

Fylde Boat Angling Club
Lower Walk, Little Bispham, Nr Blackpool, Lancashire, UK.



A GUIDE TO BOAT FISHING WITH THE FYLDE BOAT ANGLING CLUB

WWW.FBAC.CO.UK

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Introduction

This is a guide intended for members who are new to the Fylde Boat Angling Club, new to boats, new to the area, new to fishing off this coast or to those who have been members for some time, but need a memory-prompt on how to be a good member of this club, stay safe and how to get the best of the fishing off this coast.

It is a simple guide; personal experience will refine much of what is said, but it is pages of building blocks on how to enjoy being a member of the Fylde Boat Angling Club.

When can I go out?

You are not allowed to launch until your boat has been checked to the RNLI Inshore waters Seacheck scheme and received Tractor training. As a minimum your boat must meet the equipment requirements defined on the FBAC Internet site www.fbac.co.uk.

Once the check and training has been carried out you can:

1. Launch at any time of the day or night provided that your boat has achieved the RNLI Seacheck Inshore Waters's requirement and two members are trained to drive the club tractors.

The RNLI Seacheck badge must be clearly displayed on the boat.

That said, in all circumstances, the club recommends a minimum of two boats and two members trained to drive club tractors for launching for maximum safety.

It is a serious breach of club rules to go out on your own without having achieved the required RNLI Seacheck standard, to only have one tractor out or only one tractor running. For safety reasons and for preservation of tractors, anyone in breach of this club rule must expect disciplinary measures.

If there are not many boats out, keep in regular radio contact. If you come ashore and there is just one trailer left on the slipway, call up that boat immediately and say they are the last boat out. The boat name will be on the trailer. Some people prefer not to be the only boat out; they will tell you when they intend to come in. It is often comradely to wait in these circumstances until they are safely ashore.

RYA Level II Powerboat Certificate

With the ever increasing focus on Health and Safety many councils around the country are now insisting that people using slipways or beaches have as a minimum a RYA level II power boat certificate of competency, this is now a requirement in most European countries. It is only a matter of time before the local council insists that the members have this qualification to launch via the councils slipways on the sea defences. In preparation, the membership have voted that all existing members must hold this qualification by February 2006 and that new members achieve this qualification within 6 months of joining. Details of course can be found on the clubs website www.fbac.co.uk.

Boathouse

Every boat-owning member should have an outer boathouse key for access to tractors. Only those who have a boat in the inner boathouse have a key for the inner boathouse.

The inner boathouse must be locked as soon as you have removed your boat unless another member is present and waiting to fetch a boat out. Theft of items from boats will be prevented if people with an inner boathouse key follow these rules. Members with a boat in the boathouse are expected to keep the area around their boat clean.

If you open up the boathouse outer door, lock it again when you have brought up the tractors unless there is someone fetching boats. Members of the public have been found wandering around inside because members did not lock the outer door and it was left open all day. Turn off the lights when you close the tractor house doors.

There is a reel hosepipe on the boathouse wall, which can be used for flushing out engines and general boat cleaning. Coil the hosepipe back up after you have used it.

No one is allowed to park vehicles in the boathouse while they go fishing. You may leave trailers in the boathouse overnight if two or more of you are going out all night, but inform a committee person before doing so.

Tractors

Tractors are the biggest headache this club has and much of the problem is caused by members not following a few simple rules. If you find a tractor has a flat battery, it is likely that somebody didn't bother to put it on charge when they put the tractor away.

Tractors Training is now a **mandatory** requirement of the Club to maintain its safe system of operation to meet its Health and Safety obligations to not only yourself but to those of your crew, other members and members of the public who also use the beach and promenade areas.

Members are encouraged to visit the boathouse on an ad-hoc basis to check the batteries are charged up and tractors starting. Tractors are a collective problem and a collective responsibility. If there is a problem, report it immediately to Dave Cunningham, the committee man responsible for tractor maintenance. You can also contact him for Tractor Training

Tel 01253 811024

Dicky starter motors and knackered batteries are an endemic problem due to the dampness of the sea and the boathouse, but by regular monitoring, diligent reporting of problems and care, we can restrict the downtime and replacement costs.

To start a tractor. Disconnect the charger plug, then disconnect battery charger leads, or at least ensure that the charger terminal clips cannot touch each other by clipping them to the wooden tray. If the weather is cold you may need to screw in the choke thumbscrew under the fuel pump. Basic tractor training will show you where this located. After the tractor has fired up, this can be screwed back out. Leaving it in results in very smokey running. Check the fuel stop level is pulled backwards, towards the driver and turn the ignition key till the tractor fires. You will need about a third throttle to start the engine.

