



ROWING ON THE TIDEWAY

A Code of Practice for Rowing on the Tidal Thames

THIRD EDITION 2015

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This book is based on the PLA and TRRC's 2009 publication:

Rowing on the Tideway, A Code of Practice for rowing on the Tidal Thames above Putney 2009 (second edition).

With thanks to the contributors to this the 2015 (third) edition:

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Thames Regional Rowing Council

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ROWING ON THE TIDEWAY

A Code of Practice for Rowing on the Tidal Thames

This Third Edition (2015) of the Rowing Code of Practice is substantially rewritten and redesigned to be more of a user guide to help you better understand and apply the Rowing Code on an increasingly busy river. We hope you find the new book even more useful, as it is very much intended to be a readily available and easily assimilated ‘come in handy’ guide.

Rowing safely on the Tideway requires more than the usual rowing skill. It also demands a sound knowledge of the effects of the strong tidal streams and variable depths invariably found on the River Thames. At low water especially above Putney, rowing is made even more challenging by the exceptionally large number of rowers and other river users, all of whom wish to pursue their activity in what is a very confined area with limited water. Below Tower Bridge the main challenge for rowers is the busy commercial nature of the river.

“Rowing on the Tideway”, a joint publication produced by the Port of London Authority and Thames Regional Rowing Council brings together practical guidance from experienced rowers, the

recommendations of a detailed risk assessment and the requirements of local and international regulation.

Its objective is to provide the rowing community with a single comprehensive source of information and advice about rowing on the tidal Thames, in which all may have confidence and which will enhance safety.

To this end, it is vital that all who use the Tideway recognise that others have equal rights to the water and that safety will best be enhanced by the application of three fundamental principles - namely:

- Keep a proper lookout
- Know and follow the rules
- Show consideration for others

Enjoy your river

David Phillips

*Chief Harbourmaster,
Port of London
Authority*

Martin Humphrys, JP

*Chairman,
Thames Regional
Rowing Council*

The tidal Thames as far as Teddington Lock comes under the jurisdiction of the Port of London Authority (PLA) who regulate navigation on the tidal Thames in a number of ways:

- [Col Regs](#)
- [Port of London Act](#)
- [Thames Byelaws](#)
- [General Directions](#)
- [Notices to Mariners](#)

By its very nature, the Rowing Code must, in part, refer to and recognise these various regulations. Where navigational regulations are quoted in this Code they are enclosed in a coloured panel for ease of recognition.

The PLA keeps all its regulations under regular review and the latest additions can be found in their entirety on the PLA website – pla.co.uk

Ignorance of the regulations is not a defence in the event of an incident.

Introduction

As the result of a study by the Salvage Association in 2004, the PLA and the TRRC developed a **Rowing Code of Practice**, which is designed to allow rowers to continue to enjoy their sport in a safe way.

It must be made clear that being allowed to navigate using The Rowing Code is a privilege conditional upon responsible, safe navigation, which may be removed if rowers do not adhere to it. Within the Rowing Code Areas rowers are expected navigate according to the Rowing Code.

Since the second edition of the Rowing Code (2009), the PLA held a Navigational Risk Assessment Working Group in October 2013. A new set of rowing rules was established in 2014 to take into account rowing in Greenwich. These rowing rules are similar to the Upriver Area and predominantly follow the same practice of “**working the slacks**”.

It is up to the rowing community, clubs and individuals to take responsibility for following the Rowing Code and ensure that the traditional privileges historically enjoyed by the rowing community in these areas are not taken away for good, to the detriment of the sport.

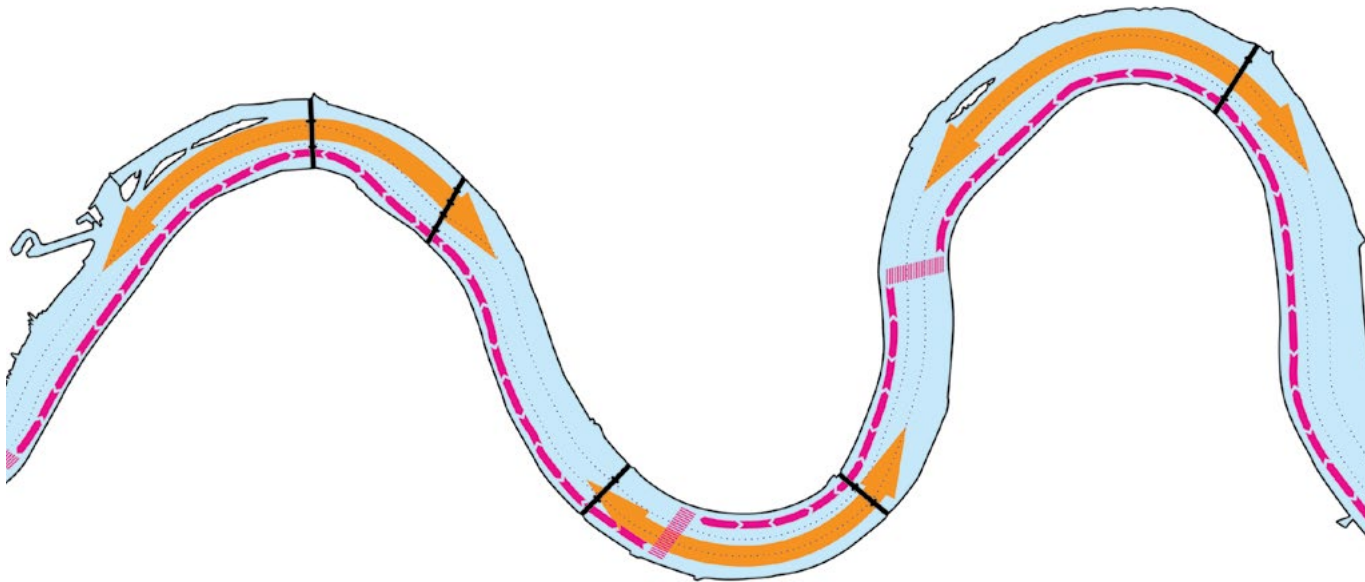
This Code of Practice is specifically aimed at **rowing** on the Tideway. For guidance and advice on other water activities on the Tidal Thames please visit the PLA leisure website – boatingonthethames.co.uk

What is “Working the Slacks”?

Working the slacks is a navigation system historically developed by working oarsmen to use the easier ‘slack’ water when rowing against the tide, rather than have to try and force their boat into a strong current. In general **water flows faster around the outside of a bend**, with slower or ‘slack’ water being on the inside of the bend. Therefore, oar-powered boats have traditionally been allowed to break with normal

navigation rules of staying to starboard by rowing in the **slower moving water on the inside of the bend** – but only against the tide. It is this practice that is known as **working the slacks**.

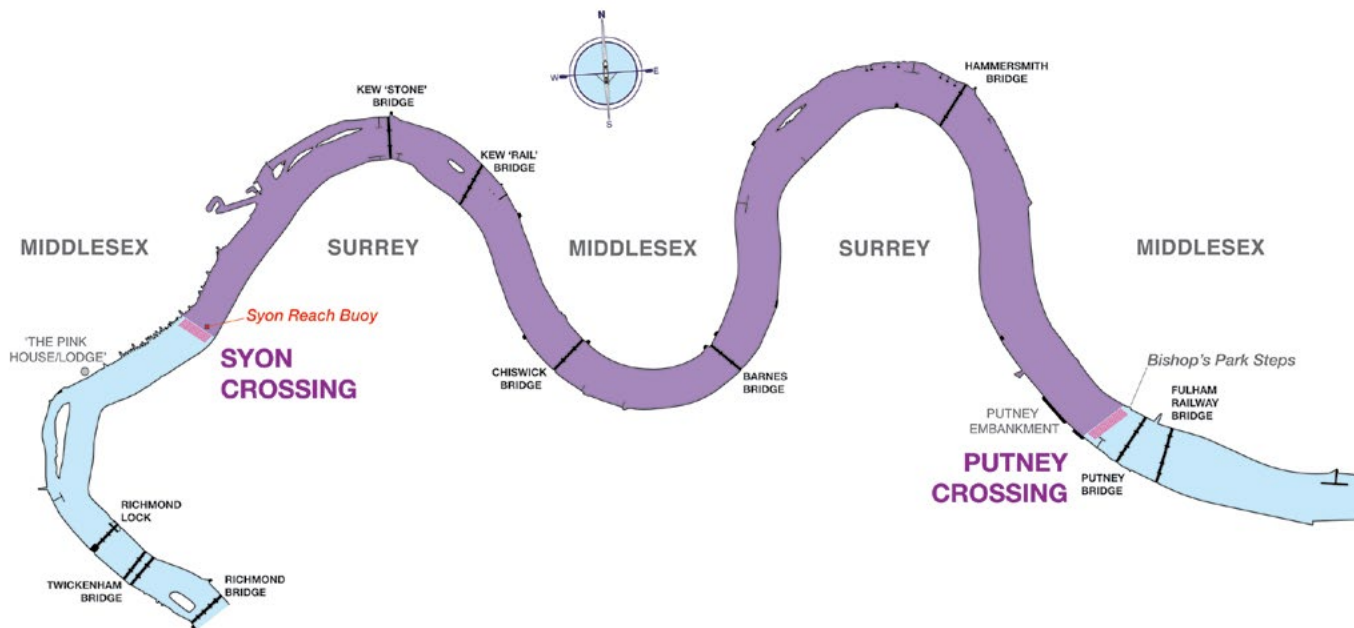
It’s a bit like being allowed to ride a bike on the pavement against the flow of the traffic.



Upper Tideway Rowing Code Area

The Upper Tideway Rowing Code Area is between the Bishop's Park steps at Putney and the red navigation buoy in Syon Reach.

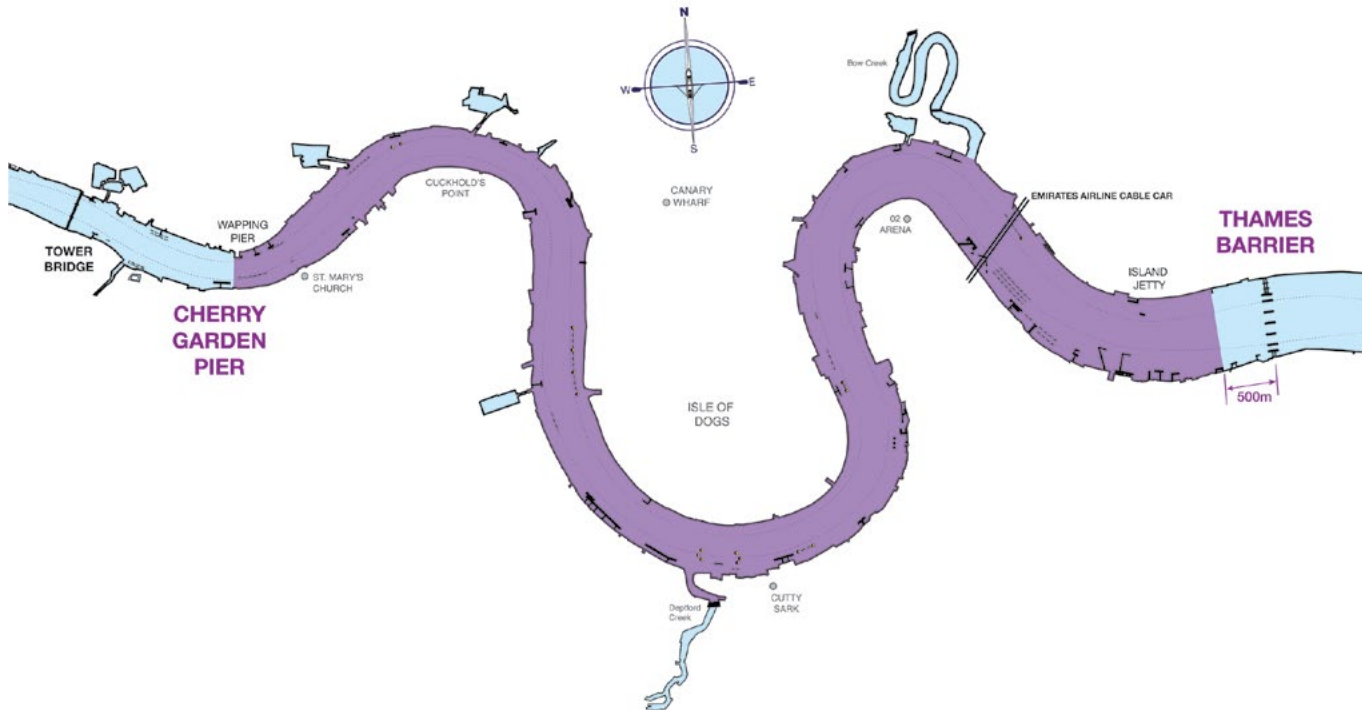
Outside this area rowers should not work the slacks but navigate according to Col Regs (Rule 9a, starboard rule). [See pages 19 – 20 for details](#).



Lower Tideway Rowing Code Area

The Lower Tideway Rowing Code Area is between Cherry Garden Pier and 500m upriver of the Thames Barrier.

Outside this area rowers should not work the slacks but navigate according to Col Regs (Rule 9a, starboard rule. [See pages 19– 20 for details](#)).



Ebb & flood tide

The Thames below Teddington Lock is a tidal river and the Rowing Rules are essentially based around the behaviour of the tide, which changes constantly. The tidal rise and fall can be as much as seven metres and the flow can reach four knots – more around bridge piers etc. – so attention must be paid to both the direction and strength of the tide and stream, with regard to navigation.

Knowing in which direction the tide is going is critical. Tables of predicted tide times are available on the PLA website and there are various other websites and smart phone apps. that can also provide this information.

If the tide is on the turn, it can be very hard to judge its direction. The tide generally turns first at the edge of the river and there is usually a section of slack water between the two tides where there appears to be no tide at all.

How to navigate at the turn of the tide is covered in more detail on [page 36, Further Principles of Navigation](#), but there two golden rules to follow if you are not sure about the state of the tide:

- Navigate to the **starboard side** of the **Fairway**
- Keep a **very good lookout**

Apart from tide tables, which show predicted tide times, there are many ways to check the tide direction:

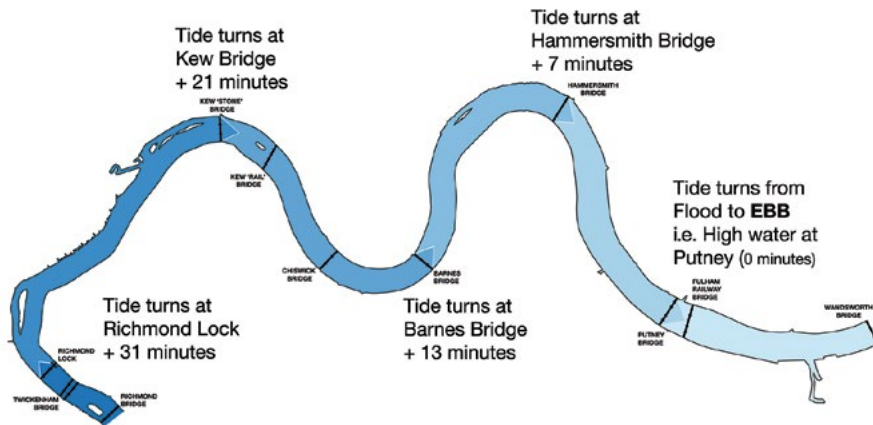
- Look at boats moored only at one end (e.g. Putney Embankment), they will always hang downstream from their mooring
- See what direction stationary objects drift in (accounting for the wind)
- Stop and square your blades in the water, you will generally drift with the stream direction (accounting for the wind)
- Look at which direction the water is flowing past a bridge buttress or buoy (see below)



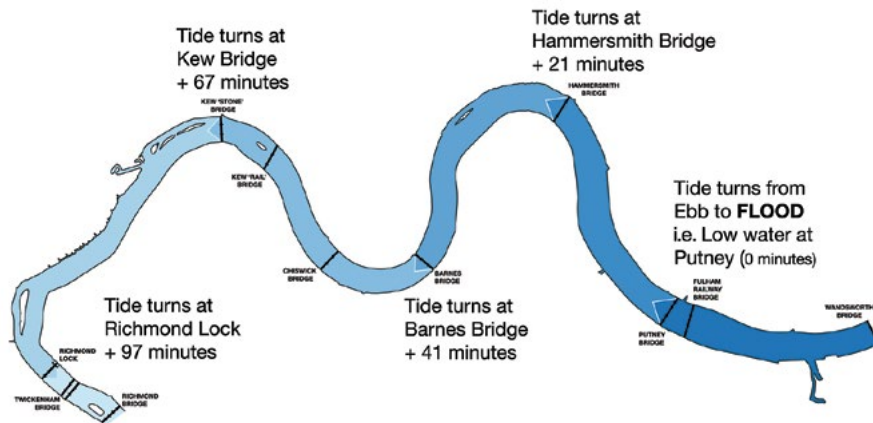
Ebb & flood tide

In the [Upper Tideway Area](#) the tide will always turn first below Putney:

- An **EBB** tide is an outbound tide so the river level **drops**
- An ebb tide takes approximately 8.5 hours to run out from high water



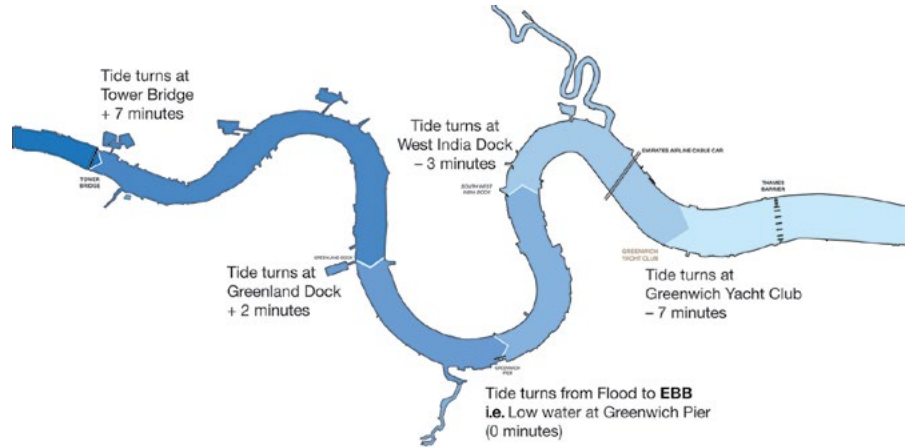
- A **FLOOD** tide is an inbound tide so the river level goes **up**
- A flood tide takes approximately 4.5 hours to come in from low water



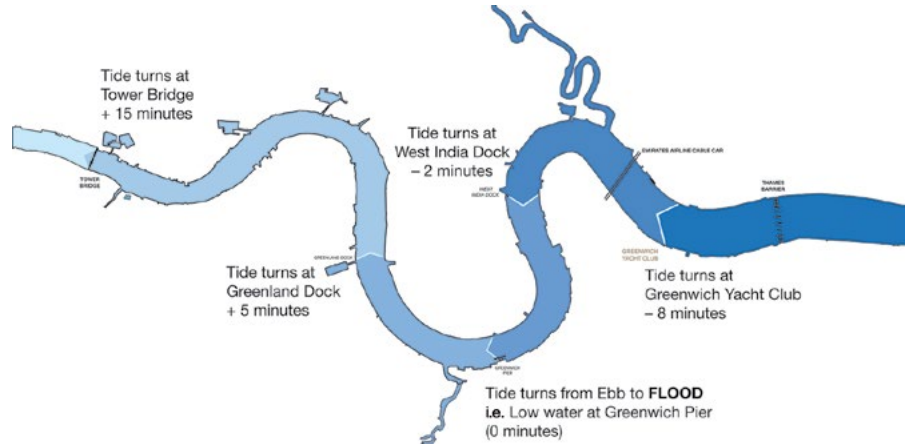
Ebb & flood tide

In the Lower Tideway Area the tide will always turn first below Woolwich:

- An **EBB** tide is an outbound tide so the river level **drops**
- An ebb tide takes approximately 7 hours to run out from high water



- A **FLOOD** tide is an inbound tide so the river level goes **up**
- A flood tide takes approximately 5 hours to come in from low water



Fluvial flow

Fluvial flow is the amount of water flowing downriver from the non-tidal Thames. There is always water flowing outbound (downriver) and is the reason that the river fills up very quickly when it meets the inbound (flood) tide. After heavy rainfall, the fluvial flow will increase causing the outbound stream to increase in speed. When combined with an ebb tide this can make the river more difficult to navigate on and in some cases, dangerous.

