

# Blakeney Harbour Association

## Navigational buoys, beacons and markers

Everyone who uses Blakeney Harbour will understand how challenging it can be to position and maintain the system of navigational aids as channels shift with almost every tide. At Blakeney Harbour Association (BHA), the Buoyage Team of Henry Archer, Neil Thompson and Will Darby make every effort to keep the buoys, beacons, markers and withies around the harbour well placed to guide and protect all boat users but it remains the responsibility of every skipper to ensure the safety of their craft.

We thought it might be helpful to explain a little about the care we take to ensure the harbour is safely marked.

### **A harbour-wide system**

Around 24 entrance channel buoys and almost 50 inner harbour buoys form a comprehensive system of navigation aids from the Hjordis wreck through to Blakeney and Cley Channels. Although the Hjordis wreck beacon itself is maintained separately by Trinity House, all other buoys, beacons and markers are positioned, maintained and monitored by the BHA volunteers.

In addition, each buoy, beacon and marker is inspected, cleaned and serviced with new chains and sinkers when necessary.

### **Surveys on water, foot and from the air**

Following a comprehensive review at the beginning of each season, the position of each beacon, buoy and marker is monitored on a regular basis. In addition to the reports from harbour wardens and boat users using the harbour on a daily basis, volunteers regularly walk the harbour at low-tide to check that each marker is still correctly positioned in relation to the shifting channels.

Special thanks to Peter Roe and Alistair McInnes for their tireless foot patrols and surveys.

To back up this constant monitoring from the water and land, BHA carries out drone surveys every month at low Spring Tide. These surveys monitor the position and movement of sand banks and channels with a perspective impossible to achieve from sea level.

Reports of any issues identified by sea, foot or from the air are provided to the BHA Buoyage team and when required, teams of volunteers are mobilised to help lift, move and sink buoys to the correct position.

### **Different types of markers**

The system of navigational aids is made of up beacons, buoys and withies, each of which has a slightly different function.

- Beacons are fixed to the earth and may be poles or structures in relatively permanent positions. They are mostly used to carry information and/or weather stations.

- Buoys are floating markers which are used to mark channels or hazards which may move position. From the heavier harbour entrance buoys to the smaller channel 'cans' and 'cones' lateral buoys are green for starboard and red for port when entering the harbour (so, the other way round going out!).
- All beacons and the harbour entrance channel buoys are lit, each with its own code of flashes.
- Withies are willow poles used to mark the shallow shelves and some approach channels around the inner harbour.

There are also a number of other markers around the harbour including the yellow numbered race buoys placed by Blakeney Sailing Club.

### **Annual surveys by Trinity House**

To ensure we are providing the highest standards of guidance to mariners and complying with international conventions, the Blakeney Harbour navigational system is audited each year by Trinity House. To date we have received a clean bill of health every year.

### **Notices to Mariners**

BHA regularly issues Notices to Mariners by email to notify harbour users of important changes, buoyage information and general updates. These are also posted on the BHA website. You can sign up to receive email notifications through the website.

### **The website and interactive map**

The coordinates, name and description of every beacon and buoy is recorded and marked on an interactive map on the BHA website. Please use this map to familiarise yourself with the navigational system around the harbour.

### **Skippers Responsibility**

Although BHA take every care to provide a safe and well-managed system of navigational aids throughout the Harbour, please remember that channels and sandbanks can shift with a single tide and that buoys can sometimes be moved by the power of nature. For that reason, it remains the responsibility of every skipper to ensure the safety of their vessel.