If you are the first to get the tractors out (remember a minimum of two tractors), the following checks **MUST** be made

The battery charger leads are disconnected from the battery and made safe so the charging crocodile clips aren't touching each other.

Check the radiator is full of water.

Check there is at least half a tank of fuel in the tank; the level should not be less than eight inches from the filler cap.

Dip the gear oil dipstick (if below minimum, do not take out and report).

Remember that the fumes from the exhaust are hazardous, so vacate the boathouse as quickly as possible and do not leave the engines especially when refuelling. If time permits is a good idea to leave the boathouse doors open to allow the fumes to clear but not at risk of security,

To water a tractor, drive it to the post at the bottom of the ramp where there is a tap and hose.

To fuel a tractor, put it in the same position and follow this procedure for operating the fuel line. It is a manual pump, wall mounted midway between the store tank and the bottom of the ramp. Check the wheel valve on the store tank is turned on. One member will have to hold the nozzle into the tank while the other cranks the pump handle. You will see an arrow on the pump that indicates which way round the handle should be cranked. The pump will only work one way. Remember to turn off

the wheel valve on the storage tank and place the pump nozzle well above floor level.

It is a serious breach of club rules not to do these three basics checks before taking a tractor out. It also can lead to serious damage, inconvenience or even loss of a tractor.

The tractor won't start.

There are rarely more than a handful of reasons a tractor won't start. These are the common problems.

You turn the key and there is not a sound or movement. Explanation: Either the battery is flat (likeliest reason), the battery terminals are not sufficiently tight or the starter motor is broken. Wiggle the battery terminal leads on the battery terminal posts to ensure they are tight, if not, have you a spanner to tighten them or a gentle tap to push down the connector may do the trick.

If the battery was connected to a charger and the charger was on, then there is a serious battery problem. Report the matter to Dave Cunningham. If the battery was not connected, then you can either connect it back up and take another tractor, tow the tractor to start it, or if you have some jump leads, use jump leads from the battery on another tractor.

You turn the key and there is a single click or a rat-tat-tat sound of rapid clicks coming from the starter motor. Explanation: The same as above, but it may also indicate a starter motor problem. Report to Dave Cunningham.

There is only one tractor which will start, the others seem as if they have flat batteries. Action: There are ropes on the rear of most tractors, hitch up the "dead" tractor and tow it out of the boathouse and onto the lower promenade where we keep the trailers while fishing. This will give you a good run at bump-starting the tractor. Ensure everything is in place for the tractor to fire and tow in second gear.

Remember, you must have two tractors running at all times of launching and retrieving, so if you come in from fishing and find one tractor will not start because of a flat battery, you must drag start it before taking the one operational tractor onto the beach.

No tractors will start. This is very frustrating and does very occasionally happen. There is no alternative but to abort the trip. Report the matter to Dave Cunningham. Tip: If it is convenient, it is worth popping down to the boathouse the night before your planned trip and ensuring everything is working and the batteries connected up.

Using a tractor to take you boat in and out of the boathouse. During the week, when there are just a handful of boats out, it is okay to use one of the two running tractors for this job. On a Sunday, when there are many people wanting to use

tractors, it is very bad manners to take one of the two tractors "out of active service" to attend to your boat down below. Use a third tractor or your own vehicle for this.

How to drive tractors on land. Because our tractors have little braking power, you must give way and consideration to other road vehicles and pedestrians on the promenade. Drive slowly, never go higher than second gear and be patient with people who just gawp at you, yapping dogs and unruly children. There are some members of the public who would dearly love an excuse to complain to the police and the local council about reckless tractor driving and get us banned from using the slipway.

When ascending and descending the ramp to the boathouse, ALWAYS use first gear and drive slowly. Ensure the boathouse doors are open before you start to go down the ramp. We have had smashed doors, smashed walls and smashed front ends of tractors from people who thought they were driving a vehicle with a fully working set of brakes.

Driving tractors on the beach. Descend and ascend the slipway and the steep foreshore in first gear. If you use any other gear, you risk losing control through speed and skidding or stalling the engine in the soft shingle. Sod's law says you will stall the tractor in shingle only to find the battery is flat. Avoid driving down the steep shingle at steep sideways angles. When you reach the flat beach, you can switch to second gear, but do not go higher than second gear and do not tow boats fast, this can cause both tractor damage and trailer damage.