Ebb tide flag warning system

A flag warning system is in place to help indicate the speed of the river to rowers. It is similar to the red and yellow board system used above Teddington but on the Tideway it only applies to an ebb tide. Use this system to help judge if crews are suitably experienced for the conditions.

Ebb Tide Flag Warning



Extreme Caution –
Very Strong Fluvial Flows

The Port of London Authority advise all river users that the fluvial flows are very strong and conditions are difficult and dangerous. All man-powered vessels are advised not to go afloat on the Ebb Tide.

Ebb Tide Flag Warning



Caution – Strong Fluvial Flows

The Port of London Authority advise man-powered vessels, in particular, Beginners, Novices, Younger Junior (J15's and younger), or any weaker crews, and those that do not usually navigate on the tidal section of the river Thames not to go afloat on the Ebb Tide. All river users of man-powered vessels should navigate with extreme caution and consider whether it is safe for them to go afloat on the Ebb Tide.

Ebb Tide Flag Warning



Average Fluvial Flows

The Port of London Authority advise all river users to navigate with caution and maintain a proper lookout.

Ebb Tide Flag Warning



Caution – Low Fluvial Flows

The Port of London Authority advise all river users that the fluvial flow is less than usual and lower than predicted tides may be expected, especially around low water.

During abnormal fluvial flows the PLA provide an 'Ebb Tide Flag Warning' system and all man-powered vessels should note the advice, as detailed in Notice to Mariners P23 2014

This advice is updated daily on the PLA leisure website – boatingonthethames.co.uk

It is also provided as a widget which should be installed on all club websites.

This information can also be sourced online on the main PLA website – pla.co.uk

Factors affecting the tide & stream

The Stream

The stream is the visible direction of the flow of the river and can be a slightly different thing from the tide, although they almost always flow in the same direction.

On rare occasions (usually in the winter), when the fluvial flow is very heavy, the tide can be inbound (flooding) but the stream still appears to be flowing outbound.

This effect is called **Swelling** and can cause confusion. With the river in this state you should always **navigate according to the outbound stream direction** and not the expected flood tide.

Thames Barrier

If the Thames Barrier is shut, it will have a noticeable effect on the river which can be confusing. It may be hard to tell what the tide is doing and the flood tide may not really feature. If you are unsure, navigate to the **starboard side** of the **Fairway**.

Wind

The wind can have a considerable effect on the river. If the wind is in the same direction as the tide it will speed-up the stream. If it is against the tide, it will chop up the top of the water and can make for very difficult conditions, especially at high tide. Sometimes a very strong wind can give a false impression of the stream direction.

The Tideway meanders considerably so it is important to remember that wind will affect the river differently along its course.

Draw-offs

The draw-off is normally for four weeks in October – November and is when the half-tide barrier at Richmond is left open over low water. This allows the river to drain to its natural level, which is much lower than usual. The draw-off only affects the river between Richmond and Teddington locks.

Set of the tide

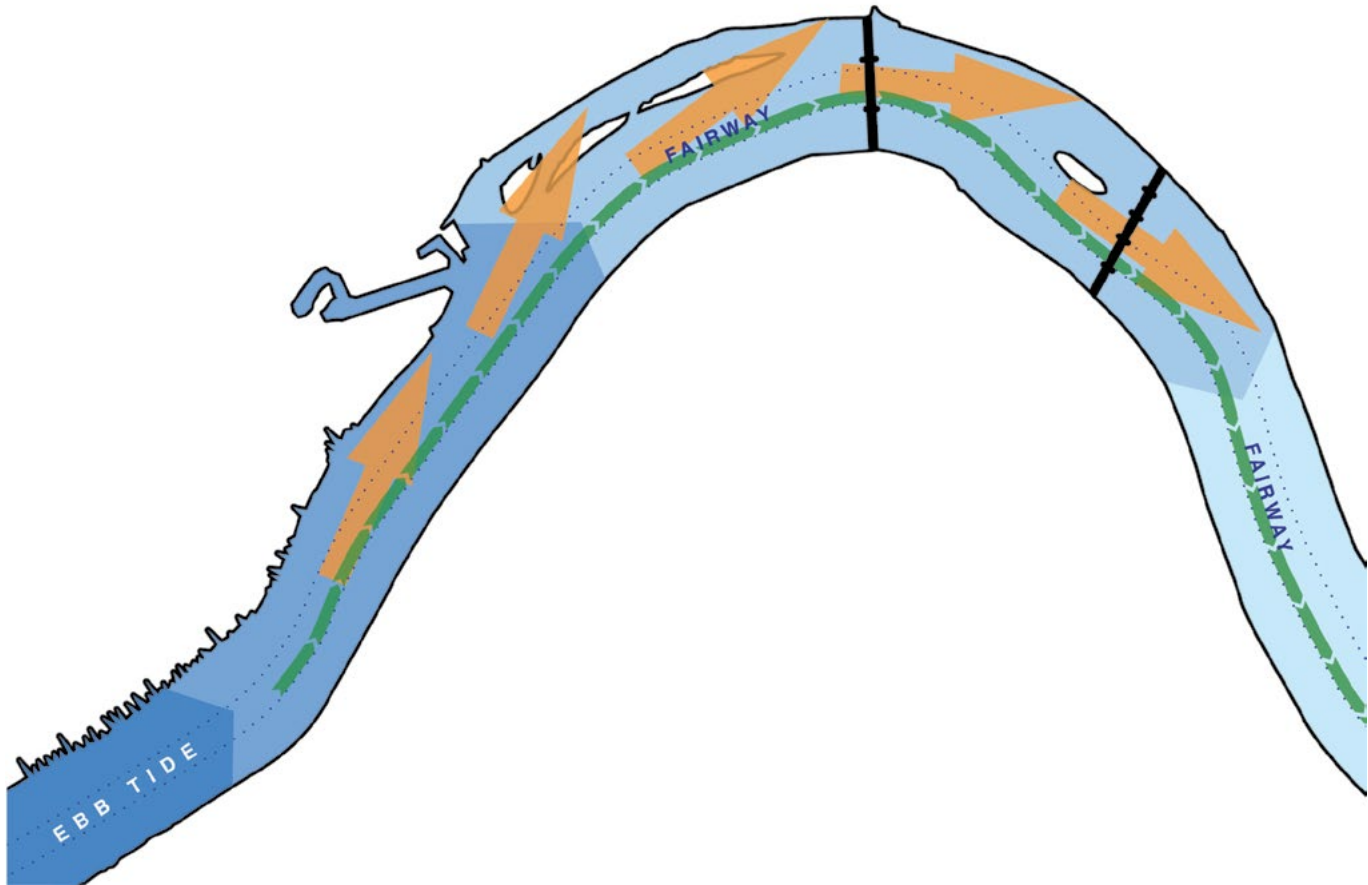
(aka Tidal set)

Navigators need to be aware of the **set of the tide**. This is where the flow of water always ‘sets’ to the outside of a bend (its natural course), which may not be the correct course expected of a rowing boat.

In the example opposite, around this bend on the ebb tide, the correct navigation is to stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway**, towards the inside of the bend but the **set of the tide** will naturally push boats towards the outside of the bend.

Steers and coxes should steer to actively correct their course in order to stay on the correct navigational line and not be pushed out of position by the set of the tide.

Set of the tide



Rowers must be aware that in the Rowing Code Areas the tidal Thames is categorised by the MCA (Maritime and Coastguard Agency) as Category C waters, where river users should expect waves of up to 1.2m in height.

All club Captains, Safety Advisers, Coaches and authorised steers should [sign-up on the PLA website](#) to automatically receive, by email, Notices to Mariners pertaining to their stretch of the river. These Notices are also available on the PLA website – pla.co.uk

A lot of topical river information is also available via social media, particularly Twitter:

[@LondonPortAuth](#)

[@AlanBarrierEA](#)

[@MrSafeT_Tideway](#)

[@Thames21](#)

[@ThamesPoo](#)

Questions to ask before you go afloat:

It is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that they have assessed all factors which may affect conditions during their row.

Do not proceed with an outing if the outcome of these checks shows up a problem with your equipment, knowledge or experience.

Do not be forced, by peer pressure or a coach, into going afloat if you are not comfortable with any aspect of the outing.

Is the Steers Authorised?

Steers must be authorised by their club to take a boat onto the river having completed a steering and navigation test to prove their understanding of this Code of Practice.

Authorised steers are “Master of the Vessel” and legally responsible for the navigation, safety and behaviour of the crew.

[\(See Roles & Responsibilities, page 45\)](#)

Who is afloat?

Clubs are strongly advised to keep a log or sign-up board of who is afloat and in which boat in case of an accident. Members should also know what procedure to follow if a boat fails to return.

In addition to signing-out, those rowing on the Downriver Area are strongly advised to inform London VTS prior to going afloat and fly a ‘Rower On The River Flag’ from your clubhouse.

It is recommended that coaches, crews and scullers, where possible, carry a mobile phone to summon help in an emergency.

Topical river information?

Recreational river users must be aware of the information and guidance which is available on the PLA and TRRC websites. These will include Notices to Mariners (see panel left), Safety Bulletins and notices of temporary local hazards, which are usually sent by the TRRC via an email to the Club Rowing Safety Advisor for distribution.

What will the weather conditions be like?

Temperature

High temperatures as well as cold ones should be considered.

Wind

Wind can have an extra chilling effect which will lower the level at which cold is felt and can lead to exposure.

Wind will also have an effect on any wave height especially when it's in an opposite direction to the tide.

Rain

Rain can very much affect the perceived temperature. You will feel much colder when wet. It may also reduce visibility.

Visibility

The Tideway is prone to fog. **No attempt should be made to go afloat unless the visibility is more than 200m.**

If you encounter reduced visibility during an outing you should find a safe haven. Fog is often a more serious hazard than darkness.

A good guide is: **if you cannot see the opposite bank clearly then you should not go afloat.**

(The river width is 300m at Greenwich, 200m at Putney and Hammersmith Bridges but narrower above Hammersmith)

Lightning

If you experience lightning in your vicinity you should get off the river as soon as possible.

No crew should go afloat unless 30 minutes have elapsed since the last visible lightning

What will the water conditions be like?

- What is the direction and height of the tide? High tide means lumpier water. Low tide means shallows and less usable water
- When is the tide predicted to change?
- What colour will the Ebb tide fluvial flow warning flag be during the outing?
- Is the wind against the tide?
- Is the Barrier shut?
- Is the river swelling?

How experienced is the crew?

The experience of the crew, cox or steers, should be taken into account, particularly with regard to the water and weather conditions.

What time of day is it?

Consider the time of day when planning your outing. Weekend mornings are particularly busy and may have an impact on what you can achieve.

You should not try to fulfil your plans regardless of other river users: **safety, correct navigation and consideration of other river users must always take priority over any training objectives.**

Time restrictions

There are time restrictions on when rowers can navigate below Putney and above Cherry Garden Pier ([See Rowing in Central London, page 90](#)).

Are you wearing the right kit?

Coxes and coaches MUST wear a Life Jacket – correctly fitted, well maintained and regularly serviced (see Appendix A page 113).

You must ensure that you are wearing suitable clothing for the conditions.

Wind, rain and cold temperatures will require additional layers.

Peaked hats and sunglasses are recommended in sunny weather, especially for steers and coxes.

In low light or darkness, it is strongly recommended that rowers wear light-coloured or hi-vis clothing.



Is your equipment adequate?

You must ensure that your boat is in good working order before going afloat.

Heel-restraints, hatches and bow-balls in particular must all be present and correctly fitted.

Your boat must carry a registered and approved ID (see page 49).

Coaches MUST always use a kill cord (see page 44).

If you discover a problem with your equipment, fix it before proceeding with the outing.

In the dark or reduced visibility your boat must be fitted with lights



Lighting your rowing boat

Lights are to be displayed at all times of restricted visibility such as mist, fog, rain or snow and obviously at night time or early morning. If in doubt, use lights.

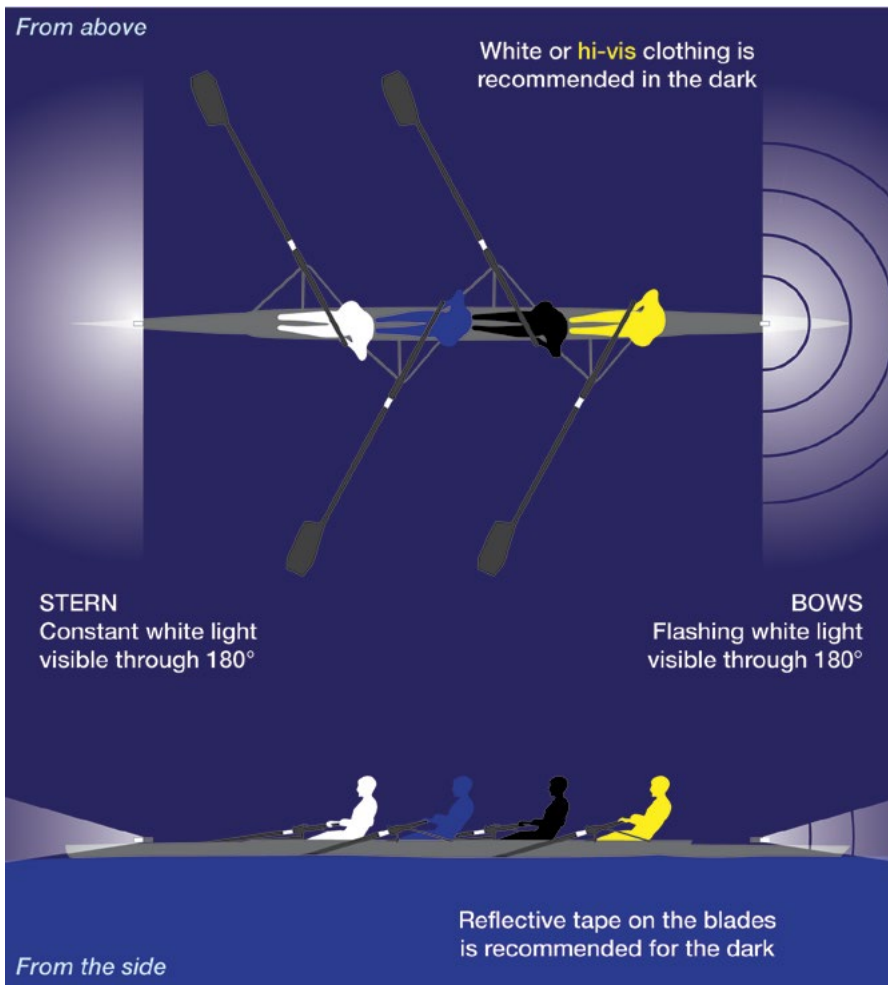
All rowing crews must have the following lights **firmly fixed to their boat** in low visibility.

- **On the bow:**
a flashing white light – flashing to determine direction of travel
- **On the stern:**
a constant white light

The lights must be **visible for 800m** and also be **visible through 180°** – so that the boat effectively has lighting visible through 360°.

Unidirectional lights are not permitted as they are not safe. Spare lights should be carried at all times. *Additional* lights or LED sticks, attached to the back of the bow or cox, are allowed and high visibility clothing and tape on the blades is strongly recommended.

If you do not have the correct lights, you do not go out.



Col Reg Rule 25 Sailing vessels underway and vessel under oars

a - A sailing vessel underway shall exhibit:

(i) Sidelights (ii) A sternlight

d (ii) - A vessel under oars may exhibit the lights prescribed in this Rule for sailing vessels, but if she does not, she shall have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision.

Col Reg Rule 20 Application (Lights and Shapes)

The lights prescribed by these rules shall, if carried, also be exhibited from sunrise to sunset in restricted visibility and may be exhibited in all other circumstances when it is deemed necessary.

Going afloat

When placing your vessel on the Tideway, always boat with your bow into the tidal stream.

Be aware that the stream will try to **pull the bows out** – very quickly sometimes – and you may have to actively prevent this. If you do accidentally get pulled round by the stream it might be safer to go with the unplanned turn than to try and fight against it.

