can visit by appointment, or buy online (ph 01631 730594). The pastiche turrets on some of the modern houses by the pier leave something to be desired.

Another walk is along the road towards Glaceriska Bay on Loch Creran, and take a look at Druimnell Gardens (see Loch Creran anchorages).

### **Sheep Island (Eilean nan Caorach)**

This is a rather remarkable small island because at one time it must have been entirely taken over by lime-making, albeit by only two resident families. There are three kilns, one of which is certainly in a better state of repair than those at Port Ramsay. You can look down it from above as well as up it from the bottom! Behind them I think is the quarry from where the limestone was taken. Sheep are obviously kept here during the summer, and not surprisingly there are loads of nesting birds — mostly gulls I think. It is more an anchorage for lunch than an overnight stay, unless it is very calm And take care, the last time I visited there were no marks that I could see for the leading line.

### **Shuna Island**

The anchorage here is a bit further away from the rather noisy main road than at Linnhe Marine, but you can still hear it — maybe that doesn't matter too much, the scenery makes up for that. Go ashore, turn left along the beach and visit Shuna Castle<sup>41</sup>, up a slight rise. This is a very crumbling and uncared-for ruin but it is rather atmospheric with vaulted rooms at the bottom, and a good view from the wrecked windows on the first floor approached by a spiral stair. It was built as a fortified tower-house in the late 16th century, and belonged to the Stewarts of Appin. The island changed hands in 2013 but that won't change the scenery. The new owners are anxious to avoid any liability if a bit of castle drops on someone's head, so watch out if you do visit.

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<sup>41</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/site/23289/shuna-island-castle-shuna>