

## Chichester Harbour Epic Tour – Sunday 27 July

Tour organizer – Jim Mullany

Technical director (& report author) – Peter Barnes

Trips to [Chichester Harbour](#) have taken place each year since the mid 90s.

Always enjoyable, but to my mind they have become a bit pedestrian, a bit too easy. In the early years there was the challenge of learning to manage the sometime chaos caused by individuals, and, (misguided) attempts to paddle in the face of over difficult winds and waves.

About 10 years ago Charmian Gradwell and Sarah Odell (in a Mystere), starting from Chichester Harbour, completed a circumnavigation of [Hayling Island](#). On seeing that the low tide time, on the board at [West Itchenor](#), was at 1220h, and seeing that it was becoming very warm with little wind, I figured that the conditions were good for the group to have a go at the big one. The Coastguard was happy, but gave us their patrol boat mobile numbers should we need assistance. We variously peered at my OS map in order to get a feel for the mission ahead.

### **Stage 1 West Itchenor (1050h) to Chichester Harbour entrance, western side (7km)**

We set off in a good tight group (7 doubles and a Laance) and got to East Head easily. We proceeded west in front of the sand dunes, and then the first moment of truth – crossing the harbour entrance to the western side. The water looked hairy with big washes off the heavy pleasure boats that were going in and out of the harbour. But with sufficient skill being deployed by all, we got across this 400m without problem.

### **Stage 2 Chichester Harbour entrance to Langstone Harbour (6km)**

We were hoping that the trip along the coast in front of Hayling Island would be OK. Unfortunately, it wasn't. The wind was coming from the south and the water was choppy and unpleasant. After no more than 1km there was a capsize and it was clear that things were not going to go smoothly. If what you are doing is not working, do something else. We would portage the remaining 5km distance to Langstone Harbour. (Andrew in the Laance found he could handle the water OK, so it was agreed that he could dip out of the portaging).

So off we set. After a little more than 1km of slog it was decided to have a rest and some food, and then to have another go at paddling. If anything it was more difficult this time so in we came again to resume the portaging mission with renewed effort. Most of the distance we traipsed along on the grass verge at the side of the minor road nearest to the sea.

And we got there. A shingle spit between mud flats led to some nice water within Langstone Harbour. There was some concern about Andrew, but he appeared after about 20 minutes, happy as Larry. Though he did say that the harbour entrance area was a nightmare with high-powered jets skis zipping about. Angus showed that he was happy by floating on his back in the water. Sonia reveled in the replacement paddling shoes and socks that had been sourced for her (following an attack of blisters inside her Decathlon rubbers). Quite a few crashed out on their backs and/or found the need to visit the bushes 100m away.

### **Stage 3 To [Langstone Bridge](#) (6km).**

Easy peasy paddling. Stopped near to Texaco garage for replenishment with water, energy drinks and some food.

### **Stage 4 Langstone Bridge to West Itchenor (12km)**

For the first 2km we were sheltered from the southerly wind by Hayling Island so easy peasy paddling again. But after crossing over the main channel to be close to Thorney Island the waves became larger and less pleasant. Angus at one point decided that he had had enough so exited the boat into chest deep water leaving Sam by herself.

Our intention was to split this stage into two parts by making for [Pilsey Island](#). We could not make it out, probably because the thing was still connected to Thorney Island at this stage of the tide. Anyway we had quite a stretch of walking in shin deep water (over good sand rather than mud), skidding the boats along.

Finally rounding this sandy area we paddled off again but stayed on the north side of the main Chichester Channel in straightforward water. We finally got to within sight of the Itchenor area. We crossed the main channel easily (no boats nearby and shelter from any southerly wind) in good “open order paddling formation”, to arrive back where we started at 1920h.

An epic. Total time 8h 30m

Total distance 31km (26km paddling, 5km portaging)

### **Paddlers**

Andrew	Laance
Kevin/ Jim	Condor
Sonia/ Will	Condor
Coralie/ Ian	Condor
Karl/ Steve	New Discovery
Claire/ Paul	New Discovery
Sam/ Angus	Mystere
Peter/ Cath	Stiletto