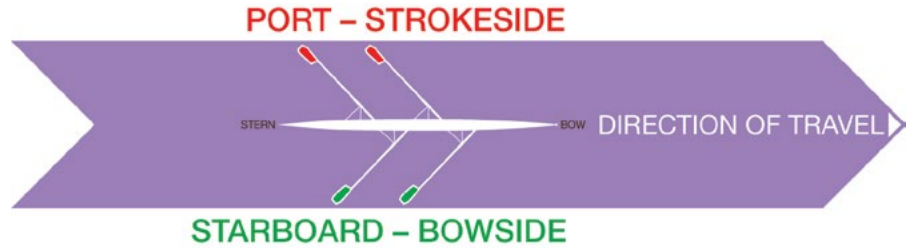
While boating ensure you maintain a **good lookout** for other river users to ensure that you stay safe. Also be very aware of wash and of water being drawn-off the foreshore by passing motor vessels.



Port & Starboard

Because the river below Teddington lock is an international seaway, the conventions of **Port** and **Starboard** are used to describe navigation – always in the **direction of travel** of the boat.

In coxless boats the steers is facing backwards which is why we should avoid using left and right, which causes confusion. It helps that most blades are marked with **red tape – strokeside** and **green tape – bowside**.



Port and **starboard** always refer to the **direction of travel** of the boat.



Lookout

Keeping a proper lookout is the single most essential feature of safe navigation.

Failure to keep a proper lookout is the single biggest factor in collisions and near-misses between rowing boats and with fixed objects.

For a coxless boat the maximum recommended time between checking over the shoulder should be five strokes – alternate shoulders are recommended. A coxless four travelling with the tidal stream could cover as much as 100m in five strokes.

When in heavy traffic, poor visibility, at the turn of the tide or navigating in the vicinity of the **Restricted Zones**, a more proactive lookout should be employed – a minimum of every three strokes is recommended.

A cox's first priority is the safe navigation of the boat, more so than good balance or quickest racing line.

Whatever is being said to the cox by the crew or coach it is the cox, as legal Master of the Vessel who will be liable in the case of an accident. The same applies to the steers of a coxless boat, or sculler.



Col Reg Rule 5

Lookout

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper lookout by sight as well as by hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.



Col Reg Rule 9 Narrow Channels

(a) A vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or Fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit of the channel or Fairway which lies to her starboard side as is safe and practicable.

Port of London Thames Byelaws 2012 - Byelaw 27 Vessels navigating above Cherry Garden Pier (Cherry Garden Pier is downstream of Tower Bridge) and above Westminster Bridge

27.2

In addition to their obligations under byelaw 27.1 (p.31), a vessel of less than 20 metres in length navigating above Westminster Bridge and a sailing vessel navigating above Westminster Bridge must not impede the passage of a vessel of 20 metres or more in length.

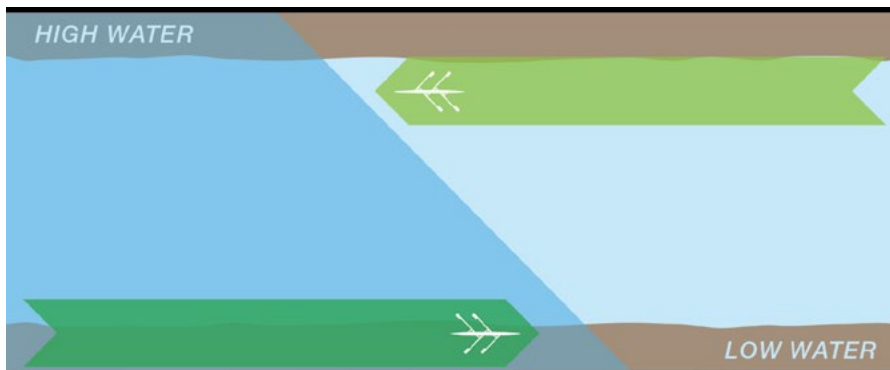
For the purposes of Rule 9 & Byelaw 27 rowing boats must act as power-driven vessels.

Positioning on the river – Outside the Rowing Code Areas (Col Regs)

Because the tidal Thames is an international seaway, the navigation laws that apply are **Col Regs – The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea**. Rule 9a essentially states that all vessels should navigate to the **starboard** side of any channel so as to pass **port-to-port**.

In all locations along the tidal Thames, outside the Rowing Areas, it is vital that you **keep a good lookout** and navigate on the **starboard side** of the river at all times, as per **Col Regs**. Observe where the main river traffic flows are and position yourself well away from them.

Rowers are encouraged to navigate as close to the **starboard** bank as is safe and practicable.



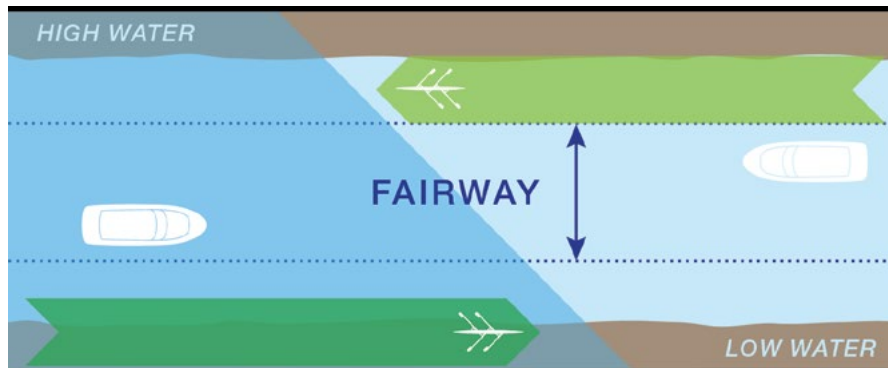
Positioning on the river – General Navigation Rules (Col Regs)

The river can be roughly divided into three lanes which remain in place whether the water level is high or low.

The centre lane is the main navigation channel and is called the **Fairway**. It is a deeper channel for larger boats and is not generally marked.

Large vessels have more draught (hull under the water) so will usually be near the centre of the river, in the **Fairway**. Rowing boats have minimal draught and can use shallow water so must give way to larger boats in the Fairway and return as soon as possible to the **starboard** side of the river.

NOTE: In a number of places the **Fairway** is not in the centre and large boats can appear to be in the “wrong” place on the river, especially at low tide. You should always ensure that at such times you give way and show your intentions clearly ([see page 34](#)).



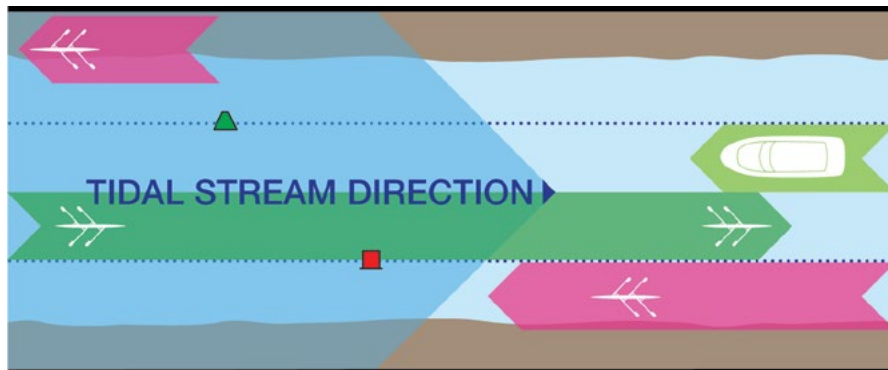
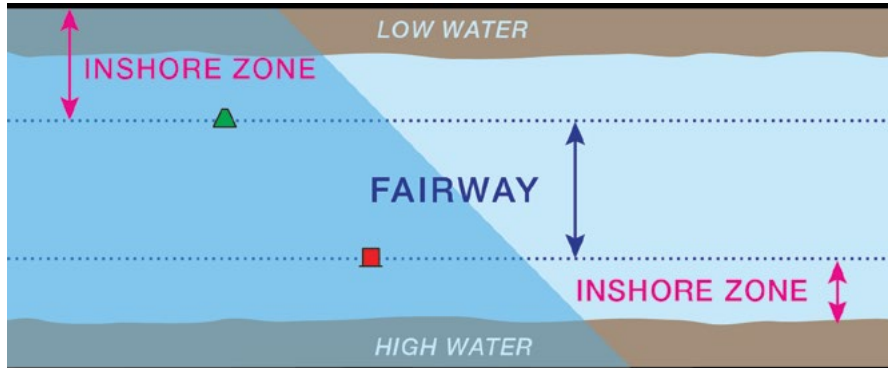
Col Reg Rule 18 Responsibilities Between Vessels

18 (d) Any vessel other than a vessel not under command or a vessel restricted in her ability to manoeuvre shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, avoid impeding the safe passage of a vessel constrained by her draught



Positioning on the river – inside the Rowing Code Areas

Within the rowing areas, rowers should not navigate according to Col Regs (Rule 9a). Instead they should **work the slacks**. This means, when rowing against the tidal stream, using the lanes between the Fairway and the river's edge. These lanes are known as the **Inshore Zone**.



In the Upriver Rowing Code Area the lanes are occasionally marked with buoys in important areas and at crossing points:

- ▲ Green buoys are always on the Middlesex or north edge of the Fairway
- Red buoys are always on the Surrey or south edge of the Fairway

In both rowing code areas the Inshore Zone should only be used when rowing against the tidal stream.

When rowing *with* the tidal stream rowers should be positioned on the **starboard side** of the Fairway (rather than the starboard bank). Think of it as a river within a river.

When using the **Inshore Zone**, against the tidal stream, rowers should be positioned as close to the bank as safe and practicable, however high the water is.

Crossing the river in the Rowing Code Areas

Because rowers **work the slacks**, they have to cross the **Fairway** and there are specific places called **Crossing Zones** where this should be done and rules to follow when doing it:

- You may not cross unless the **Fairway** is completely clear. Be prepared to have to wait until the **Fairway** has cleared
- Do not cross in front of oncoming traffic
Any boats in the Fairway have right of way
- Crossing must take place as quickly as is safely possible and by the shortest possible route
- Outside the designated crossing zones, there are other local crossings where crossing is permitted for crews navigating between the **Inshore Zone** and their boathouse. Crews using these local crossings must give way to all other navigation



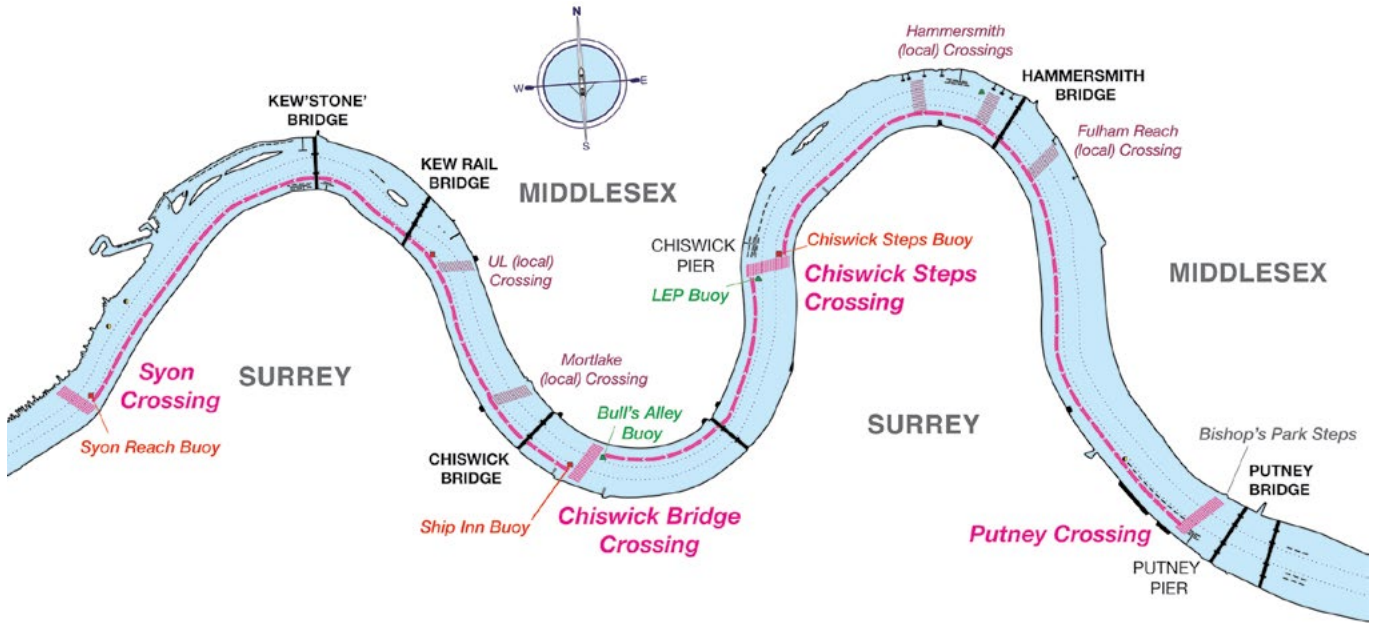
Port of London Thames
Byelaws 2012

Byelaw 24 Modifications of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (Col Regs) - Crossing

- (a) a vessel must not cross or enter a fairway so as to obstruct another vessel proceeding along the fairway.

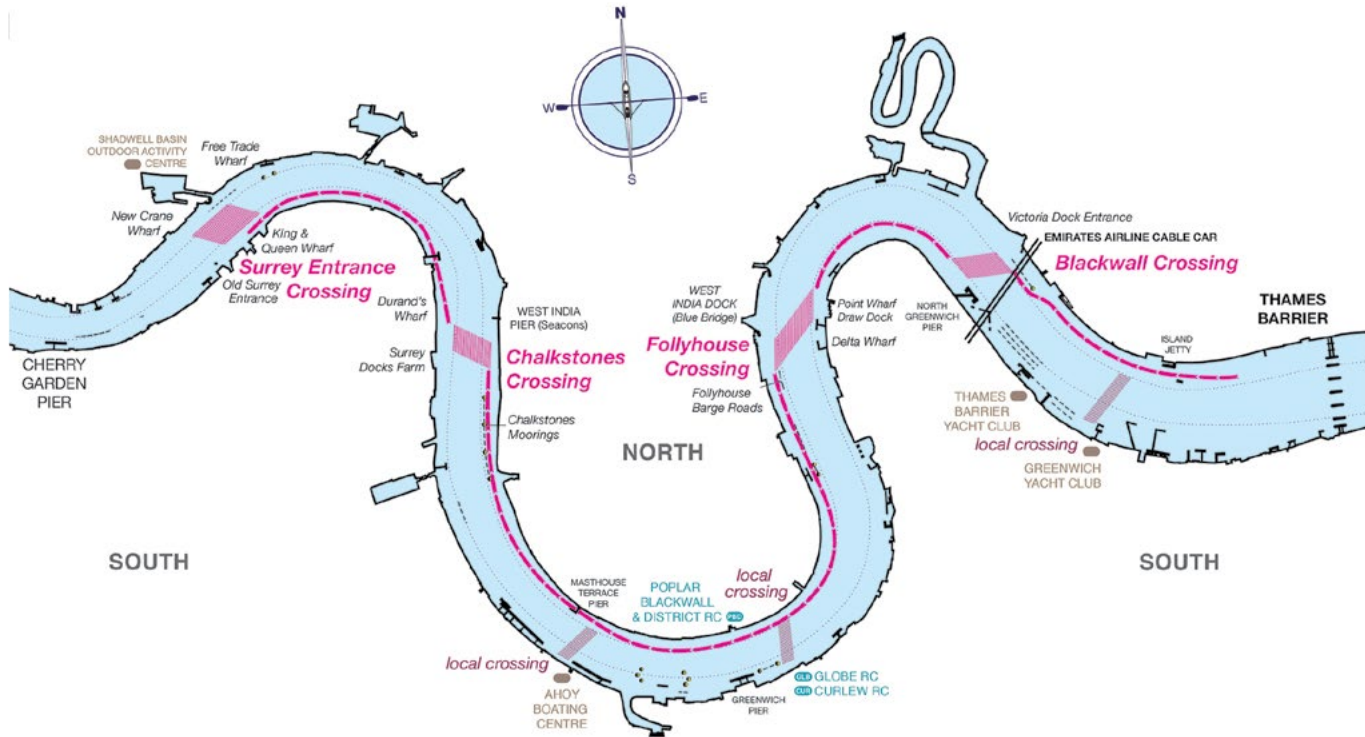
Crossing the river – Upper Tideway Rowing Code Area

In the Upper Tideway Rowing Code Area the four formal **Crossing Zones** are defined by buoys – except at Putney. Additionally there are yellow marker boards on the shore that may be visible at lower water. There are also five **Local Crossings** for boat houses on the opposite bank to the Inshore Zone. These crossings are defined by the boat houses they serve.



Crossing the river – Lower Tideway Rowing Code Area

In the Lower Tideway Rowing Code Area the four formal **Crossing Zones** are defined by landmarks (see [Lower Area Directions](#) for diagrams). There are also three **Local Crossings** for boat houses on the opposite bank to the Inshore Zone. These crossings are defined by the boat houses they serve.



Restricted Zones

Bridges can present particular hazards to navigation, both to rowers and other vessels, whose vision of rowing boats can be very easily obstructed by the bridge buttresses. Every bridge within the Tideway Rowing Areas has a **Restricted Zone** beneath it which generally extends approximately 75m either side of the bridge.

A **Restricted Zone** generally only applies in the **Fairway**. The exception to this is at Kew Rail and Kew Stone bridges where they extend across the whole river. Kew is the only place where these full width restrictions occur.

In the Lower Rowing Area there is only one **Restricted Zone**, at Greenwich Ship Tier. This is the only restriction that is not in the vicinity of a bridge. This restriction is more of an exclusion zone for the safety of small boats.

Outside the rowing areas, there are no formal **Restricted Zones** but all bridges should be treated the same way and the same rules followed.

