

HARBOUR RACING TIPS

by Tim Weedon



Tim has raced in the Harbour for the past 12 years, initially at Emsworth and more recently at Thorney Island. He has been a regular competitor at the Chichester Snowflake series during this period and has won it on a number of occasions. A previous OK Junior National Champion, he and Mel Miller now campaign an RS400 on the harbour and they are the current holders of the Hayling Christmas Cracker!

The two previous articles have been concerned with racing towards the southern end of the Harbour and have usefully emphasised the importance of understanding the tidal streams in this part of the Harbour. This year, John Davis asked for my thoughts on racing in two areas in the northern reaches, namely Emsworth and Chichester. Whilst the tidal effects here are less marked than further south, they are undoubtedly still important. My comments are based on observations made within 2 hours of high water, since this is when racing in these areas inevitably takes place.

Emsworth

With prevailing south-westerly wind, the normal beat is generally from Emsworth towards Sweare Deep or beyond, against the tide. If Sweare Deep is itself the turning mark, it can be tempting to stick to the western side of the main channel, since this avoids having to cross the main channel to round the mark. This is particularly true if there is more of a westerly component in the wind.

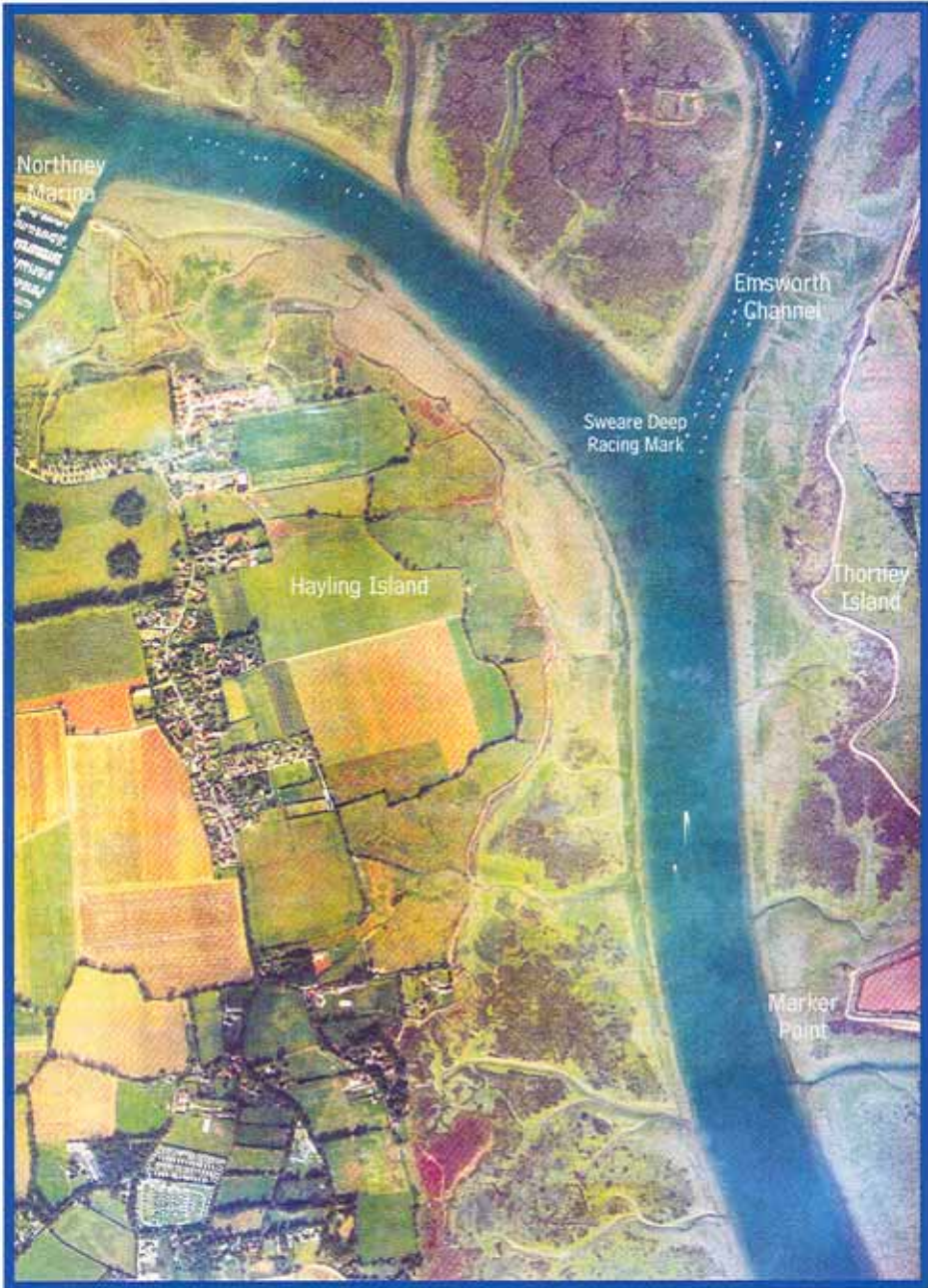
However, some of the longer courses involve a beat to Marker or beyond. In this

