

# Hayling Challenge 2023

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## Alan Moulton in Deben Lugger *Eydis*

*This entry is also eligible for the Allan Earl Trophy*

Alan Moulton & Neil Sutherland

Boat: Deben Lugger, *Eydis*

Thursday 30/08/2023

Route: Clockwise

HW 11.38 4.79m LW 16.58 0.83m

Winds: Variable W to NW F2 to F4

Recorded time: 5 hours 7 minutes. Departed at 10.33am

Hayling Bridge: Lowered both masts and sculled. Slack water.

Neil and I launched at Itchenor and made our way over to Cobnor to set foot on the gravel Hard there to say hello to a few DCA folk and to set a start time for the Hayling Challenge. A series of family and other commitments had limited my participation in the Cobnor Fortnight and I had missed a series of days during which, in my opinion, the tide times better suited this circumnavigation. However, I was encouraged by the forecast North-Westerlies, a wind direction that suits Chichester Harbour quite nicely. This was to be my first Hayling Challenge attempt in *Eydis* and Neil's first attempt ever, although we have both circumnavigated Hayling Island on



previous occasions in several other craft. We had discussed our approach to the event and had simply decided to go as quickly as we could. I prefer a clockwise approach and after a brief discussion this was also agreed.

We took a photograph to record our departure and immediately pushed off from the Hard. I sculled for a short period to move us into a decent breeze, then we were off. With the wind on starboard, we made quick progress down the harbour cutting the corner close to Pilsey Island and the shallows beyond with impunity on the top of a Spring Tide. The wind in this area though had more West in it and I couldn't quite lay a reliable course directly to the marked entrance channel adjacent to Hayling Island Sailing Club. Neil proposed taking a much less travelled route out of the

Harbour. About 300 yards west of East Head beach is a deepish channel running

parallel to the official Harbour Entrance. We had explored this in small dinghies and kayaks in previous years and given the height of the tide we were confident we could save time by taking this route, so we did. Approximately due west of 'The Hinge' we were clear and pointed towards the Bar Beacon and cleared it easily without yet having made a single tack.

We had the outgoing tide in our favour as we made two or three long tacks to clear Hayling Bay and as we approached Langstone Harbour entrance we saw that the West Winner bank was still truncated by the tide which was very convenient. I recall a conversation about lunch somewhere in this vicinity and we agreed to wait until we were broad reaching up the harbour before partaking. There was no stopping at the Ferryboat Inn on this

occasion, we were aiming for a quick time. Any concerns regarding stemming the outgoing tide were allayed as we made good progress against the young ebb and accelerated beyond the Mulberry Harbour. By now, I was confident that we would arrive at Hayling Bridge in good time and get through well before LW. We sailed up to Langstone Sailing Club's slipway and lowered the sails



and dropped the masts. With her unstayed Carbon fibre masts, this is more straightforward with this boat than you might imagine. I sculled Eydis under the bridge grateful that the water appeared to be slack in this immediate vicinity. Once through, we picked up a vacant mooring to raise the masts and hoist sails again.

By now we were confident that our circumnavigation time was going to be a personal best for me and an excellent first for Neil. We had passed under the bridge almost exactly three and a half hours after starting and allowed ourselves to speculate. Was a sub-five-hour time going to be possible? It was certainly going to be close. The now strong ebb would spirit us down the Emsworth Channel but would slow our approach to Cobnor. Neil now helming, made a bold move to steer a short course directly across Stocker's Sands with me on the bow poking an oar in occasionally to check the depth. Eydis can sail downwind in about a foot of water but with the water falling fast and the depth reduced to about 18 inches, I became very nervous. If our subsequent strategic discussion regarding the merits and risks associated with Neil's proposed course had been overheard, it might loosely be described as a good-natured bickering. With opposing views, the outcome was determined as I pulled rank (my boat) and steered us into deeper water and an adverse tide, extending our course and probably costing us about 10 minutes - significant later.

For the remainder of our voyage, we kept glancing at our watches as the minutes ticked by. We celebrated when the breeze picked up and sighed when it eased and

all the while a sub-five-hour time remained feasible. The drag towards Itchenor after Chalkdock started to erode our confidence as the wind eased a little and we sailed in the shallows attempting to avoid the strongest of the ebb. Our former friend had become our foe, that turncoat tide! Then when we turned into the Bosham Channel the breeze fell light and I grabbed the oar and sculled energetically for the remaining several hundred yards. Neil was ready with the camera to record the moment of arrival for posterity and for the time stamp. We organised the sails, set an anchor and then examined the time stamps of the departure and arrival photographs. The calculation revealed an outcome of 5 hours and 7 minutes, good time but we had just missed our self-imposed target. As we settled down on one of the shoreside benches for coffee and a celebratory bun, Neil raised the matter of my navigational intervention over Stocker's Sands. 'Just saying!'

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