In **Restricted Zones** the following simple rules apply:

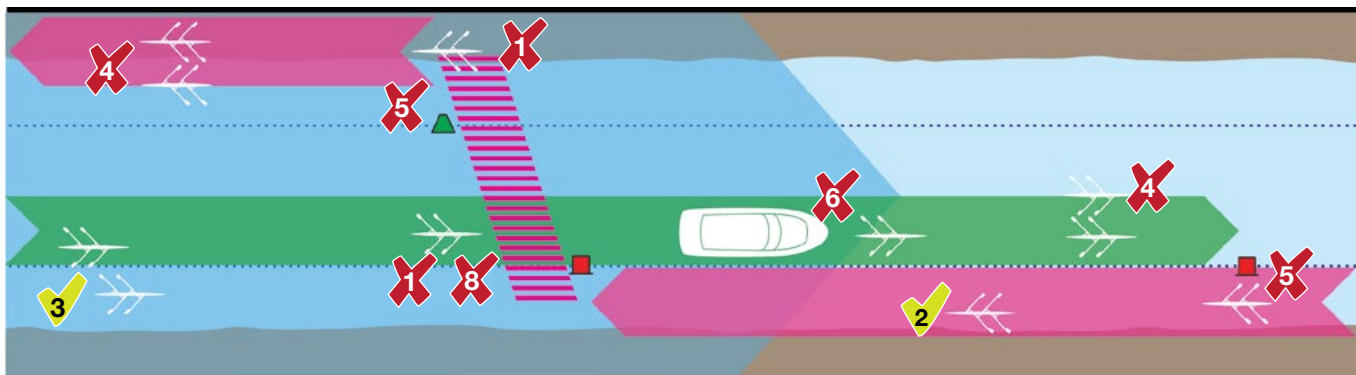
- **No stopping**
(unless in an emergency)
- **No turning**
- **No crossing**
- **No overtaking**
- **No baulking**
(rowing deliberately slowly or doing exercises)



Stopping (aka easy-ing)

- 1** No stopping in the vicinity of the **Crossing Zones** (unless waiting for the **Fairway** to clear)
- 2** When rowing in the **Inshore Zone** always pull in as close as is safe and practicable to the bank, so as not to block the **Inshore Zone**
- 3** When rowing with the tidal stream, wherever feasible stop as close as possible to the **starboard** edge of the **Fairway**. If it will not obstruct oncoming traffic or increase risk of collision, pull out of the **Fairway** entirely
- 4** Do not stop abreast (along side) of any other vessels including coaching launches and rowing boats. If in a group always stop in line astern. This applies in the **Fairway** or the **Inshore Zone**

If a coaching launch wishes to stop to talk to the crew the coach must ensure they are not blocking the **Fairway** or the **Inshore Zone**
- 5** Do not stop abreast of navigation buoys especially at low water
- 6** Do not stop in front of or baulk any vessels. Large power driven vessels proceeding with the tidal stream are severely limited in their ability to stop
- 7** Do not stop in a **Restricted Zone** close to or underneath any bridge
- 8** Avoid stopping close upstream of fixed objects, such as bridges, buoys, moored boats and islands so that you will not be swept onto them by the stream



Turning (aka spinning)

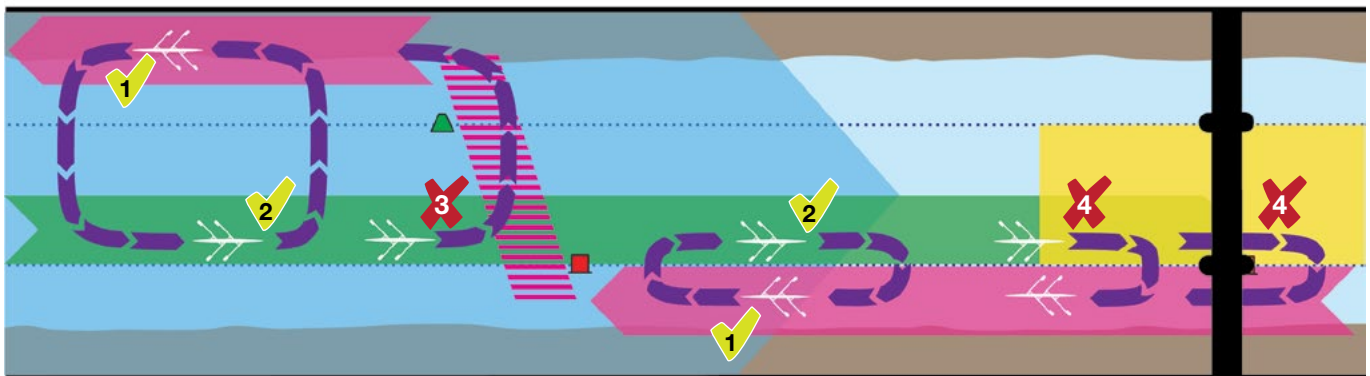
- 1 When turning into the Fairway from the Inshore Zone, do not 'spin' on the spot in the Inshore Zone. Instead wait until the Fairway is clear and then turn onto the correct side of the Fairway
- 2 When turning into the Inshore Zone from the Fairway, ensure that there is enough space and that other vessels are not impeded. Boats already rowing in the Inshore Zone have right of way

(You may briefly move over to the port side of the Fairway if you immediately turn out of the Fairway and into the Inshore Zone – but only if it is clear to do so. Otherwise you must wait on the starboard side of the Fairway until both the Fairway and Inshore Zone are clear)

- 3 No turning in a Crossing Zone. Either turn before or after the crossing
- 4 Do not turn close to a bridge, it is a Restricted Zone



Wait until the Fairway is completely clear before turning or crossing!



Proceeding abreast (aka side-by-side)

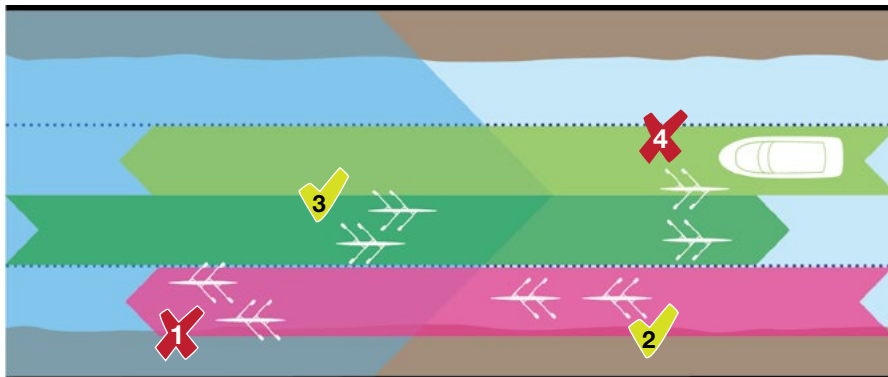
In the **Inshore Zone**

- 1 Boats should **not** proceed abreast (side-by-side) in the **Inshore Zone**
- 2 Boats in the **Inshore Zone** should proceed in line astern. This is particularly important at low water when the **Inshore Zone** can be very narrow

NOTE: The rules for proceeding abreast both in the **Fairway** and in the **Inshore Zone** **also apply to coaching launches**

In the **Fairway**

- 3 A **maximum of two** boats may proceed abreast in the **Fairway** but only if there is sufficient room to do so and both boats remain on the **starboard** side of the **Fairway**
– this is a **concession to rowers of Byelaw 15c (panel right)**
- 4 Two boats may not proceed abreast in the **Fairway** if they obstruct boats coming in the other direction. They must proceed in line astern instead



Port of London Thames
Byelaws 2012 - Byelaw 15

Modifications of the International Rules

- (c) a power-driven vessel must not proceed abreast of another power-driven vessel except for the purposes of overtaking that other vessel; and
- (d) a vessel in a fairway above Tilburyness must not overtake a vessel which is itself overtaking another vessel

For the purposes of this rule rowing boats must act as power driven vessels.

General Directions
for Navigation in the
Port of London 2011
(as amended)

Direction 24

Overtaking Manoeuvres

- (1) Overtaking manoeuvres shall only be undertaken so that the vessels involved do not prejudice their ability to navigate safely, particularly in areas of additional constraint such as river bends and bridges.

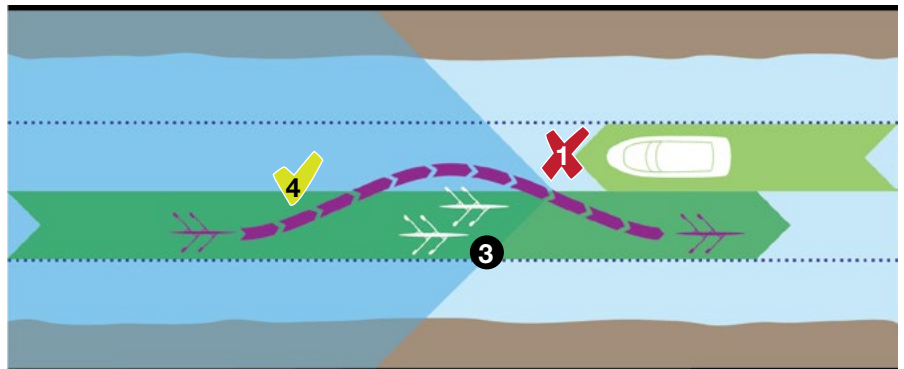
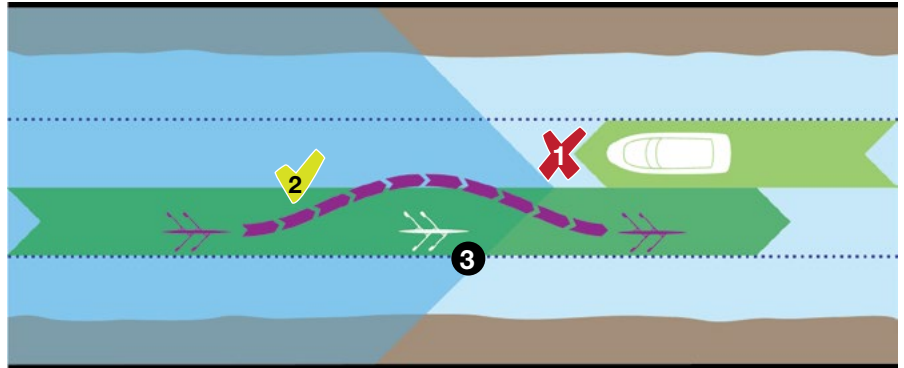
Col Reg Rule 13

Overtaking

- (a) any vessel overtaking any other shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken.

Overtaking – in the Fairway

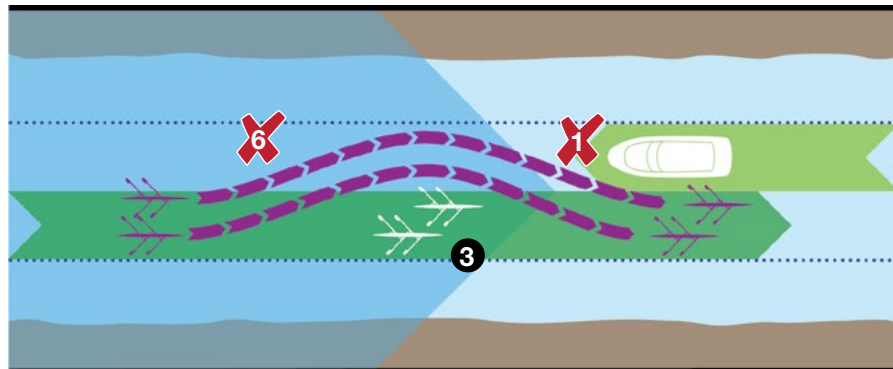
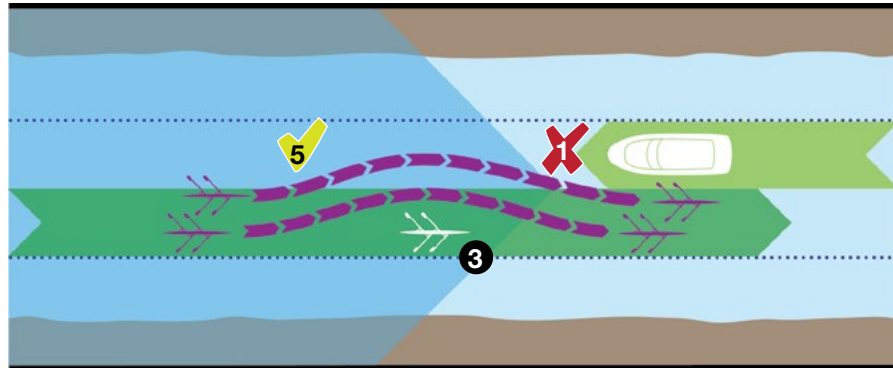
The overtaking crew does not have right of way.



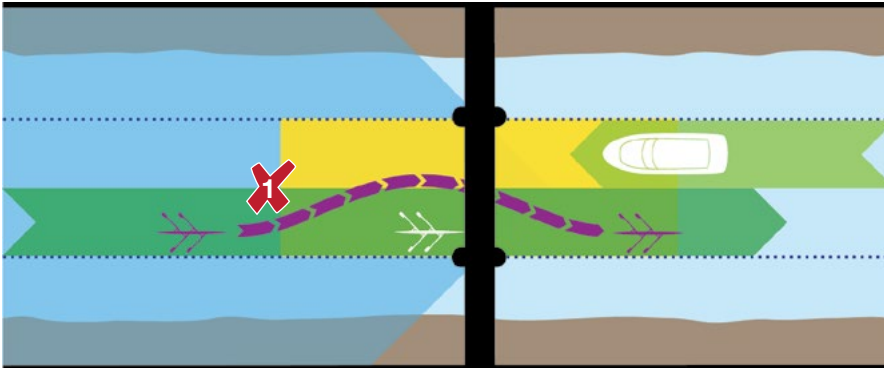
Overtaking – in the Fairway

The overtaking crew does not have right of way.

- 1** Overtaking shall not take place if it puts the overtaking boat into the path of oncoming traffic
- 2** Overtaking should in general be on the outside, i.e. in the faster tidal stream
- 3** The crew(s) being overtaken should maintain course and speed – baulking the passage of an overtaking vessel is not permitted. (Variations of speed for training purposes do not constitute maintaining “course and speed”)
- 4** A single boat may overtake two slower boats – only if the Fairway is clear
- 5** Two boats may overtake one slower boat – only if the Fairway is clear
- 6** Two (or more) boats may not overtake two slower boats – under any circumstances

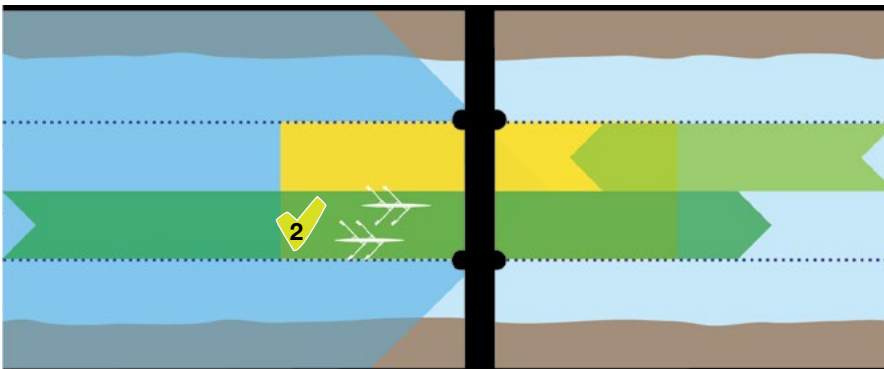


Overtaking in Restricted Zones



X Overtaking shall not take place in a **Restricted Zone**. There is not sufficient space around bridges for large vessels to react safely if rowing boats are blocking the **Fairway**

However –



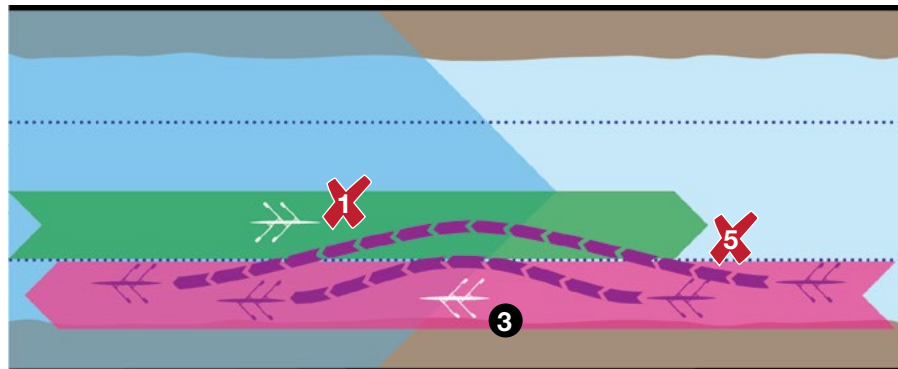
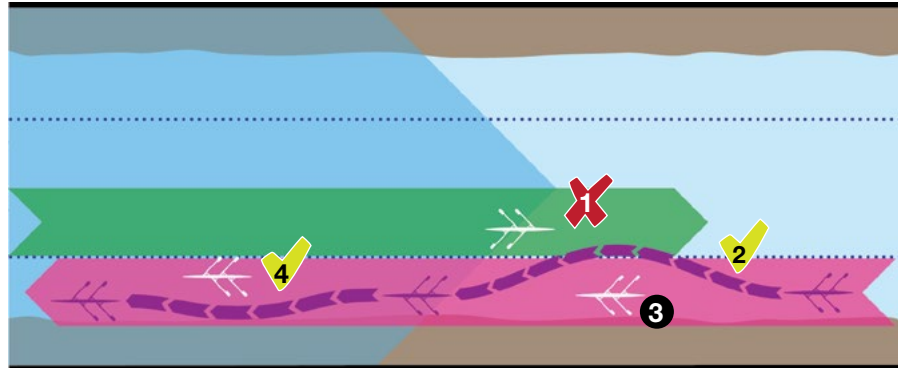
2 Boats may row abreast through a **Restricted Zone** but only if they can both remain on the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** and can see that the **Fairway ahead is clear of other vessels**

If the fairway is not clear then boats must drop back in line astern (single file)

Overtaking in the Inshore Zones

The overtaking crew does not have right of way.

- 1** Overtaking shall not take place if it puts the overtaking boat into the path of oncoming traffic
- 2** Overtaking should in general be on the outside
- 3** The crew(s) being overtaken should maintain course and speed – baulking the passage of an overtaking vessel is not permitted (Variations of speed for training purposes do not constitute maintaining “course and speed”)
- 4** Boats may ‘undertake’ if the boat being passed is a long way off the bank, making an outside overtake hazardous
- 5** A boat should not overtake a boat that is itself overtaking another boat – Only one boat at a time may overtake in the Inshore Zone



**Col Reg Rule 18
Responsibilities Between
Vessels**

Except where rules 9, 10 and 13 otherwise require:

18 (a)

A power driven vessel underway shall keep out of the way of:

- (i) a vessel not under command;
- (ii) a vessel restricted in her ability to manoeuvre
- (iii) a vessel engaged in fishing;
- (iv) a sailing vessel;

18 (d)

- (i) Any vessel other than a vessel not under command or a vessel restricted in her ability to manoeuvre shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, avoid impeding the safe passage of a vessel constrained by her draught
- (ii) A vessel constrained by her draught shall navigate with particular caution having full regard to her special condition.