Do not ride on the back of tractors, it is a very dangerous procedure, should you slip you may fall under the trailer and be injured.

Watch out for soft sand. The club has lost thousands of pounds over the years through tractors getting bogged down in soft sand and covered by the tide. A few precautions can reduce the risk of a bog-down.

The sand is always softest when it is waterlogged on the early part of an ebbing tide. Going over the top of banks is where the softest sand will occur. Driving along the route of streams is usually the firmest. Keep an eye on the ruts made by tractors before you, if there are deep ruts, take an alternative route. Obviously, avoid mud patches.

Should you begin to encounter soft sand, drive in first gear very slowly. Don't try to turn the wheel abruptly; the wheels will just bog in. Keep a sharp eye on the rear tractor wheels to make sure that even though you are digging down, you are continuing to move forward. If forward progress stops, immediately disengage the gears and unhitch the trailer. This should allow the tractor to move forward out of the soft sand. Putting a rope around the trailer should allow you to drag the boat and trailer free.

Alternatively, summon the second tractor and position it on firm sand and rope the two tractors in line and see if the combined pulling power of two tractors will release the bogged down tractor. The safety of the second tractor is paramount.

Another trick for releasing a bogged tractor is to try and reverse a little, then edge forward. If you are unfamiliar with handling tractors in a bogged down situation, providing there is not a danger from the incoming tide, you can leave the tractor stuck and go to the promenade and ask for the help of someone who is.

Putting a tractor away. This is a very important procedure, which should ensure the tractor is working the next time somebody wants it. Take the tractor down into the boathouse and using the reel hose, thoroughly wash the sand from the bodywork, the mudguards and around the wheels and bearings. Nose the tractor into the seaward wall and connect up to a battery charger.

If you have experienced any problems with the tractor, notify Dave Cunningham. If the committee are not informed of tractor faults, they can't put them right.

Launching your boat

Once you are at the water's edge, unhitch your boat from the winch hook and slowly reverse the tractor and trailer into the sea. Modern roller trailers are quite easy to launch with, but older trailers with skids can be very difficult. However, you must not reverse a tractor above the front wheels as water will ingress into the engine and battery causing damage.

The rule is “**always have half of the front wheels out of the water**”.

Even with only half of the front wheels in the water, the back of the tractor and boat can be in quite deep water and could get easily swamped by wave action. If your boat will not float off at that, you have to get your shoulder under the bow and heave. This is obviously better if you have not got people in the boat making it heavier.

If someone asks you to back a tractor in deeper because they have a poor trailer or a mis-matched boat and trailer, you must refuse. Taking tractors into the sea too deep is a serious breach of club rules and could result in serious damage to the tractor.

Tractor good manners. It is obviously more convenient for someone to launch you rather than launch yourself, since this means you do not have to return the tractor to the promenade and walk back down to the water's edge. You will find members will volunteer to launch you to win custody of a tractor so they can be launched. If you ask somebody standing about on the slipway who is not ready to launch, you will usually find members happy to oblige.

Don't be a queue jumper. Often on a Sunday morning around 8-9am there are lots of boats waiting to launch. Make a mental note of where you fit in the queue even if you are not directly lined up. Just because you choose to prepare your boat on the lower promenade while somebody else will do it on the top, does not mean you have right of way. If you get a reputation as a queue jumper, you will find people reluctant to launch you in the future.

When you are ready to go, unless there is a tractor standing idle, you should offer to launch one or two boats in front of you until you feel it is your turn in the queue. Then ask the person behind you in the queue if they will take the tractor, or if you prefer to drive your own boat down to the water's edge, ask them to jump in the boat and to bring the tractor back.

Launching into a lumpy sea can be a nightmare, since you are launching stern first, the waves hit the flat stern and crash over the back, filling the boat with water and flooding all your equipment. You have to get the boat turned around as quickly as possible so the bow faces the waves and will break them.

Retrieving can be even worse. As your boat hits the beach and you jump out, you may feel relieved and safe, but the boat is in danger. The surf will throw the boat around, usually side-on and water will start to crash into the boat. You have to be organised. It is better to wait 100 yards offshore while your trailer arrives and there are helpers to get it onto the trailer rather than trying to hold the boat in a surf. It is a good idea to make sure the trailer is facing the waves, regardless of the direction that the waves are coming from. This stops the waves from trying to push the boat off the trailer and can assist in actually pushing the boat on.

Once you start to get water into the back of the boat there is a risk that when you start to winch the boat onto the trailer, the winch cable will snap under the weight of the water. Then you are really in trouble. This is why it is important to have a heavy-duty winch strap and a winch hook that seem much over-gunned for the size of the boat.

