

# Hayling Challenge 2023

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## Tony Watson and crew in Drascombe Dabber *Priscilla*

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

Skipper: Tony Watson  
Crew: Mandy Gorringe, John Collins, Tola the Dog  
Boat name: PRISCILLA  
Type: Drascombe Dabber  
Rig: Standing Lug Yawl  
Date: 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023  
HW: 08:36  
LW: 14:19  
Start: 09:54  
Finish: 18:20  
Clockwise  
Wind: SW through NW F3 - F5  
Hayling Bridge: Both masts lowered. Walked / rowed  
Current: With

Passage planning was somewhat haphazard on account of only owning the boat for a month and not having much idea of the boat's sailing speed but 3.5 knots with current assistance seemed achievable. With a forecasted light westerly wind, the basic plan was to travel clockwise and do the "upwind" leg in the open waters of Hayling Bay rather than in narrow channels and arrive at the Langstone entrance at, or near, low water.

We left Cobnor 1.5 hours after high water and made East Head on one tack. We stuck to the main channel until abeam the Chichester Bar Beacon and then headed westwards. A fortunate wind shift allowed us to sail almost parallel to the Hayling shore until the exposed East Winner Sands made us head seawards again.



Around this point the sun went in, the wind increased and the sea turned choppy. Beating into Langstone against the last of the ebb was painful at first and not helped by an ineffective mizzen. We also discovered considerable water in the bilge (later traced to a leaking bung) which needed to be pumped out. Tola the dog has a cast iron bladder and easily goes twelve hours without a pee but unfortunately the rest of the crew couldn't wait until the planned "comfort break" at the Ferry on Hayling Island and were forced to add to the bilge water.



We tacked to and fro close to the East Winner Sands but not close enough to either run aground or allow the cold and seasick crew the opportunity to "abandon ship". By the time we'd reached the entrance the tide was turning in our favour and we gladly abandoned the planned stop near the Ferry. By car, we'd explored this area and the bridge the previous day and I wasn't relishing having to land on a leeward shore and having to get off again without the use of the outboard.



With an increasing flood tide and a fresh beam wind we flew up the Langstone Channel and landed just below the bridge. Dropping both masts we rowed through and allowed ourselves a modest G&T at the Ship Inn before untangling and re-securing the halyards and rigging and draining the dog.



By this time there was enough water in the New Cut and we carried the flood tide until the Emsworth South Cardinal beacon. Heading south, the current turned against us so we sailed close to the shallows on the east side of the Emsworth channel to North Pilsey Buoy and then headed east across the Sands into the Chichester Channel and home to Cobnor to be greeted and applauded on the beach by Joe Murphy.

The trip took 8 hours 24 minutes so we didn't break any records but overall it was a great trip and looking forward to doing it next year!