**Port of London Thames
Byelaws 2012 - Byelaw 27
Vessels navigating above
Cherry Garden Pier** (Cherry Garden Pier is downstream of Tower Bridge) **and above Westminster Bridge**

27.1 A vessel of less than 40 metres in length navigating above Cherry Garden Pier, and a sailing vessel navigating above Cherry Garden Pier must not impede the passage of:

- (a) a vessel of 40 metres or more in length; or
- (b) a vessel engaged in towing.

For the purposes of Rule 18 & Byelaw 27, rowing boats must act as power-driven vessels and must keep out of the way of all the types of vessels listed. They must also give priority to vessels such as (but not limited to) Class V Passenger vessels, tugs and tows and large Dutch barges.

Rights of Way

With regards to the rules of the river, rowing boats are considered to be powered vessels.

- All vessels in the **Fairway** (including rowing boats) have right of way over rowing boats working the slacks, including at **Crossing Zones**
- Rowing boats must give way to larger motor vessels in the **Fairway** because these vessels are restricted in their ability to manoeuvre
- Rowing boats must give way to sailing boats (unless the sailing boat is crossing the **Fairway**)
- Overtaking boats do not have right of way

Notwithstanding the above points, all vessels have a duty of care to avoid a collision (Col Regs, Rule 2).

Avoiding collisions – Head-on situations

Alterations of course should be taken in ample time to avoid collision.

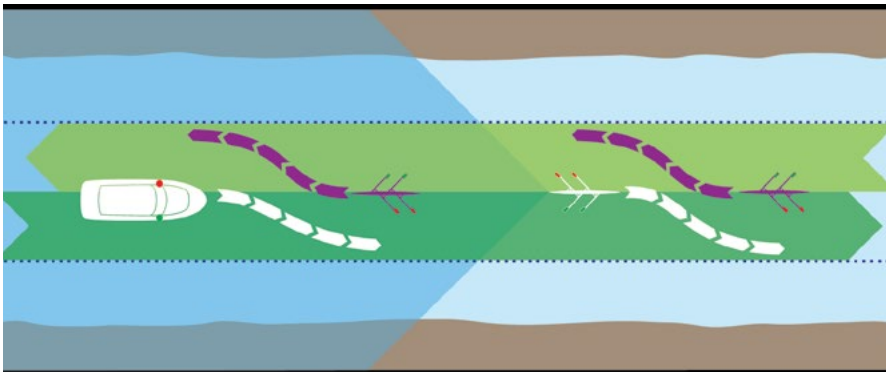
You should try to make your intentions obvious by means of a significant change of direction. If necessary (and there is time), stop and then take-off again on an obviously different course.

Motor vessels may use a sound signal to communicate their intentions in these situations ([see page 37](#)).

However, when two vessels are on a head-on course and a collision is unavoidable without immediate action, both boats should take the emergency avoiding action shown below.

Essentially you should steer to **starboard** and thus return to the correct station. This means that both vessels should pass **port-to-port**.

This rule applies to all vessels at all times.



Col Reg Rule 14 Head-on situation

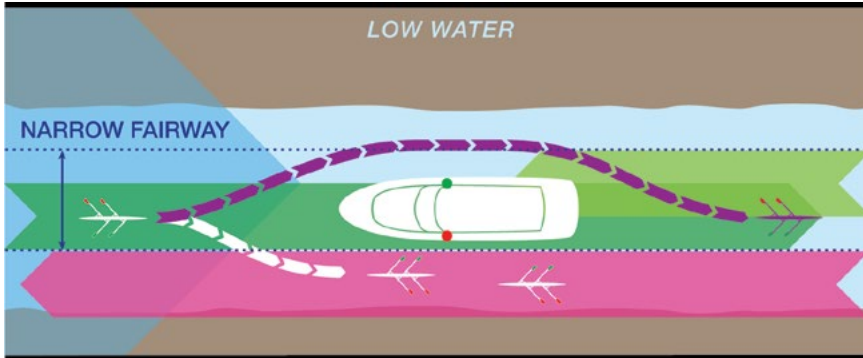
(a) When two power driven vessels are meeting on reciprocal or nearly reciprocal courses so as to involve risk of collision each shall alter her course to starboard so that each shall pass on the port side of the other.

(c) When a vessel is in any doubt as to whether such a situation exists she shall assume that it does exist and act accordingly.

For the purposes of this regulation, rowing boats must act as power-driven vessels.

Avoiding collisions – Head-on situations

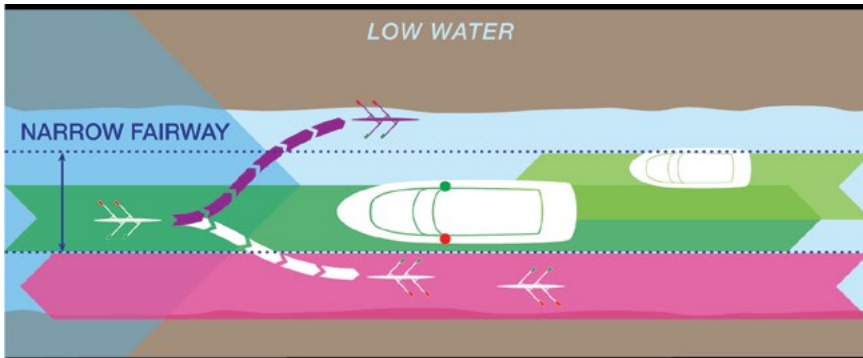
A very large motor vessel, restricted by her draught may, at lower tides, be forced onto the “wrong” side of the Fairway to stay in deeper water.



In this situation rowing boats must take early action to avoid collision. However, sometimes moving (correctly) to **starboard** would put the rowing boat on a possible collision course with another rowing boat in the **Inshore Zone**.

In this case, if the **change of course** is made early enough, rowing boats may have to consider moving to **port** **but only if the fairway is clear**.

The scenarios described and illustrated here are rare and the actions are only recommended in situations of dire necessity – generally, keeping a good lookout and early, decisive action should avoid them ever occurring



If it is not possible to move to **Starboard** because the **Inshore Zone** is not clear, or to **port** because the **Fairway** is not clear, nor is stopping a safe option, then **any action should be taken to avoid a collision**.

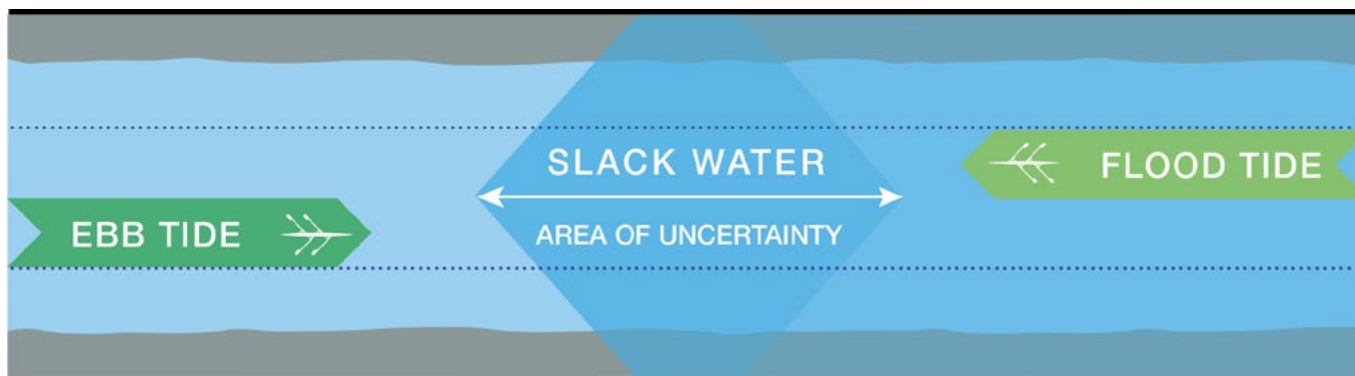
In extreme situations rowing boats may have to move completely out of the way even if it breaks all the rules. If so, they should always return immediately and safely to the correct station before continuing.

Avoiding collisions – Navigating on the Turn of the tide

- It is possible for a rowing boat to travel faster than the tide is moving
- When travelling with the tide you can easily overtake the changing tide
- When travelling against it you could easily meet the changing tide as it comes towards you
- At the point where the tide is turning there is usually a zone of slack / still water
- This slack water zone continually moves at the head of the turning tide and is a good indicator that you will need to change your navigation pattern from one tide to the other: from rowing with the tide in the [Fairway](#) to rowing against it in the [Inshore Zone](#) or *vice versa*

Tips on how to check the tide direction are in the [Tide & Stream section on page 7](#). However:

- If in doubt, navigate on the [starboard](#) side of the [Fairway](#) until you can be sure of the tide direction
- Observe how other crews are navigating and communicate with them about the state of the tide – it may be different where you are now to where they have just come from and *vice versa*
- Once you are sure, make the necessary change to your navigation – if it is safe to do so
- Avoid doing pieces when you are unsure of the tide direction
- Above all **KEEP A GOOD LOOKOUT**



Shouted warnings

If you feel that a risk of collision is developing do not assume that the other boat is aware of it and call out in good time to warn them. The conventional calls for rowers are:

- **“Take a look [other boat]”**
– potential risk of collision
- **“Ahead [other boat]”**
– imminent risk of collision
- **“Hold it up”**
– precautionary stop
- **“Hold it hard!”**
– Emergency stop

All rowers when hearing such a call in their vicinity should take a good look to ascertain whether it pertains to them or not.

Coaching launches are in a much better position to see oncoming traffic and the formation of potentially dangerous situations. Coaches should try to warn rowers of such situations **before** they develop whilst avoiding giving specific navigational instructions.

Sound signals

Power-driven vessels, especially the larger commercial (passenger) vessels are much more likely to use sound signals than they are to shout.

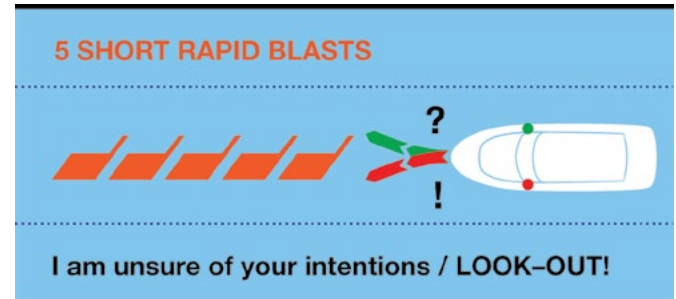
Emergency vessels such as the lifeboat and police will use their siren rather than shout.

Rowers must be aware of the meaning of sound signals, usually given via a horn or whistle.

In the **Upriver Area** sound signals are most likely to apply to the Class V passenger vessels, especially when using Kew Pier.

Below Putney and in the **Lower Area** use of sound signals will be common amongst the busy commercial traffic.

The most important **sound signals** for rowers to remember are as follows:



1 SHORT BLAST



I am turning to **starboard**

2 SHORT BLASTS



I am turning to **port**

4 SHORT BLASTS THEN 1 SHORT BLAST



I am turning 180° in the **Fairway** to **starboard**

4 SHORT BLASTS THEN 2 SHORT BLASTS



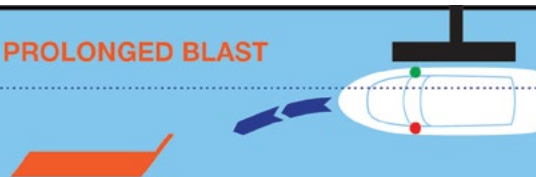
I am turning 180° in the **Fairway** to **port**

3 SHORT BLASTS



I am operating astern propulsion

1 PROLONGED BLAST



I am leaving the pier / entering the **Fairway**

Port of London Thames
Byelaws 2012 - Rule 36
Bridges

36.1 When the arch or span of a bridge is closed to navigation, the person in control of the bridge must display at or as close to the centre as practicable of that arch or span, or in a position agreed with the harbourmaster:

- (a) by day, three red discs 0.6 metres in diameter at the points of an equilateral triangle with the apex downwards and the base horizontal; and
- (b) by night, three red lights in similar positions to the discs displayed by day.

Bridges – navigation & marking

Navigating through Bridges

There are 29 bridges over the main channel between Teddington and Tower Bridge. The height and width are of no concern to rowers, but currents can be strong around bridges and they should always keep well away from bridge buttresses and avoid passing other vessels close to a bridge, which will often be very limited in their ability to manoeuvre.

Arch lights/marking

The **Fairway** (main channel) is marked with two amber lights above the arch (pictured, right).

The PLA uses an inverted triangle of three red lights to identify when a bridge arch is closed to navigation (pictured, below right).

No vessels should ever navigate through a closed arch, this is both for the rowers' personal safety and also for the safety of those working on the bridge structure.

Any arch closure will be announced via a Notice to Mariners.

All bridges are subject to the following rules both within and outside the Rowing Code Areas:

- No stopping (unless in an emergency)
- No turning
- No crossing
- No overtaking
- No baulking (rowing deliberately slowly)



Fairway marker



Closed arch marker

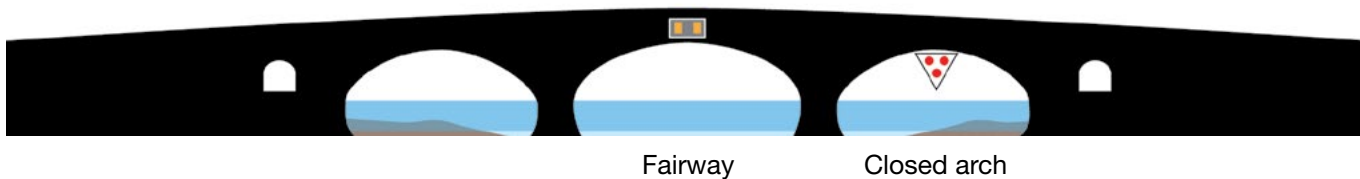
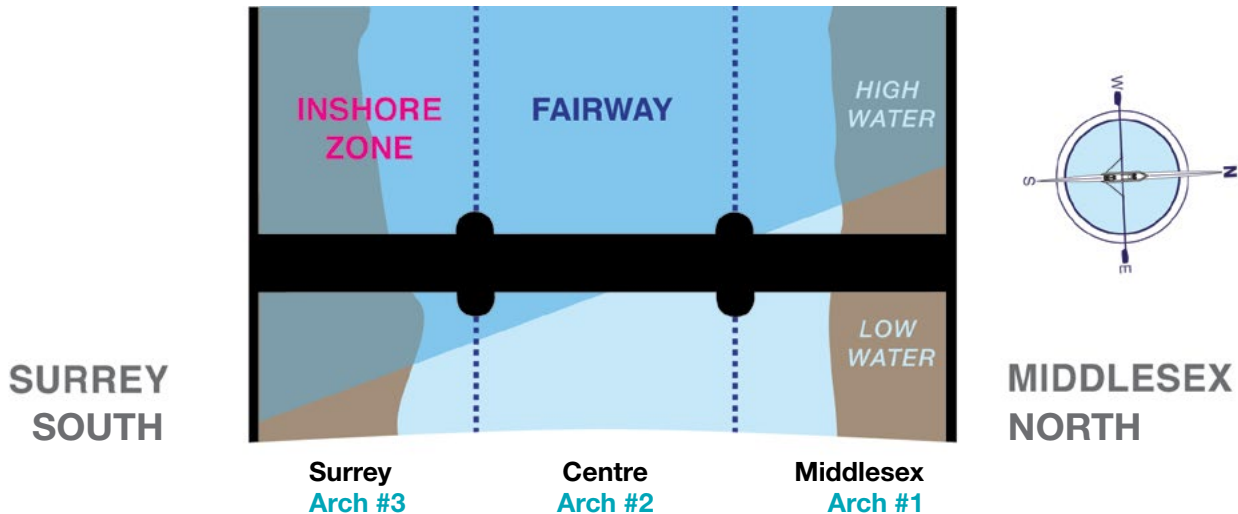
Bridges – arch numbering

Rowers, especially in the Upper Rowing Area, have historically described bridge arches according to which side of the river they are on: Surrey – Centre – Middlesex.

However, the convention (when described in NTMs for example) is to number the arches starting from the north bank with arch #1.

These numbers only apply to arches that span the river.

