

Pp 194 et seq.

Wiencke Island

Local Weather

The worst summer weather on the Antarctic Peninsula comes from the north sectors. A gale from that direction funnels down Neumeyer Channel between Anvers Island and Wiencke Island, increasing in strength as it funnels between the mountains on either side of the channel. The wind is further compressed as it crosses Wiencke Island over the low glacial saddle between the Wall Range and Mt Noble/Mt Jabert on Wiencke Island then roars down into Port Lockroy and Dorian Cove. Thus an unpleasant 35-knot gale in the main part of Gerlache Strait becomes a dangerous 55-knot NE storm in Port Lockroy or Dorian Cove. It would be wise to move or take appropriate precautions if in either place when a NE or N gale is forecast for the general area. Melchior Islands, Paradise Harbour, Hovgaard Island and the Argentine Islands are all better protected from such a gale.

As an example of the effects of topography, a depression that GRIB files predicted to bring NE35 knots to the general area brought 35 knots to Vernadsky Station in the Argentine Islands but a few hundred metres away in Stella Creek the wind was only 20-25 knots. At the same time a yacht in Paradise Harbour near Videla Base reported 20-25 knots, while the wind in Port Lockroy was NE 50-55 knots with gusts to 64 knots.

Port Lockroy

64°49'S 063°29'W

Chart BA 3213

This is one of the few places on the Peninsula where it is possible to lie at anchor without lines ashore. No swell enters the harbour and the holding is good in places. Port Lockroy is the most visited place in Antarctica; there will often be a charter yacht in the harbour and most days a cruise ship will land its passengers Jougla Point and Goudier Island.

Fast ice persists in the inner part of Port Lockroy into December, and sometimes as late as early January, preventing a yacht from entering the inner harbour. Early in the season after south or west winds, drift ice may restrict the entrance to the harbour. This is rarely a problem after mid-December.

Ashore

There are some good walks ashore, with the usual restriction of avoiding rookeries. There are large gentoo rookeries on Jougla Pt/Lécuyer Pt and Goudier Island and a blue-eyed shag nesting area on the north side of Jougla Point, which can be viewed from the dinghy without disturbing the nesting birds. Dominican gulls nest on the rocky slope on the south side of Alice Creek as do a small number of sheathbills. Wilson's and black-bellied petrels nest in rocky crevasses on the north side of the Barrel Stave Haulover, but they are wary and secretive, being much preyed upon by the skuas who nest and roost along the rocky ridges. There are often a couple of Weddell seals lying in the snow on the east side of the Barrel Stave Haulover. Terns

(both Antarctic, in breeding plumage, and Arctic in plain dress), snow petrels and giant petrels are common, but usually do not breed in Pt Lockroy.

There are several good short walks ashore on Jouglia Point, taking care as always not to disturb nesting birds. It is possible to walk to Harbour Glacier (the glacier on the east side of Port Lockroy and overlooking the harbour) from the east end of Alice Creek but this is not recommended. Harbour Glacier has numerous crevasses, many of which are hidden under dangerously thin snow bridges. Do not venture on to the glacier unless suitably experienced and equipped.

[*Re Harbour Glacier: at least one incautious yachtsman has died here after going through a snow bridged crevasse.*]

For those interested in 20th century industrial archaeology, there are numerous traces of the whalers who used Port Lockroy as a base between 1911 and 1931. There are large piles of whale bones on Joulga Point, some of which have been re-assembled to a crude approximation of a humpback whale's skeleton. Barrel Stave Haulover is littered with oak staves from the storage barrels used by the whalers and Goudier Island has the remains of several scows that were used as platforms for flensing whales. There are chain and wire rope mooring slings around many rocks around the harbour and a couple of mooring bollards cemented into the shore, one on Besnard Point and one on Flag Point. Graffiti on Goudier Island (from the whalers) and Besnard Point (from Sir Hubert Wilkin's 1924 flying expedition) has been elevated from pollution status to historical artefact, as has the whaler's detritus. Do not touch any of it.

The chief historical relict is the British base on Goudier Island, which was occupied from 1944 to 1962, initially to establish a territorial claim on this part of Antarctica and later as a scientific station. This has been restored and operates as a shop/museum/post office during the tourist season from mid November to early March. It is much visited by passengers from cruise ships and it is essential to book ahead for a visit. Call on VHF to make the arrangements. The staff (three people in 2018) is very busy and cannot accommodate casual callers. The landing is on the NW side of Goudier Island besides the whaler's mooring chains. Someone will come to meet you and give briefing. Visits are usually limited to an hour.

Approach

Straightforward.

Anchorage/Berths

The best anchorage is that marked 1 on the sketch chart *Approaches to Port Lockroy and Dorian Cove*. It is NE of Jouglia Point in 20m, good holding, clay. An alternative marked 2 on the sketch chart is in the NE part of Pt Lockroy in 12 to 18m, fair holding. Both are safe in all but a NE gale.