Launching at high water. This can be done, but is a tricky manoeuvre and boats need to be reversed into the sea down the ramp. The angle of the ramp is in two halves. The top half is a gentle slope. Halfway down it turns to a much sharper angle. Depending on how the shingle is from year to year, the lower steep section may not be uncovered. In this case, the boat may be reversed on the back of the tractor in the normal way.

Should the steeper section of the ramp be exposed, you must never try to reverse a boat down this. The brakes are not strong enough to hold the combined weight of the boat and the tractor and you will lose control and career dangerously down the slip. You must use one of the ropes on the back of the tractors to lower the boat. You may find a longer rope on some tractors, which helps. Position your boat with the stern facing down the slip at the top of the ramp and tie the rope to your trailer. Remember the danger of a loose knot in this manoeuvre. Then, with a taut rope, slowly reverse the tractor while pushing the boat down the slip. By keeping the tractor on the higher, gently sloping portion of the slip you will be able to control it. When the trailer meets the water, release the boat and pull the trailer back up the slip.

For retrieving the reverse procedure applies. Remember, launching and retrieving at high water can be dangerous if there is any surf crashing onto the foreshore. The surf will toss your boat about and fill the back of the boat with water. It needs at least three people for it to be done safely, one on the tractor, one on the winch and one guiding the boat onto the trailer.

Etiquette for retrieving on the beach. It is similar to launching. You will find that someone who is on a tractor will pull their own boat up to the promenade, then bring your trailer down and retrieve you. Manners say that you will then take the trailer of a waiting boat down to the water's edge and retrieve them. If no one else is about, you will have to walk up to the promenade and get your own tractor and trailer, but make sure two tractors are running. It is the height of bad manners to bring your boat to the promenade and just go home if someone is waiting at the water's edge.

If there are only a couple of boats waiting, it is okay to keep the trailer connected to the tractor while you winch the boat on. If there are several boats waiting this causes delays. Unhitch your trailer and winch the boat on. While you are doing that, another trailer can be brought down, unhitched, then the tractor will hitch you up again and tow you to the promenade. This makes multiple retrieving much quicker. Exception to this would be if the sea was rough or flooding so fast the tractor could not return in time before your boat would be submerged. Always help each other in retrieving, especially if the sea is lively.

Weather and tides

It sounds daft, but some anglers study as many weather forecasts as they can find until they find one that sounds the best, and believe that. Forecasts can be wrong and the weather changes very quickly on this coast. While it may look fishable in the morning despite a dicky forecast, come lunchtime the weather could have worsened considerably. You must always remember that the sport you have chosen is an occasional one. You can ignore the weather, but the weather will not ignore you.

Often you may look at the waves out to sea and think your boat would be able to handle them. That might be true, there is an old saying that sailors give up before boats do, but fishing would be very uncomfortable and you would have to deal with launching and retrieving into a surf, which can be very dangerous.

You can get a very good forecast for inshore water off Lancashire by ring a premium phone line service run by the Met Office called Marinecall. It is updated around 7am and will give you today's forecast and the forecast for the days ahead.

East winds are a trap for the unwary. As you look out to sea, the wind is blowing over your back and while the wind is making waves out to sea, you cannot see them as they are crashing away from you, giving the illusion of a calm sea. You may launch and it is very easy, but the further out to sea you get the rougher it becomes. Yet because you are riding over the back of the waves rather than into them, you will not notice the roughness and will be able to travel quite fast. Yet when you turn around and attempt to sail into the face of these easterly waves, you will have a hard time punching your way back to shore. If you are fishing in easterly winds, always keep looking behind you to see how the waves are building up.

The tide off the Fylde Coast floods in a northerly direction and ebbs in a southerly direction. When the wind is blowing in a similar direction to the direction of the tide, this is known as "wind with tide" and the wind will flatten the waves, making it calmer than it should be for the speed of the wind. But when the tide changes around and begins to flow into the wind, this becomes "wind against tide" and the sea will roughen up even more than it should do for the strength of the wind. You have to bear this in mind at all times when there is a breeze.

The Tidal flow in Morecambe Bay is east and west, not north and south as it is off the Fylde Coast. The tide flows into the bay towards Morecambe and flows westerly out to sea.