The example illustrated below is Kew Stone (road) Bridge



Coaching – roles & responsibilities

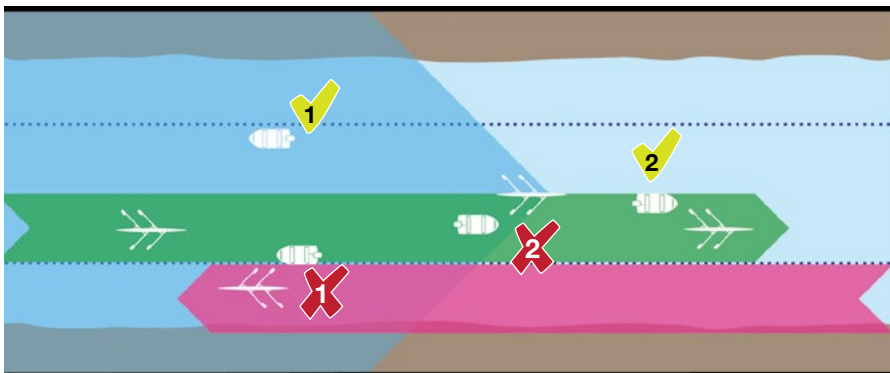
- Coaches must have a thorough knowledge of the Tideway Code. It is their responsibility to teach the principles, knowledge and skills of navigation to their crews
- Coaches must be steers accredited at the highest level, as they are responsible for the teaching of safe navigation
- Coaches of junior/novice crews are perceived as acting *'in loco parentis'* and having responsibility for the safe actions of the crews under their instruction
- Coaches must have had suitable instruction in launch driving, preferably a RYA Level 2 Power Boat qualification
- **Coaches who are paid for their services must have a Tideway coach's endorsement to their coaching qualifications.** It is also strongly recommended for volunteer coaches
- Coaches must make a full risk assessment before they allow their crews to boat
- An equipment check must be made to ensure the safety of the equipment
- **Megaphones must not be used before 0700hrs** and should at all times be at the minimum effective volume
- Coaches must always show concern for other river users, causing minimum wash for rowers and others

Launch positioning

1 ❌ *“Boats should not proceed abreast (side-by-side) in the Inshore Zone. Instead they should proceed in line astern”*

This includes coaching boats. When the river is busy this may mean that when their crews are in the **Inshore Zone** (especially against the ebb tide), coaches might have to be on the opposite side of the river

2 ✓ Coaches should position their launch to the outside of their crews. This is to help encourage the rowing boat to stay on the correct line and not be pushed out of position by the coaching launch



Speed, load & wash limits

- Coaching launches have a dispensation from the PLA to **exceed the speed limit BUT only when coaching crews.** At all other times they are limited to **8 knots** (see right) and should navigate to the starboard side
- Launches should not exceed their maximum load capacity. In a ‘tin-fish’ this is usually two people
- Coaching launches must carry no more than **two people**, unless they remain below the speed limit at all times
- Launches may be wash-tested by the PLA and approved to carry more than two people when coaching. *Please contact the PLA for more details*
- Note that a ‘tin-fish’ coaching launch should not be considered a ‘safety’ or ‘rescue’ vessel. Coaches should always carry a mobile phone (in a waterproof case) or VHF radio to summon assistance from the Coastguard/RNLI in case of an emergency

Port of London Thames Byelaws 2012, Byelaw 16 – SPEED LIMITS

- 16.1 The master of a power-driven vessel navigating in a part of the Thames to which this byelaw applies must ensure that it does not exceed a speed of **8 knots** through, on or over the water, provided that this byelaw does not apply:
- (b) where a vessel, having for the purpose of this byelaw been approved by a harbourmaster as one which may exceed a speed of **8 knots** through the water, is engaged in escorting a rowing boat in training;
- (d) where the vessel has been approved by the harbourmaster to exceed a speed of **8 knots** through the water, in connection with a river event that is subject to the requirements of byelaw 9, and if it does so in accordance with such approval.
- 16.2 The parts of the Thames to which byelaw 16.1 applies are
- (a) the Thames above Wandsworth Bridge;
- (b–g) *All creeks below Tower Bridge*
- 16.3 The master of a power-driven vessel navigating **between Wandsworth Bridge and Margaretness Limit** must ensure that it does not exceed a speed of **12 knots** through, on or over the water, provided that this byelaw does not apply:
- if the vessel falls within the exceptions described in byelaw 16.1 a), or
- where a vessel, having for the purpose of this byelaw been approved by the harbourmaster as one which may exceed a speed of 12 knots through the water, is engaged in:
- escorting a rowing boat in training;
- escorting a boat race or regatta.

Col Reg Rule 23

Power driven Vessels Underway (Lights and Shapes)

- (a) A power-driven vessel underway shall exhibit:
- (i) a masthead light forward;
 - (iii) sidelights; and
 - (iv) a sternlight.
- (c) (i) A power driven vessel of less than 12 metres in length may in lieu of the lights prescribed in paragraph (a) of this Rule exhibit an all-round white light and sidelights;
- (ii) a power driven vessel of less than 7 metres in length whose maximum speed does not exceed 7 knots may in lieu of the lights prescribed in paragraph (a) of this Rule exhibit an all-round white light and shall, if practicable, also exhibit sidelights.

Coaching – equipment

Lighting coaching launches

At times of reduced visibility launches must display a stable masthead white light, visible through 360° at least 300mm above the head of the driver, plus port and starboard side lights. You should always carry a back-up torch aboard the launch.

If you (and your crews) do not have the correct lights, you do not go afloat. You are breaking the law.



Coaching – equipment

Communications

Coaches should always carry a mobile phone (in a waterproof case) or VHF radio to summon assistance from the Coastguard/RNLI in case of an emergency.

Life Jackets

Coaches MUST wear a Life Jacket – correctly fitted, well maintained and regularly serviced (see Appendix A page 113).



Kill Cords

Coaches in a launch MUST always use a kill cord attached to the engine. Failure to wear a kill cord puts the coach and others at risk and is a serious breach of safety.

The kill cord serves only one purpose, to stop the engine when the driver moves away from the controls. **Failure to use a kill cord is considered a serious contravention.**



It is essential that all coaching launches are fitted with an operational kill cord (and carry a spare). Following incidents elsewhere, the MAIB and RYA issued the following safety advice, which the PLA strongly recommends to all owners and operators:

- Test them regularly to ensure that the engine stops when the kill cord mechanism is operated.
- Make sure that the cord is in good condition.
- Always attach the cord securely to the Master, ideally before the engine is started, but certainly before the vessel is put into gear.
- Stop the engine before transferring the kill cord to another driver of the vessel.

Further information regarding the use of kill cords can be found on the [RYA Website](#).

Port of London Act 1968 (as amended) - Section 108

General rules for navigation

A master who navigates his vessel on the Thames

- (a) without due care and attention; or
- (b) in a manner liable to injure or endanger persons, other vessels, the banks of the Thames (whether above or below mean high water level) or any structure or installation in or beside the Thames;

shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding [the statutory maximum and on conviction on indictment to a fine].

The statutory maximum fine at time of publication (2015) is £5,000

Personal Responsibility

Risk Assessment

Each crew member is responsible for checking the equipment that they are about to go afloat in and also for assessing the environmental conditions plus their own ability and experience.

They should understand the basics of this Code of Practice and be familiar with emergency procedures set out by their club.

They must be able to swim or wear a suitable life jacket if not.

The Vessel Master

In the context of PLA regulations, the coxswain or, in the case of a coxless boat, the steers person (steers), is deemed to be the master of the vessel.

As such, the steers is **legally responsible for the navigation, safety and behaviour of the crew.**

All steers should be suitably authorised by their clubs to take a boat onto the river – including coaching boats.

Coaches' responsibility

Bearing this in mind coaches and those '*in loco parentis*' of Junior coxswains and steers, should use this fact in their risk assessment when determining the suitability of those under age, or who are inexperienced, to act as masters of vessels with respect to their knowledge of and ability to adhere to, the navigation regulations and this Tideway Code.

Coaches must be steers accredited at the highest level, as they are responsible for the teaching of safe navigation on the Tideway.

Coaches who are paid for their services must hold a minimum of the RYA level 2 powerboat qualification and have a Tideway coach's endorsement to their coaching qualifications.

As for the crew, coaches should check all equipment before going afloat and must wear a life jacket and use a kill cord while on the water.

Clubs' responsibilities

Authorised Steers Accreditation

All Tideway clubs are required by the PLA to have an **Authorised Steers Accreditation System** in place.

Any coach, cox or steers must have completed an appropriate steering and navigation test to prove their understanding and knowledge of the Tideway Code of Practice.

For accreditation they must be competent to steer, and show an understanding that the Tideway is fast flowing with strong tidal sets.

Accreditation must be given by a suitably qualified person and clubs must keep an up-to-date record of accredited steers.

See [panel on page 54](#) for details about the responsibilities for visiting, non-Tideway coxes, steers and coaches.

More information about steers accreditation can be found on the [TRRC website](#)

Information distribution

Clubs are also responsible for informing members of any information relevant to safety and navigation on the Tideway.

This information could be any or all of the following issued by the PLA, TRRC or British Rowing

- This Code of Practice
- Notices to Mariners
- Safety Bulletins
- Fluvial Flag warnings
- Advice from the RRSA

Safety advice

All clubs must have a nominated Club Rowing Safety Advisor

(CRSA) whose role it is to advise the club committee and captaincy on all aspects of water safety. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the club Captain and other club officers to ensure that any advice is implemented and adhered to.

Others' responsibilities

Thames Regional Rowing Council

The TRRC is one of 10 regional councils whose representatives sit on British Rowing's National Committees. It is responsible for the development and resourcing of rowing in the Thames region.

This includes safety and navigation on the Tideway, the busiest rowing river in the country and provides a link/buffer between the clubs and the PLA via the Regional Rowing Safety Advisor (RRSA).

Port of London Authority

PLA operations cover 95 miles of the River Thames between the estuary and Teddington Lock. Its role is to keep commercial and leisure users **safe**, protect and enhance the environment and promote the use of the river for trade and travel.

The PLA is ultimately responsible for enforcing the navigation rules of the river, including this Rowing Code.



Events' responsibilities

An 'event' is classed as use of the river for anything other than a regular outing. This includes Head races, regattas and private matches of any kind. The organiser of an event must advise the Harbourmaster as far in advance as possible, at least four weeks before the event.

The organiser must provide:

- proof of public liability insurance
- a risk assessment and event plan
- a signed Standard Event Letter containing an indemnity for the Port of London Authority against any costs or claims arising as a result of the event
- details of any boats involved in the event working for hire or reward
- information on how to access the Rowing Code for non-Tideway clubs visiting their event

If a Notice to Mariners is required by the Harbourmaster, at least four weeks' notice is required.

Joint Notices to Mariners are possible for events which will be run in a similar fashion to each other (Head Races for example).

Any event that will involve more than 99 craft, or if the Harbourmaster deems it necessary, must have a full river closure, which requires at least one month's notice.

More information about running events on the Tideway can be found on the [TRRC website](#) or by contacting the [Regional Rowing Safety Advisor](#).

Port of London Thames Byelaws 2012 - Byelaw 9

BOAT RACES, REGATTAS, PROCESSIONS AND OTHER RIVER EVENTS

9.1 A person must not organise or promote a boat race, regatta, stunt, procession, exhibition, firework display, air race or other river event on or over the Thames except with the consent of the harbourmaster.

9.2 Any person who proposes to organise or promote a boat race, regatta, stunt, procession, exhibition, firework display, air race or other river event on or over the Thames, must consult with the harbourmaster on the navigational and safety issues arising from the proposed event and give the harbourmaster at least four weeks' notice of the proposed event.

9.3 Every person navigating a vessel in or in connection with such an event must comply with the instructions of a harbourmaster relating to it.

9.4 Any person who proposes to organise or promote a boat race, regatta, stunt, procession, exhibition, firework display, air race or other river event, must provide to the harbourmaster the findings of any comprehensive risk assessment requested as a result of the consultation under byelaw 9.2 in respect of the event in question. The risk assessment must identify the relevant hazards and any suitable procedures, precautions and other risk control measures to be implemented to ensure any risk to persons or navigational safety or both is mitigated and maintained as low as reasonably practicable.

Boat Identification

All rowing and coaching boats on the Thames Tideway must display a six figure ID number. It should contain a three letter club code plus three numbers

This ID should be registered with your club and includes all boats visiting the Tideway for Head races or training, including foreign crews.

Contact [British Rowing](#) for your club code or [see Appendix C on page 115](#) for Tideway club codes

ID numbers can also be registered with the Environment Agency (EA).

Any boat with an EA registered ID can then be used off the Tideway, on EA waters without requiring a separate EA boating licence.

The cost of registering your boat ID with the EA is approximately half the cost of purchasing a boating licence.

ID Specification

Font: Ariel, Helvetica or similar 'sans serif' typeface

Size: 60mm cap height (50mm on small sax boards)

Colour: can be any colour but must contrast with the colour of the shell and be easily legible

Position: ideally at the forward (bow) end of the sax board



Environment, Pollution & Health

Environment

All users of the river should be environmentally friendly and take care not to disturb the wildlife of the Thames.

Water Pollution

Do not drop your litter in the river or leave it where it can be taken by the tide. Plastic bottles are a particular eyesore and menace to wildlife.

After heavy or prolonged rainfall, screened sewage is often released into the river from combined sewage outfalls. Avoid rowing when pollution is likely and a possible risk to your health is increased.

You can usually see if the river is polluted by seeing sewage-derived litter and debris, as well as the river tending to have a greasy brown film on the surface from sewage discharges. Pollution alerts can be requested from Thames Water.

Noise Pollution

Please be considerate towards those who live on or near the river. **Coaches must not use a megaphone before 0700 hours** and all rowers should avoid using foul or abusive language.

Health

Rowers should always be aware of the risk of Weil's disease from rodents particularly after heavy rainfall.

All cuts and grazes should be covered before going afloat. If a bleeding wound occurs during an outing, wash it thoroughly as soon as you return and treat as an infection risk.

It is recommended that both boats and blade handles are washed with clean water after every outing.

Always wash your hands after rowing and before eating.



Port of London Thames Byelaws 2012 – Byelaw 8

- 8.1 Where any vessel has, whilst in the Thames:
- sunk or is in danger of sinking;
 - been abandoned;
 - become derelict;
 - been in collision with another vessel, shore facility, the river embankment, a structure including any part of a bridge or a berthed or moored vessel or object;
 - been damaged or caused damage to anything (including a vessel);
 - been or is on fire or has suffered an explosion;
 - taken the ground or stranded (not being a vessel which has intentionally taken the ground);
 - run into, fouled or damaged any light, buoy, beacon or other aid to navigation;
 - suffered any person falling overboard except in relation to a recoverable capsize of a sailing dinghy or a vessel

- propelled by paddles or oars;
- suffered any other accident normally required to be reported to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch or the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, or both.
- 8.2 A written report must be submitted by the vessel master to the harbourmaster, as soon as practicable after the submission of the verbal report, required by byelaw 8.1 above. The written report must give the full details of the occurrence, in a form prescribed by the Harbourmaster.

Note: In respect of Byelaw 8 (a), (b) and (c), incidents will also be reported to the PLA and in the case of (b) and (c) only when the damage is valued at a cost more than £500 at cost to repair. However, all incidents involving personal injury must also be reported directly to the PLA.

Emergencies

In an emergency, call **999** and ask for the **Coastguard**. You will need to provide details of your location on the river.

Mobile phones

It is strongly recommended that coaches (plus crews and scullers, where possible), carry a mobile phone to summon help in an emergency situation.

VHF radio

A VHF handset is recommended in busy commercial traffic areas to make other river users aware of your intentions and to find out the intentions of other vessels.

NOTE: All users of VHF must have proper training and certification.

Behaviour of motor vessels

Any concerns about poor / abusive behaviour or navigation by motor vessels should be reported as soon as possible to **London VTS:**

Telephone **020 8855 0315**
or use VHF Channel 14.

Communications & Incident reporting

Who is afloat?

Clubs are strongly advised to keep a log or use a sign-out board to indicate which boat and steers are on the river. This should also indicate the departure time and expected return time of all crews. All club members should be advised on the correct procedure if a crew is overdue.

In addition to signing-out, those rowing on the Lower Rowing Area are strongly advised to inform London VTS prior to going afloat and fly a 'Rower On The River Flag' from your clubhouse.

All rowing boats must inform London VTS if they intend to row into or through Central London below Chelsea Bridge and above Cherry Garden Pier (see page 90).

Events organisers should inform London VTS that the event is about to start and again once the event has finished.

Rowing incidents

All rowing-related incidents on the Tideway **must be reported** to the TRRC by using the British Rowing [on-line reporting system](#). This can be accessed via the British Rowing website.

Incidents should also be reported to your club captain or safety advisor, particularly if it involves damage to a boat or personal injury.

This is the case for all crews using the Tideway whether or not they are based in the Thames Region.

- **Incidents should be reported within seven days.**
- **Any incident where the RNLI is called must be reported within 24 hours**

All Tideway rowing incidents are reviewed by the Tideway Code Panel ([see page 53](#)).

Examples of the sort of incidents that must be reported are:

- **Capsizes**
- **Collisions – with other boats**
- **Collisions – with stationary objects (bridges, piers etc.)**
- **Grounding**
- **Near misses**
- **Poor navigation**
- **Unsafe navigation**
- **Inappropriate behaviour**
- **Inconsiderate behaviour**
- **Personal Injury**
- **No life jacket**
- **No kill cord**

Further information about reporting incidents on the Tideway can be found on the [TRRC website](#) or from your Club Rowing Safety Advisor.

The Tideway Code Panel

Although the PLA is ultimately responsible for policing the Tidal Thames, the rowing community is expected to self-regulate its members, their behaviour and adherence to the Rowing Code. This is done by means of the Tideway Code Panel.

This panel consists of members of several Tideway clubs who peer-review all the Tideway-related incident reports. Panel members assess each report and make recommendations to the Chairman. The Chairman, who has great experience and knowledge of the legal framework governing the Tideway, will adjudicate then decide on any appropriate advice or sanctions that may be required.

Points are awarded to a club for Code contraventions in a similar way to driving offences and these points give an indication of a club's understanding of, and adherence to, the Rowing Code.

Clubs whose crews accrue too many points may be required to justify their safety procedures to the Regional Rowing Safety Advisor, who will give appropriate advice and help.

Very serious incidents or the accrual of an excessive number of points may make a club subject to the TRRC Discipline Code and also lead to intervention by the PLA.

Penalty points are not simply the subjective opinion of the panel members or the Chairman. Points are assessed and awarded on the following basis:

0 points – Advice only

Review your navigational knowledge/conduct/risk assessment in this specific area.

1 point – Minor code infringement

Obvious navigational error, usually not involving any other vessels but still not complying with the Rowing Code.

2 points – Clear breach of the Rowing code

Navigational error or poor conduct that puts your crew or other crews in danger but no material incident occurred (eg. near miss).

4 points – Material incident

Involving damage to boats or injury to crew and the potential involvement of outside agencies or emergency services. Also bringing the sport into disrepute.

8 points – Incident resulting in potential risk to life

A serious, possibly reckless incident or potentially serious incident involving risk to life or total shipwreck and damage to other vessels. Such incidents involve crew in the water (but not a simple capsized) and the intervention of the emergency services and/or PLA.

Coaching

Incidents where a crew is being coached may be subject to additional points as the coach, who must have a thorough knowledge of the Tideway Code, is responsible for teaching the principles, knowledge and skills of navigation to their crews. Coaches should not overrule a steers' correct navigation for the sake of any work or exercises. This is particularly the case where a junior crew is involved in an incident.

Right to respond

In all cases, clubs will be given the opportunity to respond to any report made against one of their crews and this will be taken into account by the Code Panel.

Sanctions

Clubs whose crews repeatedly flout the Rowing Code or fail to improve their safety procedures may be subject to the following sanctions:

- a ban from racing in Tideway events (including the major Head races)
- temporary loss of British Rowing Affiliation

This applies to all clubs and not just those based on the Tideway. Visiting clubs cannot use ignorance of the Rowing Code as a defence against poor safety or navigation.

