

Essential Safety: Chichester Harbour



Chichester Harbour Conservancy
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

November 2008
www.conservancy.co.uk

Surviving Chichester Harbour

Chichester Harbour is renowned as an excellent venue for small boat sailing, but in common with all tidal waters can be deadly for the unwary in the wrong conditions, or for those in un-seaworthy vessels. This leaflet is aimed at the less experienced mariner and aims to steer them away from difficulties in their first years.



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The Essentials: Chichester Harbour

Wind

Forces 1-3 are light and suitable for beginners.

Force 4 larger waves begin to form; consider sheltered areas or returning.

Force 5 and above only suitable for experienced sailors.

Tidal Streams



Misjudging the tides and depths can result in a long wait!

The tides follow a fortnightly cycle of neap tides followed by spring tides. The spring tides have lower low tides and higher high tides and therefore give rise to stronger currents. Be aware that on spring tides, particularly the ebb tide (when the tide is falling), currents can reach speeds of up to 6-knots at the harbour entrance and many vessels are unable to make progress against it.

Depth

Whilst the harbour appears as a huge expanse of water at high-tide, depths vary greatly and it is reduced to a series of channels at low-water; if you get caught out on a drying area on a falling tide you could be there for some time! The deep-water channels are marked by navigation buoys and generally have a depth of at least two metres at low water.

Chichester Bar $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile south of the harbour entrance however is only dredged to 1.5 metres below Chart Datum (CD) every 5-years; this depth reduces between dredges and can be as little as 0.8 metres below CD at the end of the cycle.



Deep water channels are clearly marked

Combination Effects

On their own the effect of wind, tide and depth are relatively predictable, but in combination they can make life very difficult for the mariner. Strong tides pushing a column of water over a shallow feature causes the water to become very turbulent. The turn of tide can change a pleasant cruise into an unpleasant one as the friction of wind and tide in opposition create short choppy seas and a wet and bumpy ride for crews. Put these together, add a swell, and it can make for very dangerous seas, particularly in the exposed area of the Chichester Bar and across to the harbour entrance.



Chichester Bar



For the inexperienced this is no place to be even in relatively light winds. With a falling tide and strong winds from a southerly sector a dangerous sea may be encountered. Experienced sailors in well found vessels crossing the bar in these conditions are advised to do so three hours before and one hour after high water springs. In very strong winds, serious consideration should be given to postponing your trip.

Visibility

Life is much harder for the navigator at night or in poor visibility. This is particularly the case in fog; on one occasion our Patrol vessel rescued 13 people who had become disoriented and ran aground in dense fog.

Passage Planning

Passage planning is crucial to avoid being caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and is in fact a requirement under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). Have a chart and tide tables on board and heed the navigational advice in the *Chichester Harbour News and Guide*. Note the weather forecast. Real time weather and tidal information is available on www.chimet.co.uk, which relays information from West Pole Beacon, close to the Chichester Bar.



Sign up on www.conservancy.co.uk to receive Local Notice to Mariners for up to the minute advice on navigational issues in the harbour.

For further advice see SOLAS V For *Pleasure Craft* www.mcga.gov.uk.

Small Boat Safety

▶ Beware of overloading small vessels as they can quickly become unstable. Tragically there have been a number of deaths in harbours caused by tenders sinking in this way, and still more near misses.

▶ Wear a lifejacket; over the years this simple measure would have saved many lives.

▶ Always use the kill cord on your engine.

▶ Ensure that your engine is serviced and you have enough fuel.

▶ Carry a means to summons assistance, preferably a VHF radio.



Always wear a lifejacket

Rules of the Road

With hundreds of vessels using the harbour on busy summer days it is essential that mariners have a working knowledge of the collision regulations. Key rules are detailed in the leaflet *Rules of the Road* produced by Chichester Harbour Conservancy.



The collision regulations apply when you meet racing vessels in the harbour; the leaflet *Sailing and Powerboating in Harmony in Chichester Harbour* offers further guidance.

Both documents are available on www.conservancy.co.uk or can be obtained from the Harbour Office.

Training

Appropriate training will greatly enhance your competence, safety and enjoyment of your sport.

See www.rya.org.uk for advice on training courses.

A good training course will help increase your enjoyment of your sport



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Warnings: Chichester Harbour



You can be fined for excess speed or undue wash

Watch your speed and wash

Harbour users risk a £2,500 fine if they create 'undue wash', even if keeping to the speed limit for power craft of 8 knots. So keep out of trouble and avoid annoyance by slowing down enough to reduce wash and noise to a minimum when passing other boats, or through moorings.

Sewage and Oil

Don't pump sewage or oily bilge water into the harbour. There is a list of oil disposal, and sewage pump-out sites, on the Conservancy website www.conservancy.co.uk.

No Waterskiing or Kitesurfing

Waterskiing, kitesurfing, wakeboarding and similar activities are not permitted in Chichester Harbour.

Guidance Notes: Chichester Harbour

Etiquette in the fairways

- ▶ Keep to the right hand side of the fairway, and remember that large vessels moving at slow speed may need extra room.
- ▶ Avoid weaving between lines of moorings.
- ▶ Only overtake in a mooring fairway when there is no oncoming traffic!

Harbour Dues



All vessels using Chichester Harbour must pay harbour dues. You will then receive a self-adhesive plaque which must be displayed on the port quarter. The plaque has a unique reference number so the Patrol can quickly track the boat back to you in case of emergency.

Mooring and Anchoring

- ▶ Keep the fairways clear by anchoring outside the main navigable channels, particularly near the harbour entrance.
- ▶ Don't anchor in mooring areas: you'll risk losing your anchor as well as colliding with moored or moving boats.



▶ Anchor well away from navigation and racing marks, or withies; on no account tie up to them! That would make navigation difficult for others, and you'd risk being a centre of attraction for a dinghy race.

▶ When anchored: always leave someone on board if anchored in the harbour, the tide may turn, and a dragging anchor could result in damage or total loss of your boat.

- ▶ Anchor in sufficient water to allow for tidal change.
- ▶ Consider the rise of the tide when calculating how much anchor chain to use.
- ▶ Never leave your boat unattended on someone else's mooring.

Reporting Incidents

If you see a breach of the byelaws, a vessel hitting a moored boat, someone needing assistance or a suspicious incident, let the patrol know on VHF Channel 14 - call sign 'Chichester Harbour Patrol'.

To report an incident including theft, collision with a vessel or navigation mark or dangerous navigation, please complete an incident report online at www.conservancy.co.uk or call the Harbour Office on 01243 512301.



Rubbish

Take your rubbish ashore. There are disposal and recycling facilities sites at all marinas and most landing sites in the harbour.

More Information

Visit www.conservancy.co.uk or call 01243 512301. See the latest issue of *Chichester Harbour News & Guide* for information on Chichester Harbour. Available from the Harbour Office, sailing clubs and marinas.

For everything you need to know about boating see www.rya.org.uk.

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