The main current of Morecambe Bay passes down the undersea course of the River Lune in a very deep trench called Lune Deeps. The sides of the trench are extremely steep, it is up to 180 feet deep, half a mile wide and is the main shipping route for boats going to Heysham and Fleetwood. Every day you will see container boats going up and down it. Not only is it a dangerous bit of water because of ocean-going ships, it has a fierce tide race and gets big swells.

It often boils and when there is wind against tide giant rollers surf down it. The danger is also that to get to the fishing marks in Morecambe Bay you have to cross Lune Deeps. While the sea either side of the Deeps may be swelly, but manageable, the water in the Deeps can be frightening. You must guard against being caught out in Morecambe Bay and having to cross the Deeps when the weather has worsened. If you are fishing in Morecambe Bay and the weather start to chop up, think how bad it will be in Lune Deeps before you reach the calmer waters off Rossall. Lune Deeps is at its worst on big tides.

The tide takes six hours to come in and six hours to go out, but the speed of the flow is not constant; it starts off slow, then builds speed, then eases off again before the turn of the tide. Fishing is always poor around slack water. The tide heights are taken from a measuring gauge in Fleetwood harbour, which measures the depth of water in the harbour. The figures printed in tide tables refer to the depth in the dock at high water. The higher the tide, the stronger the tide pulls. On very high tides the pull makes fishing difficult, on the very low tides there is hardly enough movement to get the fish feeding. The depth range varies from 22ft to 33ft, or 7 metres to 10 metres.

Trouble at Sea

Engine breakdown. The most frequent cause of an outboard engine not starting is oiled-up plugs. Always carry spare plugs and the means by which to fit them.

Another occasional problem is the battery going flat on electric start engines. To avoid this, keep two batteries in your boat, one just for the engine and one for the electronics you have on board. In an emergency, you can swap over the batteries to get your engine started. Carrying a set of jump leads in your boat locker may come in useful one day.

If you are really broken down, then call up someone you know on the VHF radio and ask for a tow in. To tow a boat, attach not less than 15 metres of anchor rope from the stern of the rescue boat to the bow of the broken-down boat. Do not attempt to tow from anywhere but the bow, towing at an angle is very dangerous and will take a great deal of fuel. Go very slowly when you reach the shore and the towboat should take evasive action to avoid the broken down boat running into the back of him.

If at any time you cannot start the engine, always drop the anchor to stop drifting, especially when first launching.

The sea is getting rough. Common sense is to go back in, but if it is around high water, the crashing surf may make it too dangerous. You will have to sit it out until the tide drops to the flat beach, when the surf will recede and it is safer to beach the boat. Only in a true emergency is it worth trying to beach in a surf.

Understanding your VHF Radio

All boats must carry a VHF marine radio. By law, you should hold a DTI certificate of competency and pay an annual fee. In practice, few members do both, but everyone should go on a radio course to learn the correct way to use a radio. The DTI do occasional spot checks and have confiscated radios where illegal operation has been found.

You should not operate a radio from the shore. It is ship to ship while at sea, though it is okay to talk while you are on the slipway. What is not sensible is to call a friend up who is fishing while you are in the garden and tell the world you are breaking the law.

The VHF course will tell you the precise way to operate a radio, but these are the simple day-to-day ways we operate VHF in the club.

You only need to worry about two channels. All angling boats off the Fylde Coast use channel 8 for talking. Channel 16 is for distress calling as it is monitored by the Coastguard. Channel 8 is not.

Only one person can talk at one time on any channel, so when the sea is busy with lots of boats out fishing, it is irritating when two anglers are gossiping about football and the pub last night while other are waiting to transmit more important messages. Banter is fine, but keep it short. Mostly the radio is used to enquire who is where, what is being caught and when are we going in?

The normal operating distance between two boats is about 10 miles, depending on sets and aerials.

To call someone up you begin by calling twice the name of the boat you want, then say the name of your boat twice and release the mike transmit button and await a response. If you are called Bluto and you want to call Popeye, you would say, "Popeye, Popeye, this is Bluto, Bluto." You don't talk like you would on a telephone, "Are you their Bill? It's Charlie."

Never use bad language and if you tell lies about fishing you will soon run out of friends.

Listen out on the radio while at sea and you will soon get the routine, but enquire in the club when the next radio course is being held and go on it.

Anchoring a boat

This is a procedure that has to be done carefully and safely. There is no consensus on the best anchor to use. Some members like grapnels, some like fishermen's anchors, some Danforths, but nobody uses a flimsy folding anchor.

The ground off our coast is not very rough and it is rare to lose an anchor, but most boats carry a spare.