Clubs visiting the Tideway

Visiting, non-Tideway clubs do not have to have a steers accreditation system (but it is strongly recommended for regular Tideway visitors). Visiting clubs must ensure that their coxes, steers and coaches are fully conversant with the Tideway Code of Practice before going afloat. It is the visiting club's responsibility to seek advice from their hosts, the event organisers or the TRRC if they are unsure.

Ignorance of the Tideway Code is not a defence in the event of an incident and the same sanctions will be applied.

Tideway clubs that host visiting, non-Tideway clubs for training outings or provide boating for Tideway Head races are expected to provide basic advice on Tideway navigation to their visitors if requested.

Permanent Notices to Mariners P19 2014 – Reduced Upriver Depths

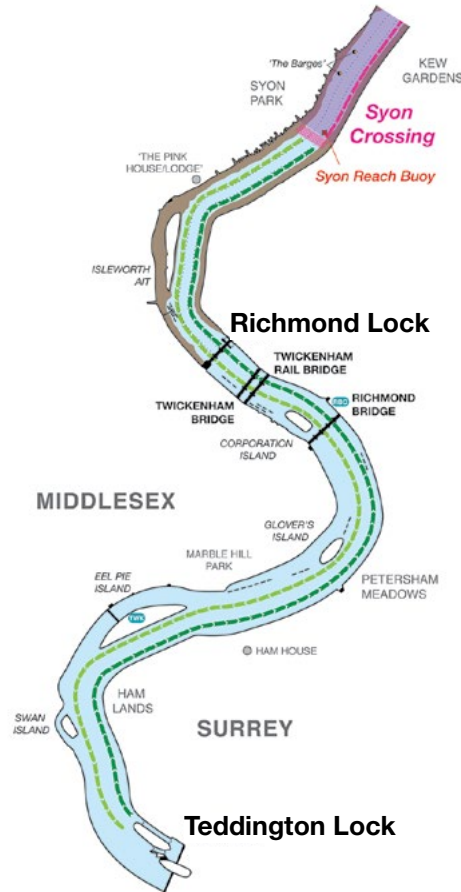
Mariners are reminded that depths in the upper reaches of the tidal Thames are greatly affected over the low water period by the amount of land water flowing over Teddington Weir.

The area particularly affected lies between Kew Railway Bridge and Richmond half-tide lock.

Under low flow conditions water levels in the above area will remain at or less than chart datum between three hours before and one hour after the time of predicted low water at Richmond Lock. Low water levels of 0.5 metres below Chart Datum are to be expected.

During such periods of reduced depths, Masters of vessels navigating upriver of Putney should only do so with caution and should also make every effort to avoid impeding the passage of commercial vessels, which are highly constrained in their ability to manoeuvre in such conditions.

Teddington Lock to Syon Crossing



Above **Syon Crossing** the Thames Tideway is not part of the **Rowing Area** and therefore Col Regs apply.

This means that you should navigate to the **starboard** side of the river at all times, **regardless of what the tide is doing**.

You should aim to be as close to the **starboard** bank as is safe and practicable in both directions.

If the half-tide barrier is down at **Richmond Lock** it is recommended that you should not proceed any further but turn and return (unless touring).

Beware that in the vicinity of Richmond the river can get very busy, particularly in the summer, with hired rowing boats. Richmond canoe club also use this stretch for training.

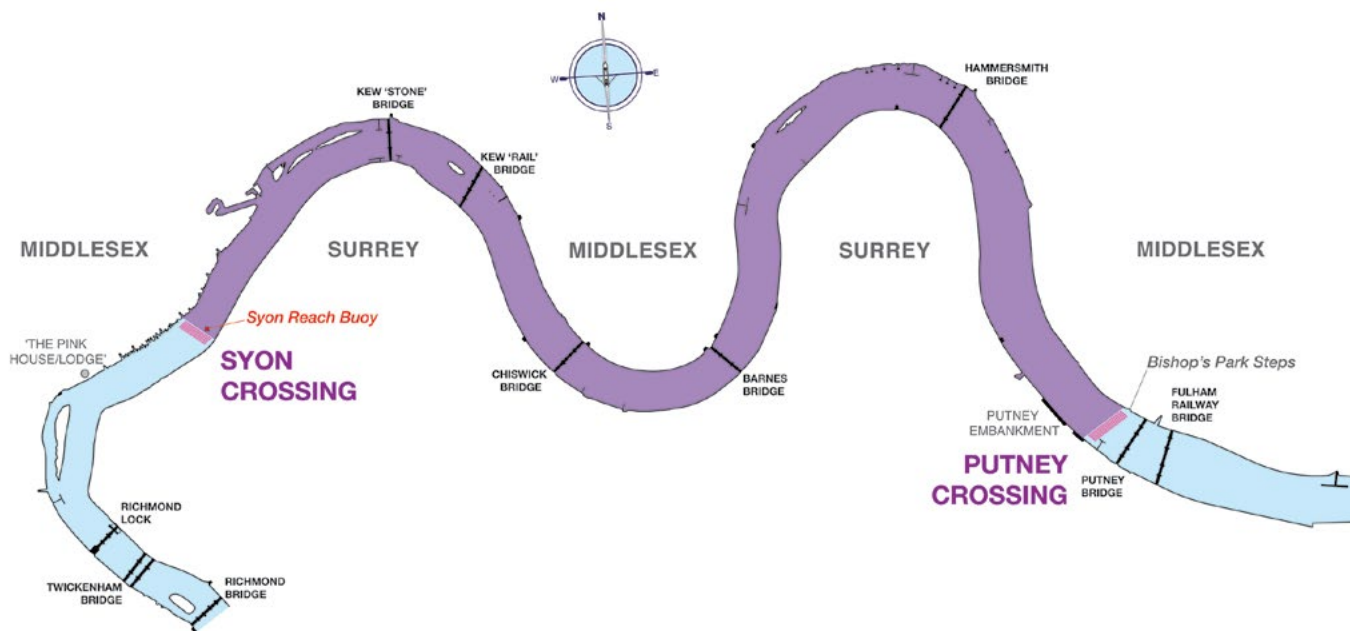
Note the NTM in the panel opposite with regard to low water hazards for large motor vessels. They only have narrow channels to navigate in. Please do not impede them.

The Upper Tideway Rowing Code Area

The **Upper Tideway Rowing Code Area** is between the red navigation buoy in Syon Reach and the Bishop's Park steps at Putney. Within this area rowers must navigate according to the Rowing Code, i.e. **working the slacks** against the tide.

This is the only area on the river where the edge of the **Fairway** is marked by navigation buoys ([see page 21](#)).

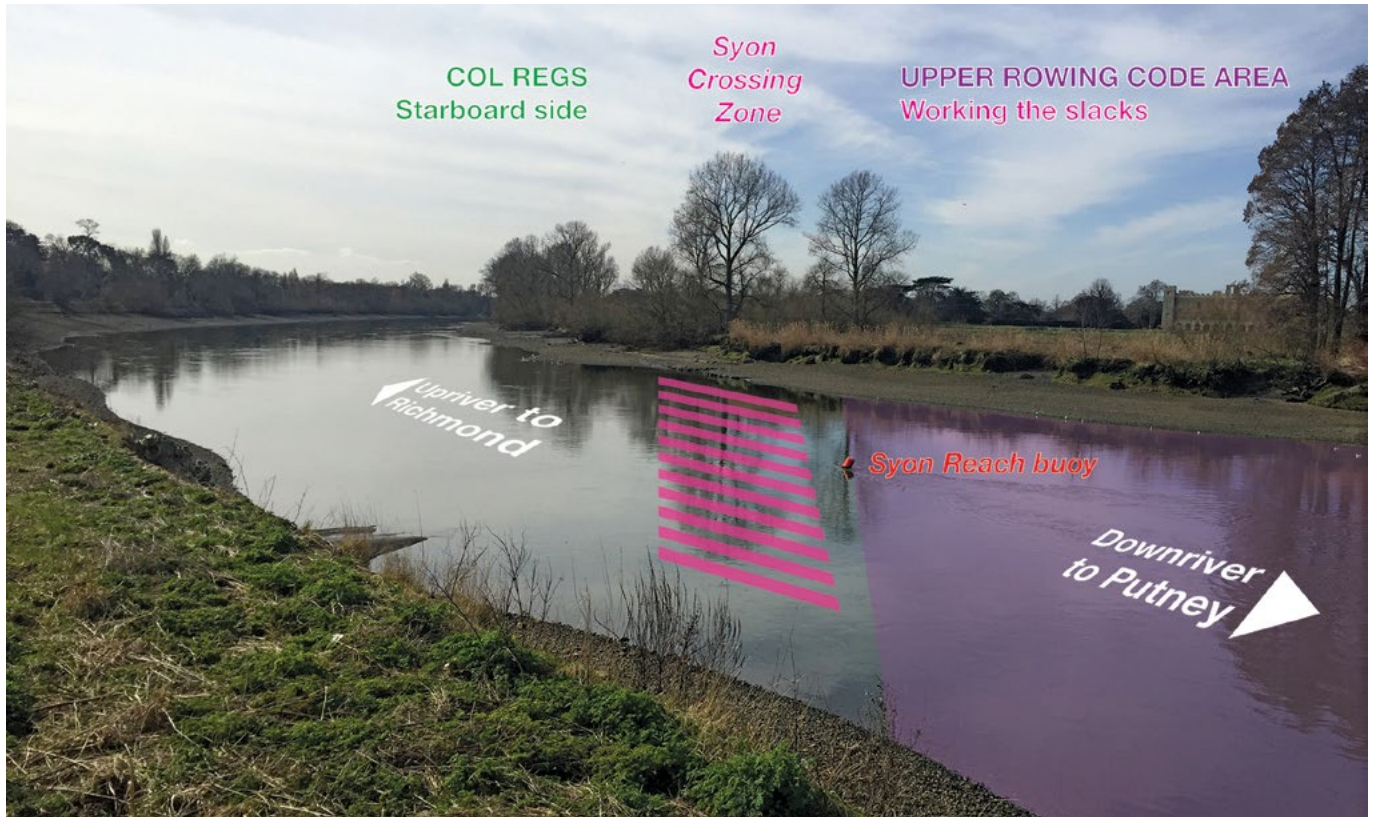
For general navigation rules in the rowing area please refer to [Basic/Further Principles of Navigation](#). These directions describe specific details within the busy Upper Rowing Area. They are described in short sections, moving downriver from Syon Crossing. In each section, the ebb tide is described first, followed by flood tide descriptions.



Syon Crossing

This is the *Syon Crossing Zone*, looking upriver from the Surrey bank.

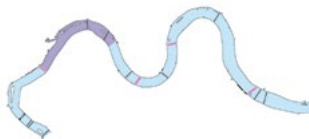
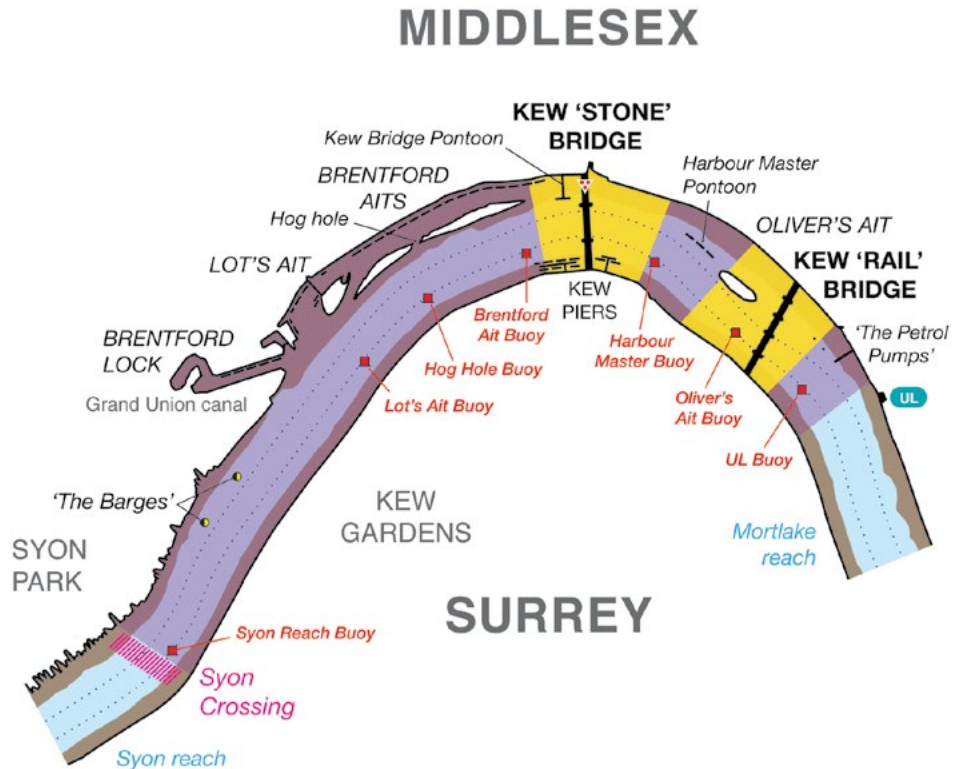
It is where the navigation pattern changes from Col Regs to the *Upper Rowing Area*.



Syon Reach & Kew Bend – including Kew bridges

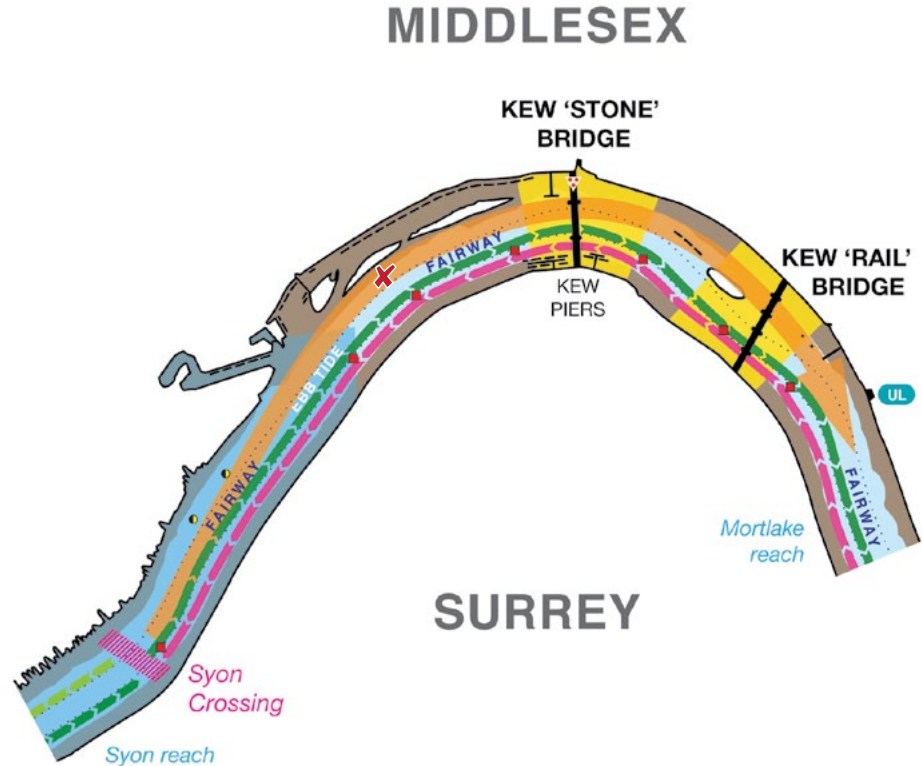
This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Kew 'Stone' and Kew 'Rail' bridges with shallow inshore channels at low tide
- Two (unique) full width **Restricted Zones** around both bridges
- Multiple piers, moorings and pontoons
- Seven red navigation buoys
- The entrance to the Grand Union canal
- A strong tidal set
- Four islands (Aits)



Syon Reach & Kew Bend – Navigating on the ebb tide

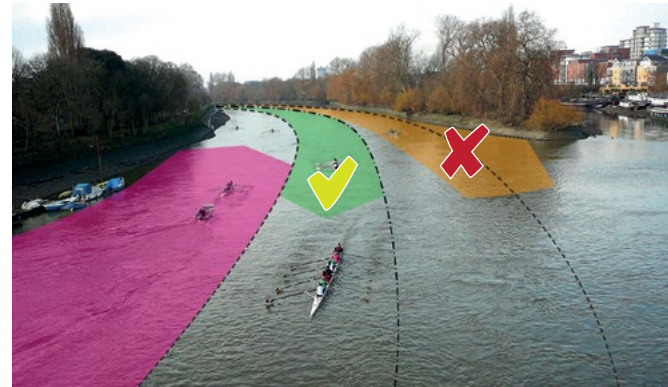
- When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB** tide, stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Surrey bank as is safe and always inside the red buoys
 - When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB** tide stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the Surrey bank but outside the red buoys
- X** Take extra care not to be pushed over to the **port**/Middlesex side of the **Fairway** by the **set of the EBB tide**



Syon Reach & Kew Bend – Navigating **with the ebb** tide

When rowing **with the ebb** tide, not staying to the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** is the biggest navigational issue in this section. The diagrams illustrate this problem:

- **Inshore Zone** – for rowing up river against the tide
- ✓ **Starboard side** of the **Fairway** – the correct navigation line
- ✗ **Set of the tide** – this **port** side line is incorrect and caused by **tidal set** plus a lack of active correction by the steers

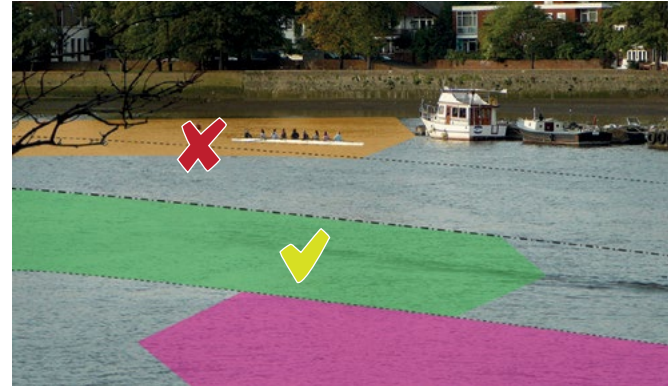


Looking upriver at Brentford Ait from Kew Stone bridge

Looking downriver at Kew Stone Bridge centre arch from the Fairway



Looking across at Harbour Master Pontoon from the Surrey bank



Kew Rail Bridge – Navigating **against the ebb tide**

If there is sufficient water, always use the Surrey (#5) Arch of Kew Rail when rowing **against the ebb tide**.