situation, as a rule of thumb, sticking to the Thorney Island shore pays. The reasons for this are twofold; there is less interference with the wind from the trees and buildings on Hayling Island, and the harbour bottom shelves more gently to the east of the deep water channel, giving more scope for beating whilst remaining in relatively shallow water and hence less adverse tide. There are some areas which are substantially shallower than others, notably around Marker Point, which can be a source of frustration if racing an RS400 against Lasers etc which draw less!

Another aspect of racing at Emsworth is the stretch of water known as Sweare Deep, running from the main Emsworth Channel towards Northney Marina and Langstone. Here, if trying to dodge an adverse tide, the Hayling shore always seems to pay, remembering of course the tide both ebbs and floods from Chichester Harbour into Langstone Harbour.

Chichester

Here I am considering the area from Longmore Point and Westlands in the south out to Dell Quay in the north and in par-



Aerial View Showing the Emsworth Section of 'Racing Tips' from Marker Point to Sweare Deep Racing Mark

ticular the area referred to as 'The Lake', favoured by Chichester Yacht Club for its Snowflake series. On a relatively calm day, it is easy to understand why it is so called; of all the racing areas in the harbour, it is probably fair to say that here the wind is king, with large areas of calm to trap the unwary!

However, tidal considerations are still likely to affect one's strategy. A typical beat starts close to the entrance to Chichester Yacht Basin, with the windward mark in the vicinity of Longmore Point. A study of the area at low water reveals that the majority of this beat can be achieved in the shallow water beyond the main Chichester Channel and that most of these shallows lie to the east of the channel.

The favoured route seems to be to tack up the shoreline adjacent to Birdham Pool, crossing the main channel as late as possible. Bear in mind the shallow area known as Monkey Island between the Chichester Yacht Club jetty and the entrance to Birdham Pool, which can be a problem ex-

cept near the top of a spring tide! Depending on the precise location of the mark, it may be worth bearing in mind that the channel is narrowest to the south-east of Longmore Point. Of course, there are generally other considerations such as what the rest of the fleet are doing and on many occasions, the most critical point of the entire leg is the final approach to the mark. If the buoy is situated close inshore, the proximity of the trees in this area makes the wind extremely fickle and at this stage it is worth just sailing for clear wind.

The gravel spit located at Bowling Green (due west of Copperas Point) provides some interesting, if localised, tidal effects and is certainly worth bearing in mind if sailing in a south-westerly direction along this shore against the tide. At worst, it provides some shelter from the flood tide and on spring tides there can be a hint of a back-eddy here. It is easily identified in winter by vast numbers of oystercatchers who frequent it. However, once again, beware the dense woodland!