The most secure (if not the most convenient) berth for a yacht is in Alice Creek. As there is no room to swing here it is necessary to run lines ashore, but once moored the berth is safe in all conditions. The best approach to Alice Creek is to pass west of the skerry that lies on the north-west side of the creek. It is possible to enter Alice Creek from the east of this skerry but that route is narrow, tortuous and not recommended. Approach the skerry from the north, avoiding the rock with a charted position 100m NNE of the skerry. This rock may not exist; if it does, it is not in the charted position. Aim for the mid part of the skerry and turn sharply to starboard when 6-8m from it. Follow around the west side of the skerry keeping 6-8m from it:

least depth 3.5m, least clear width 10m. Once in Alice Creek the depth increases to 7-8m.

Run a line from the bow to the skerry and two lines astern to Jougla Point. There are numerous suitable rocks to attach lines to on Jougla Point but the skerry is low and ice-smoothed with few suitable tie points. However it has wedge-shaped cracks that will accept a length of chain with a couple of overhand knots in the end. Once dropped into the crack the knots act like a climber's nut. This arrangement will withstand hurricane force winds.

Secure with the bow facing the skerry as this puts the vessel's bow towards the ice driven across the harbour by a NE gale. As the temperature rises during a NE gale the rate at which the ice cliffs around Port Lockroy calve is increased and the whole of the inner harbour is sometimes covered with brash. Most of this ice is too small to menace a yacht, but there will also be some growlers that weigh a tonne or two. Some of this ice will drive down into Alice Creek, but the skerry deflects the larger growlers and, as the yacht is facing into the wind, brash and small growlers rumble harmlessly down the vessel's sides. In the same conditions a vessel anchored NE of Jougla Point will not only have to cope with hurricane-force gusts but will be repeatedly bashed by growlers large enough to be worrying and perhaps dangerous.

In a NE gale the anchorage in the cove west of Barrel Stave Haulover, marked 3 on the sketch chart, is protected from drift ice but the holding is poor and the anchor is pulling down a steep, rocky bottom. However, if the vessel should drag it is into deep water, unlike the situation in inner Port Lockroy. Some charter yachts use this anchorage when a NE gale threatens, but they have very large anchors and powerful motors capable of pushing the vessel to windward in hurricane force winds to re-anchor if they should drag. The berth is less attractive for a low-powered yacht.

Another possible berth in a NE gale is with the bow tied to the bollard (left there by the whalers) on Flag Point with a stern anchor to the south-west. The holding is poor and it will be necessary to move immediately the wind shifts from the north-east. A considerable amount of ice, some of it quite large and moving quickly, will stream past this berth in a strong gale. Pulling close in to the shore will minimize the number of impacts.

[This section needs editing to reduce its length. I know the area quite well, have wintered in Alice Creek in 1999/2000 and visited the area again in 2018.]

Dorian Cove

Dorian Cove is a delightful spot 3 miles by sea from but only Port Lockroy half a mile north of it over the glacier. Dorian Cove is protected from the sea by a reef extending east from Wiencke Island. Landing is easy on a section of gently sloping beach that has been cleared of rocks. Chart BA 3213 is misleading. It shows a gap in the middle of the reef that looks as if it might be passable for a yacht. There is no such gap and the only entry is through a narrow gap at the east end of the reef close under the ice cliff.

Ashore

There is a large gentoo rookery and good walking and skiing around Dorian Cove. The snow slopes above Dorian Cove are free from crevasses except for a large crack along on the summit. This crack usually has a thick, secure snow bridge that is safe to

cross. Walking on this snow slope is generally safe except around the base of Mt Jabert where there are numerous crevasses with thin, unstable snow caps.

There are two huts ashore. The larger one is in good condition and until 1995 was used by the British Antarctic Survey as a bunkhouse for crew transfers. Crew were brought to Dorian cove by ship and flew the rest of the way to Rothera on aircraft that landed on the glacier above Dorian Cove. The other, older hut, originally built as a refuge by the Argentinians, was used as a rubbish dump by BAS personnel and has not been cleaned up since.