You need 3 metres of galvanised chain between your anchor and the anchor rope to weigh down the rope and make the anchor bite. If you do not use chain, the anchor will not hold.

The rule of how much rope to let out is three times the depth of water you are fishing in. If the tide is running very hard, you may need more. The minimum amount of rope you need off this coast is 50 metres.

You must anchor the boat from the bow, not the side. Anchoring from anywhere but the front of the boat is dangerous. If you do not have a hatch access in your cabin through to the front, use one of the two safe methods of anchoring. Never walk around the outside of the boat to anchor, it is very dangerous. The safe methods are the "lazy line" method and the "buoy" method.

Most members of the club know these two methods and if you are unfamiliar about them, just ask on the slipway and you will be shown how they work.

Beware of getting your anchor rope stuck around your propeller this can be very dangerous.

To haul an anchor, first get all fishing tackle inside the boat. Then start the engine, so that should the engine not fire up, you are still at anchor and not drifting. If the anchor does not pull free or because of a strong tide is very hard to pull in, motor very slowly in the direction of the anchor rope, hauling the rope as you go uptide. When you are over the anchor it will pull upwards and break free. Guard against running over the anchor rope and fouling the propeller.

So what about the fishing?

In general there are some basic rules of fishing off our coastline. It is poor between the end of February and the end of April no matter what the conditions. As the year progresses, it gets better and better for our main specie of cod, peaking in November and December. Cleveleys and Rossall tends to fish mediocre in spring and summer, much better as winter comes on. Morecambe Bay fishes okay in summer and autumn, but dies in winter.

The tide run in Morecambe Bay is very strong. On tides above 8.5 metres it is difficult to fish. Fishing off Cleveleys and Rossall tends to be poor on tides below 8 metres. This is why a lot of members fish in summer in Morecambe Bay on small to medium tides, and off Cleveleys and Rossall on big tides.

The species

Codling are about from May to February, but in summer they are mostly under-sized. They start to be takeable around September and put on weight very fast, being 3lb to 4lb by Christmas. The main marks for them are off Rossall, Cleveleys and Bispham. You need a medium to big tide for the best of the codling fishing. Small tides generally fish poorly. You will often find that the best of the codling fishing comes in the last three hours of the flood tide. In late summer and autumn you can get codling in Morecambe Bay from a popular mark called the spoil ground. They are also prolific off Vickerstown, on Walney Island. The main bait for them is black lugworm.



Tope appear at the end of May and stay until September. They can be caught anywhere off the coast with big fish baits, but most tope are small male fish around 10lb. A mark for bigger tope is half a mile west of Lune Buoy.



Bass generally make an appearance in May when the shore crabs start to peel and stay until mid-September. Catches can be taken anywhere along the coast but there are a number of localised marks that can be quite productive predominately in Morecambe Bay and in areas of rough turbulent water.

Whiting appear around October and stay until the end of January. They are all over the coast, but favourite marks are opposite Rossall School or opposite the Norbreck Castle. They are not very big.



Dabs are prolific on the smooth ground. They are around for most of the year. Best marks are from Bispham south to Blackpool North Pier or the muddy grounds 1 mile south of Shell Wharf Buoy. On small tides when there is little else to catch this is a good mark for some fun fishing in the bay.

Plaice fishing has improved in recent years; they have usually been a by-catch rather than something you can deliberately set out to catch but that appears to have changed over the last couple of years. One of the few marks where you could expect small to medium plaice was around Lightning Knoll Buoy in Morecambe Bay from spring to autumn but local marks near to the Club now seems to be producing regular catches.



Thornback rays are occasionally caught off the main coastline, but usually in Morecambe Bay. They can be caught anywhere in the Bay, but Lightning Knoll is a favoured mark. They appear around Easter and stay till October.

Mackerel are not easy to catch around Cleveleys and Rossall. There are some good shoals off Blackpool North Pier in high summer when the sea is settled; there are a few around Shell Wharf Buoy and Lune Buoy and the bay side of Danger Patch Buoy. The mackerel run along the edges of Lune Deeps and the banks close to the deeps, but not actually in the deeps. There is often good fishing for mackerel off Walney Island.



Dogfish are everywhere from March to December. They are most prolific off Norbreck and Bispham. They will eat anything you put down.

Not-so secret fishing marks

Blackpool is mainly dabs and whiting. Fish about a mile off the end of Blackpool North Pier and down towards Bispham. Some mackerel in summer.

Bispham has some quite rough ground not far offshore and is good for general mixed fishing. You may hear anglers talk on the radio about the “doll’s house”. This is a large red and white brick shelter on the lower promenade between Norbreck Castle and Bispham. About two miles out from here is good fishing in summer, autumn and winter on medium to large tides.

