

# Hayling Challenge 2024

Note: This entry is eligible for the Hayling Challenge Trophy and also the Allan Earl Trophy

<b>Skipper name:</b>	<b>Chris Waite</b>
<b>Boat name:</b>	<b><i>Polly Wee</i></b>
Crew name(s):	
Type of boat and description:	Own design, flat bottom, water-ballasted; LOA - 11'6".
Rig:	Una-rig, unstayed, balance lug
Date of challenge:	27/08/2024
Time of HW Chi BST:	18.17
LW Chi BST:	11.32
Start time:	07.48
Finish time:	12.28
Did you go Clockwise or ACW?	Anticlockwise
Wind strengths and directions:	F3-4 Southerly
How did you pass Hayling Bridge?	Rowed under Hayling Bridge with mast standing, but sail furled
Was the current under Hayling Bridge with you or against?	Notably against, but (?) none at the Hayling Billy stumps!?

## Chris's report:

Being a pair of ageing juveniles, we've performed this trick so many times now that *Polly Wee* actually knows her own way round Hayling, leaving me perched on the side deck as an afterthought.

On Saturday last I stepped in after the Challenge lecture (uninvited I might add), with the intention of giving an overview of the problems in rounding the island '*to best advantage*' - that's covert for 'racing'. Actually that'd have been a shame as working it out for yourself is part of the fun. Anyway, it was spur of the moment and without notes, I rapidly petered out.

For the reasons I would have explained if I'd had those notes, I deemed an early start and anticlockwise would best serve the purpose and actually, apart from a couple of hiccups it worked out quite well, so my boat and I left Cobnor bright and early, with a the tide ebbing and a very adequate Southerly. Apart from a couple of tacks down the Cobnor shore to the main channel, we then stayed on port tack for an hour and a half-ish; managing to cross Thorney front on a beam reach, without grounding and only touching the bottom a couple of times with the centreboard.

Bearing away onto a dead run, I decided that the ebb from Emsworth, against us, was stronger on the Thorney than Hayling side and had 'ferry-glided' across by the time we had reached the green *Marker* pile; right on the one hour I had allowed. The seals way over on the Thorney side, didn't actually cheer, but I thought I heard the odd rumble. Arriving at the division of the channels, we gently came round onto a reach and, still hugging the shallows as much as I dared, passed the Northney Marina and entered the New Cut.



1 Chris sailing Polly Wee at a 2003 rally (pic, J Murphy)

First 'hiccup'; it's not very deep, or wide at this state of the tide and there is a tranche (a heap - elongated in this case) of small trees close on the Hayling shore that stop anything less than a full Southerly gale dead in its tracks. The ebb chose this moment to overcome any momentum and we stopped; out with the oars. That was sufficient to get us past the calm, but in wrestling the oars away, facing aft I allowed *PW* to drift off to leeward. Only a few feet, but enough to wrap herself, rig uppermost, around the single starboard withy.

Well bother

....got out of that one dropping the sail and taking a few minutes to poke around in the mud with an oar.

We sort of sail-and-oared our way clumsily up to the bridge, to find a reasonable current still against us. Sail down in the lifts (the topping-lifts; because I can), I knelt aft on the cockpit sole and rowed facing forward, looking for all the world, like a very short Venetian. There's a reason for the unusual posture; firstly you can watch the masthead as it approaches the underside of the bridge. A few

inches to spare; thank goodness. Also, unlike the withy, I could visually pilot her through the channel among the maze of bridge pilings.

In the enclosed lagoon the other side, I rowed far enough away to give me room to hoist sail and slipped out of the gap in the dragon's teeth - the rail piling stumps. Once truly in Langstone, I put in a quick tack and back to make sure the sail was fully set and off to the Mulberry wreck. Close hauled on a single Port tack; not bad at all and as I rounded the concrete remnants and started tacking again on the remains of the ebb, I managed to check my watch. Amazing; twenty-five minutes ahead of my 'five hour' schedule.

It wasn't to last; outside the harbour I slithered lumpily to windward (is that possible?) down the Solent-side edge of the *East Winner*.... no 'way' was there a 'swatch'; it would be a beat to windward to round the end of the bank. I used all those spare minutes getting to that point.

And scurried across the outer edge of the breakers that were rolling onto the sand. Clearing that it was a rollicking, close-reach ride on Starboard, across Hayling Bay. In fact it was a good clear day for sighting distant objects and even as I left the harbour entrance, I could easily make out both West Pole and the Chichester Bar marks.

That helped; leaving the only other decision, whether to try for the Eastoke swatchway on the corner of Hayling itself. This is always a difficult one as from seaward; you simply cannot tell what is going on there. It's not wide or deep at the best of times and factors against included the lack of water in the East Winner swatchway, also the Southerly possibly pushing small breaking seas over the gap at Eastoke itself. It's a long way to get back round the bank if you get close enough in and decide against it. I chickened out.

Not altogether though; I aimed instead for the Chichester Bar beacon. Out beyond this, there can be a small sea running, but it's not usually necessary to go out round West Pole as well. Hayling bay was in its customary fidgety mood, but rocking and rolling along, I eventually snuck close round the beacon and eased off into the harbour with the early flood. At this point, Justin (Mirror rouge) and Paul (the Smacks-boat) passed me to lee, as they beat out of the harbour.

Next and last quandary; would there be enough water over the Winner to cut across? It's another questionable one; most of the Winner is pretty hard shingle, but there seemed to be enough water over it, so I took the risk, choosing a Northerly track, about a third of the way from its Western edge. Get it wrong and you are being blown onto hard ground with the remnants of a swell under you; very crunchy. Lucky guess though and from already fading memory, I might've merely tipped-bottom with the plate one odd time.

After that it was simply a matter, of slipping over to the groove that *PW* has already cut for herself on countless trips between East Head and Cobnor. All on starboard tack, from South-West of the East Winner to swinging onto the hard at Cobnor itself.

*Blow the wind Southerly*

Flow the Neap

Tidily