Approach

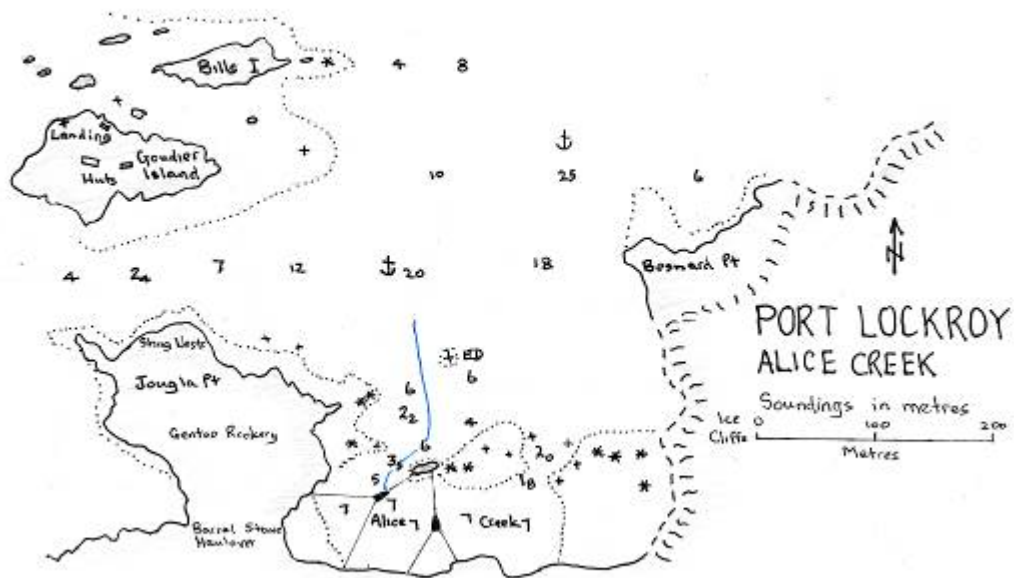
Enter from the east side of the cove through the narrow gap between the drying reef that forms the north side of Dorian Cove and the ice cliff on the Wiencke Island shore. Keep 5-8m from the ice cliff, least depth 3m, least clear width 10m. Once through the gap swing gently east, initially favouring the Wiencke Island side as rocks extend a short distance south of the point of the reef.

Anchorage/Berth

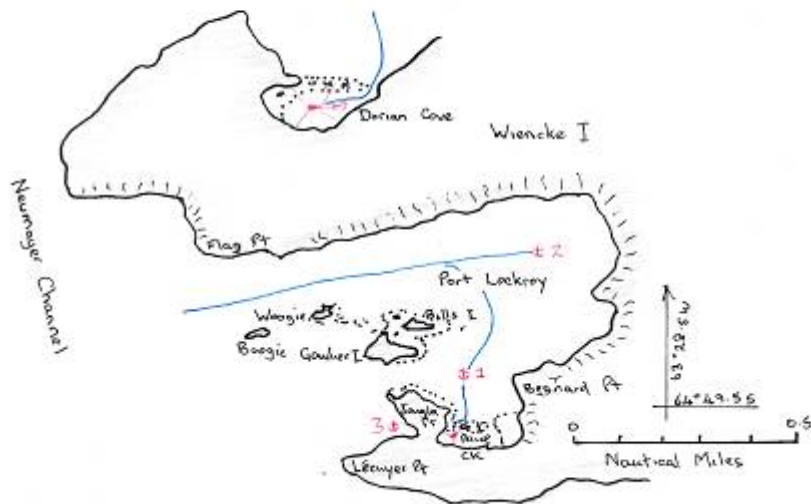
Anchor as convenient midway between the reef and shore and run lines ashore. The holding is only fair and four lines ashore are necessary for anything other than a short stay in settled weather. Moor with the bows facing east as the strongest winds are likely to be from the north-east. There are numerous strong tie points on the Wiencke shore for the port (south) side lines and the stern lines. The port bow line has to be tied to above water rocks on the seaward reef. Finding a secure place to attach this line can be difficult. A chain sling, perhaps knotted to form a jammer, is probably the best option. This line is critical for safety in bad weather as it will be the only line taking any weight in a north-east gale. The local topography accelerates and funnels wind from that quarter and a gale elsewhere will be storm force in Dorian Cove.

Although the reef keeps the bigger pieces of ice out of Dorian Cove, enough brash and small growlers will be blown by a gale to be a nuisance. The ice catches on the shore lines, which then funnel the ice on to the yacht's bow. The line to the reef is of necessity attached to rocks close to sea level; ensure this line cannot be lifted from its attachment by drifting ice at high tide.

[The sketch chart on P196 is misleading. The best berth is with the vessel facing ENE into the strongest wind with an anchor ahead and lines ashore. The text is confusing;



APPROACHES TO PORT LOCKROY AND DORIAN COVE





Wiencke 1

Fast ice may prevent access to inner Port Lockroy in November and December. In this photograph, taken on 19 November, passengers from the cruise ship *Explorer* are walking across fast ice to the Goudier Island museum. The yacht *Iron Bark* is still frozen in its winter quarters in Alice Creek; it broke out on 4 January. The *Explorer* sank in 2007 after hitting ice in the Bransfield Strait.



Wiencke 2

Iron Bark moored in Alice Creek with *Kraken* anchored behind. *Kraken* is anchored just south of the anchorage shown on the sketch chart.



Wiencke 3

Moored in Alice Creek between the skerry and Jougla Point.



Wiencke 4

When tied up in Alice Creek, the skerry deflects the bigger bits of ice and the remaining brash and growlers rumble harmlessly down the side of the vessel.



Wiencke 5

Port Lockroy looking west from Harbour Glacier with *Iron Bark* moored in Alice Creek. Caution: Harbour Glacier has numerous crevasses hidden by thin snow bridges.



Wiencke 6
Gentoos and whalebones on Joula Point



Wiencke 7
A chain stopper formed by an overhand knot dropped into a crack in rock otherwise devoid of tie points.



Wiencke 8
Mooring line attached to a chain sling around a large boulder.



Wiencke 9
Dorian Cove



Wiencke 10
Dorian Cove with approach track