Norbreck Castle is similar to Bispham.

Cleveleys has good mixed fishing in autumn and winter. A good mark is an area of rough ground about three miles due west from the boat club.

Rossall School and Rossall Hospital are good for whiting and codling in autumn and winter on medium to big tides. There are some dabs and small tope in summer.

Shell Wharf Buoy is one of the most popular and productive marks around. In autumn and winter it consistently produces codling and other bits. It will fish on smallish tides as well as large tides, though on very big tides the pull is very strong. The area to fish is south east of the buoy over a wide area up to a mile away from the buoy. You will soon get your own favoured marks in this area. There are no fish over the edge of Lune Deeps. The area on the south side of Lune Deeps from Shell Wharf Buoy to Rossall Point on the shore is all broken ground and can produce codling in autumn and winter. There are lots of other marks around here such as North West Boulders and Rossall Patches.

Lune Deeps is not fishable and dangerous. Nobody ever fishes it and there are no reports of fish from it.

King Scar Buoy is shallow, rough ground where occasional bass are taken on lures from June to October.

Danger Patch Buoy is on the Morecambe Bay side of Lune Deeps, opposite King Scar Buoy. There is some good rough ground just behind the buoy, which produces dabs, the odd ray and dogfish.

Dumper Buoy is well inside the bay and is the entrance to the Duddon estuary. This is a good “bits” mark on small tides. You will never break any records here, but when everywhere else is fishing poorly, you will usually get some flatties, small codling, whiting and the odd ray here. Because of the tide run, only fish it on very small tides and there is sometimes a problem with floating weed.

Spoil Ground is marked on admiralty charts and is the best all-round mark in Morecambe Bay. You gets flats, codling, whiting, dogfish, in fact almost anything. It is difficult to fish on tides above 8.5 metres because of the tide run.

Lune Buoy is on the opposite side of Lune Deeps to Shell Wharf Buoy. There is not a lot of fishing around it, but there are some codling in summer about a mile north of it in summer and early autumn. Drifting around the buoy with mackerel lures will produce some mackerel in summer, but the best of the fishing is for tope and rays about a mile west of the buoy.

Lightning Knoll buoy. This is the entrance to the Barrow channel in the Northwest corner of Morecambe Bay and there is a red buoy and a green buoy with a clanking bell. This fishes from spring through to late autumn for dabs, whiting, a few plaice, thornback rays, dogfish and a few mackerel in summer. The ground is very smooth.

Vickerstown is the huge shipbuilding sheds you see off Walney Island and should not be visited without two boats as it is out of radio contact with Cleveleys. The fishing from summer through to Christmas can be very good for codling, flatties, dogfish, occasional small pollack, mackerel and other odds and sods.

Top Tips about fishing and sailing out of FBAC

Here are some basic truths about fishing off this coast. They are in no particular order. Your experiences will regularly disprove them, but for those just beginning they are good first principles.

- 1.** Fishing off the Cleveleys/Rossall coastline needs a strong tide pull (usually). Whatever time of year, tides below 8 metres/26ft are unlikely to produce good fishing.
- 2.** Fish like a current to encourage them to feed. High and low water will fish poorly; it often takes a couple of hours before things start happening on the ebb tide.
- 3.** Tidal flow in Morecambe Bay is very strong. On tides that are higher than 26ft/8m it is very difficult to fish in the Bay. Think of small tides for the Bay, big tides for off Rossall/Cleveleys.
- 4.** There are no fish in Lune Deeps; the deep stretch of water than drains out of Morecambe Bay and it is dangerous.
- 5.** Hooks of size 1/0 will catch anything that swims in this area. Go down to size 2 for flatties, size 3/0 for winter codling fishing, size 6/0 for tope fishing.
- 6.** Black lugworm is a universal bait. You should always have an emergency supply of frozen black lug in your freezer.
- 7.** Mackerel or squid is a very selective bait. It catches tope and dogfish in summer and in winter whiting, but not much else.
- 8.** Uptide fishing works off Cleveleys and Rossall, but you need a strong tide.
- 9.** If your are using lines around 20lb breaking strain, then 6oz of lead will hold bottom on medium tides, 4oz on slack tides and 8oz on strong tides. On very big tides you may need to go heavier than this. On uptide fishing, 5/6oz wired sinkers will hold bottom.
- 10.** You don't need heavy tackle to fish this coast. If you want fun from the fishing, use boat rods of 20lb class, small reels, lines of 20lb/25lb and uptide gear with lines of 20lb and "6000" size reels. Many anglers use uptide rods for downtide fishing.
- 11.** Lure fishing does not work off the Cleveleys coast except for mackerel in summer and very occasional bass.
- 12.** There are not many mackerel off the Cleveleys/Rossall coastline. In late summer, you can catch mackerel off Blackpool piers, a few around the edges of Lune Deeps such as Lune Buoy and Danger Patch Buoy, but the best of the mackerel fishing is off Walney Island in the Vickerstown area.

