

Hayling Challenge 2023

Pat Ditton in her Mirror, *Heron*

This entry is also eligible for the Gunter Grail

Skipper: Pat Ditton
Boat: "Heron"
Type: Mirror
Gunter Rig
Date: 25 Aug 23
Tides: LW 1115 1.9. HW 1830 3.9. Range 2m. Neaps
Start: 0845
Finish: 1425
Winds: NW/N F2 then SW/W F3/4
Bridge: Yard lowered. Mast up. Walked through



Many thanks for all the planning info received. It was really helpful in setting up a pilotage plan, along with my chart, tides, tidal streams. I had benchmarks for low tide at Langstone Entrance and for That Bridge. The icing on the plan was the winds on the day.

Alistair, in his Paradox, waved me off from Cobnor Hard at 0845 - 2.5 hours before LW. The wind was NNW F2 so a delightful sunny morning reach down Chichester Channel . Because I was so early I gambled (successfully-just!) and cut across some of the Winner Sands and then over a very calm Bar as it was wind with tide. I turned west just after the Bar Beacon and the wind went variable until it settled SW/W F3/4 so a beat across Hayling Bay. The sea got Solent and/or E Winner Sands lumpy so I was glad to spot the Safe Water Mark into Langstone Harbour.

It wasn't the speedy Entrance I'd anticipated as I was much earlier than planned. It was slack water which made it easier to work out the nav marks. I avoided the lure of the cafe! I found the 3 IDMs were particularly useful to ensure I went in the right channel for the Bridge and could settle down on a reach with mudbanks on either

side. I decided to go through the Bridge under jib with lowered yard-and trepidation. All well til I grounded 1m before the Bridge, so jumped out and walk through.

As I was still so much earlier than my plan, I realised that there was the young flood to ease my way past Northney and hopefully down the Emsworth Channel. So I just kept going. I was pilotage challenged when very soon presented with 2 channels at the same time as I went to raise the yard with one hand and had my tiller extension in my other hand which separated itself from the tiller. Whoops. As I'd planned to keep close to the Northney shore, I took the minor channel and hoped I wouldn't ground and didn't. I now know that is the New Cut. All worked out well as it was a downwind sail the whole way back to Cobnor so I didn't need the tiller extension. Time for sarnies and coffee. I cut across some of Pilsey Sands with dagger board mostly up and a couple of scrapes. Again luck was with me. Then up the Chichester Channel, round Cobnor Point and welcomed back by Chris Waite who was just coming in from his sail and helped Heron up the ramp.

This was my second venture into the Solent with the Mirror this year and it's helping me regain dinghy confidence after nearly 2 decades in fin keeled yachts. I couldn't have asked for more favourable wind/tide conditions. They worked fantastically well together. I thoroughly enjoyed my first Hayling Challenge.