- 13.** Buy an Admiralty Chart for Morecambe Bay. It is a wise investment and will help you catch more fish and understand the area you are fishing and will help you in navigation. You can buy them from any marine chandler, but Trawler Supply, opposite the Fleetwood Freeport shopping complex sells them. They are about £15.
- 14.** You should always carry two 5-gallon fuel tanks of fuel if you plan to go into the bay. If you only have one tank of petrol, stay around Bispham and Rossall.
- 15.** When the wind blows easterly, the sea looks calm, but less than half a mile offshore and you are in very rough seas. Going to Shell Wharf in an easterly wind is dangerous. If you want to launch in a stiff easterly breeze, stay close inshore, off the Norbreck Castle is a place to try, but generally, easterly winds fish very poorly.
- 16.** In front of the clubhouse is one of the best black lugworm beds on the coast. You can either pump them or dig them.
- 17.** The sea conditions off Walney Island, in Morecambe Bay and off Rossall can vary at the same time. It is due to wind and current variations. You can be in choppy water off Rossall and hear somebody in Morecambe Bay say the sea is rough. And the other way round. But remember that if you are fishing North of Lune Deeps you may have difficult water to cross.
- 18.** Prolonged easterly winds make the sea clear and fish poorly.
- 19.** Night fishing in boat is usually poor.
- 20.** Don't motor past anchored boat at high speed. It is infuriating and scares fish. Remember how far you will drift backwards when you first drop anchor, so don't stop just in front of a boat. There are no super hotspots on this coast so there is no need to drop alongside somebody uninvited; it just irritates the angler you have invaded.

COMPASS GUIDE FOR FISHING FROM FYLDE COAST

FROM		OUT	IN	Miles
FBAC slipway	to Shell Wharf Buoy	325	145	4.8
FBAC slipway	to Lune Buoy	320	140	6
FBAC slipway	to Danger Patch Buoy	355	175	5.2
FBAC slipway	to Halfway Buoy	340	160	10.5
FBAC slipway	to King Scar	360	180	5
Shell Wharf Buoy	to Lune Buoy	290	110	1.3
Shell Wharf Buoy	to Lightning Knoll	333	153	5.3
Shell Wharf Buoy	to Halfway Buoy	352	172	6.2
Shell Wharf Buoy	to Danger Patch Buoy	54	234	2.7
Shell Wharf Buoy	to King Scar Buoy	72	252	3
Shell Wharf Buoy	to Vickerstown cod mark	335	155	11
Danger Patch buoy	to FBAC slipway	175	355	5.2
Danger Patch buoy	to King Scar buoy	125	305	.08
Danger Patch buoy	to Dumper Buoy	38	218	3
Danger Patch Buoy	to Lune Buoy	255	75	3.5
Danger Patch Buoy	to Lightning Knoll	305	125	5.6
Danger Patch Buoy	to Halfway Buoy	327	147	5.3
Danger Patch buoy	to Wyre Fairway Buoy	90	270	2.2

WAYPOINT POSITIONS for GPS USERS

WPT	LAT	LONG
1 Anchorsholme slipway	5352.33	0302.8
2 Anchorsholme low water	5351.88	0303.68
3 Anchorsholme pipe end	5352.30	0303.64
4 Shell Wharf	5355.45	0308.9
5 Lune Buoy	5355.82	0311.0
6 Danger Patch buoy	5357.37	0305.6
7 King Scar buoy	5357.0	0304.35
8 Lightning Knoll	5359.85	0314.2
9 Halfway buoy	5401.45	0311.9
10 Dumper Buoy	5400.1	0303.1

GPS DISPLAY: On longitude, one degree is 60 miles

One minute of longitude equals one nautical mile.

10th of a minute (0.1) = 176 yards.

100th of a minute (0.01) = 18 yards.

1000th of a minute (0.001) = 5 feet.

One minute of latitude is a bit more than half a mile.

1 nautical mile = 2,026 yards