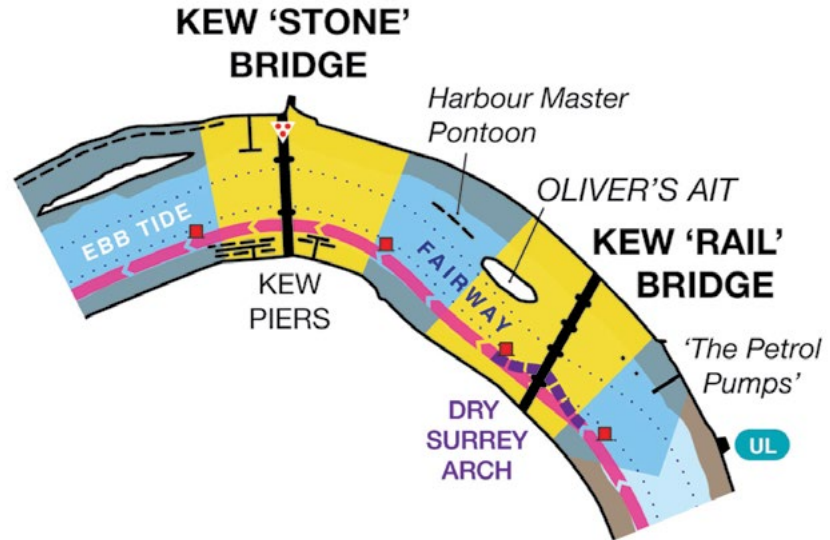


However, the Surrey (#5) arch of Kew Rail can 'dry out' at low water.



If the Surrey (#5) Arch of Kew Rail is dry, crews may **carefully** navigate through the #4 arch as follows:

- Stop well before the bridge and check the **Fairway** is clear
- If the **Fairway** is not clear you must wait. Crews out-bound in the **Fairway** have right of way
- If it is clear, move into the **Fairway** and row quickly through, **staying as close to the buttress as possible**
- Move immediately back into the **Inshore Zone** once beyond the bridge buttress, inside the red buoy





Kew Stone (road) Bridge – Navigating **against the ebb tide**

If there is sufficient water, always use the Surrey (#3) Arch of Kew Stone when rowing **against the ebb tide**.



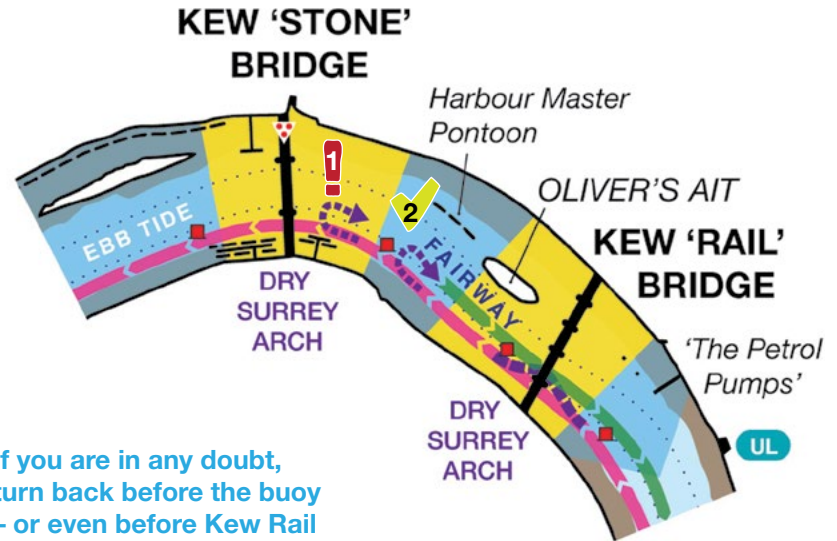
However, the Surrey (#3) arch of Kew Stone can 'dry out' at low water.



If the Surrey (#3) Arch of Kew Stone is dry, **passing though the middle arch against the ebb tide is not recommended**. Rowers should not proceed any further up-river.

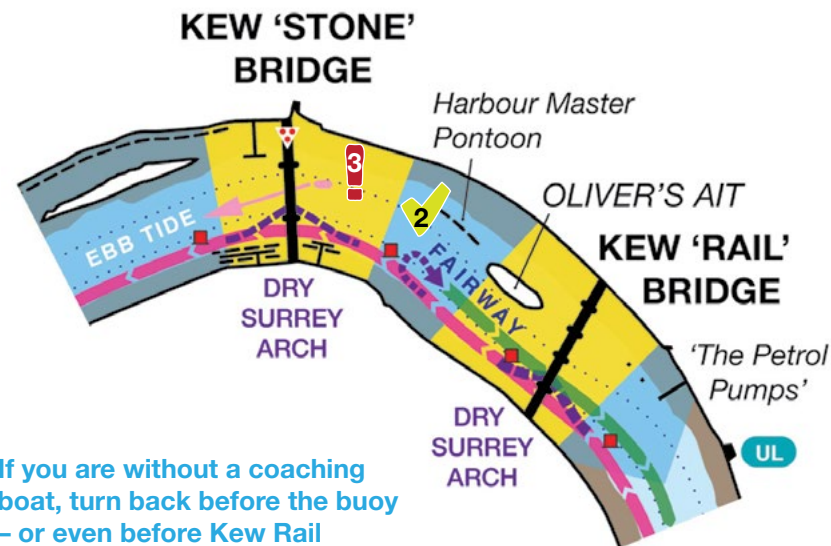
You may not discover that Surrey arch of Kew Stone is dry until you get there. A good indicator that this might be the case is that the Surrey arch (#5) of Kew Rail is also dry.

- 1** Turning in front of the bridge is very hazardous
- 2** If you suspect that Kew Stone may be impassable then you should turn before the red Harbour Master buoy



If you are in any doubt, turn back before the buoy – or even before Kew Rail

- 1 If you do get to Kew Stone and the arch is dry, turning remains the recommended course of action but do so with **EXTREME CAUTION** being aware of vessels that might be coming down-river
- 3 However, if you are with a coach who can act as a spotter to check that the **Fairway** above the bridge is clear then you may continue but with **EXTREME CAUTION**
 - The **Fairway must be confirmed completely clear by the coach** before any such manoeuvre is attempted
 - Take the **centre arch** (#2) and return to **Inshore Zone** as quickly as possible



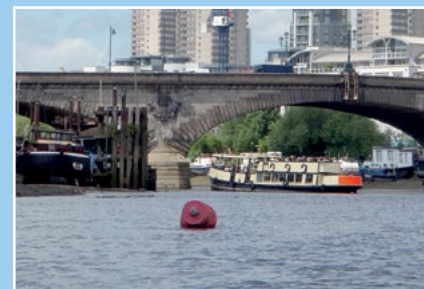
If you are without a coaching boat, turn back before the buoy – or even before Kew Rail

Note: The pier just down-river of Kew Stone is a scheduled stopping point for Class V passenger vessels, which operate mostly in the summer months.

These large vessels are likely to turn around in the Fairway below the bridge and alongside of Kew Pier.

Rowers should take extra care in this area and listen out for any sound signals (see page 37) which would indicate activity at the pier by a Class V vessel.

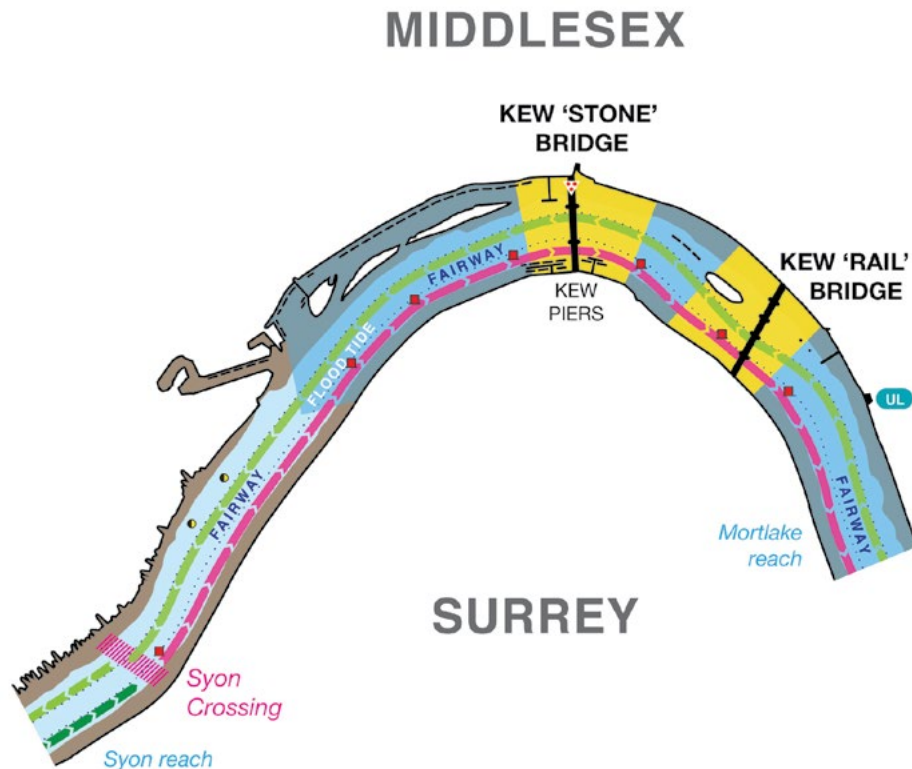
Rowers should always give way to a Class V in this vicinity as it is limited in its ability to manoeuvre by the depth of the river.



Looking upriver at Kew Stone Bridge – a Class V manoeuvring at Kew Pier

Syon Reach & Kew Bend – Navigating on the flood tide

- Rowing inbound/upriver **with the FLOOD** tide, stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the Middlesex bank
- Rowing outbound/downriver **against the FLOOD** tide stay on in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Surrey bank as is safe and always inside the red buoys

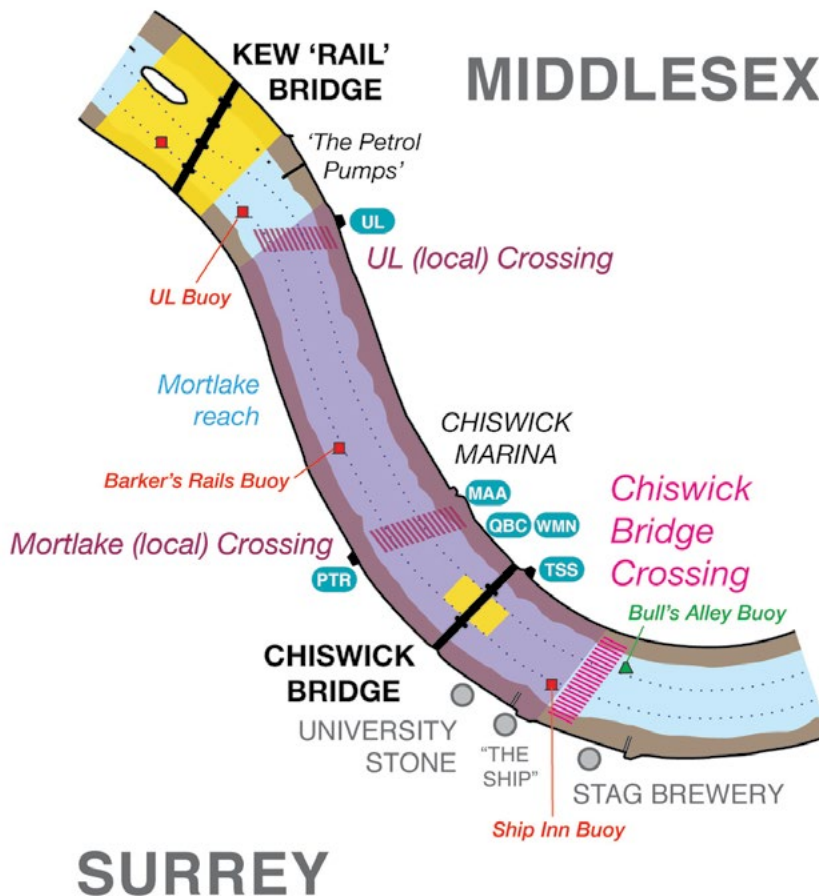
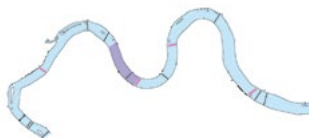


Mortlake Reach – including Chiswick Bridge

This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

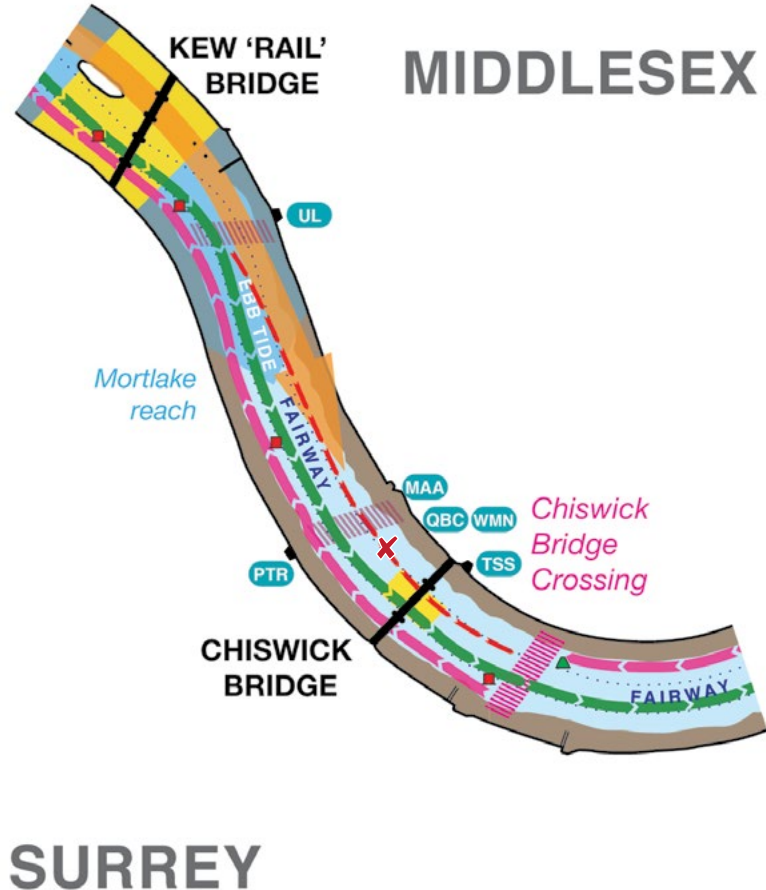
- Chiswick Bridge
(Restricted Zone)
- A very irregular and shallow foreshore in the **Inshore Zone** at low tide
- **The Chiswick Bridge Crossing Zone**
- Two local crossings
- Two red navigation buoys
- **A strong tidal set**
- The entrance to Chiswick Marina
- Five **boathouses** (including UL which houses numerous rowing clubs)

This is a busy section of the river and is a popular 1000m regatta course over the summer.



Mortlake Reach – Navigating on the ebb tide

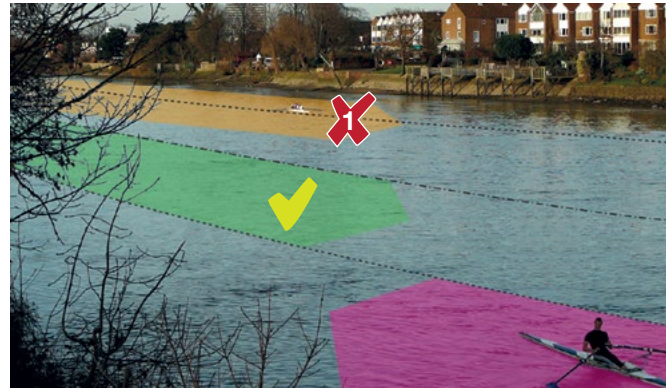
- When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB tide**, stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Surrey bank as is safe and always inside the red buoys
- When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB tide** stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the Surrey bank but outside the red buoys
- ✗ Take extra care not to be pushed over to the **port**/Middlesex side of the **Fairway** by the **set of the EBB tide** – **or to deliberately cut the corner**
- Be aware of crews using the **local crossings** between the **Inshore Zone** and the clubs on the Middlesex bank



Mortlake Reach – Navigating with the ebb tide

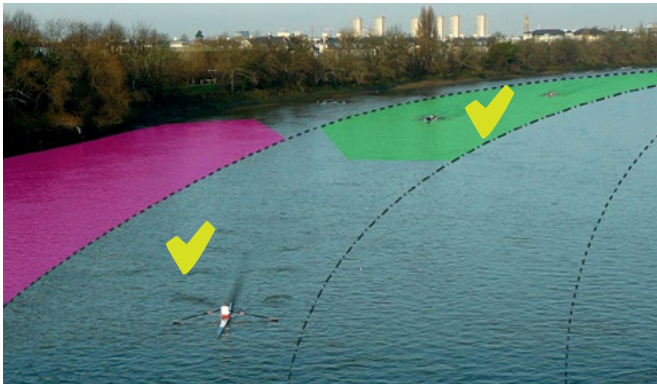
When rowing **with the ebb** tide, not staying to the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** is the biggest navigational issue in this section. The diagrams illustrate this problem:

- **Inshore Zone** – for rowing up river against the tide
- ✓ **Starboard side** of the **Fairway** – the correct navigation line
- ✗ **Set of the tide** – this **port** side line is incorrect caused by **tidal set** plus a lack of active correction by the steers
- ✗ **Cutting the (blind) corner** at Chiswick Bridge is obviously not a good idea

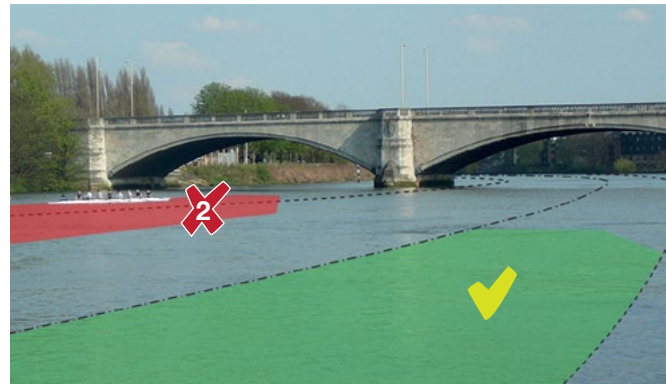


Looking upriver at Mortlake Reach from the Surrey bank

Looking upriver at Mortlake Reach from Chiswick Bridge

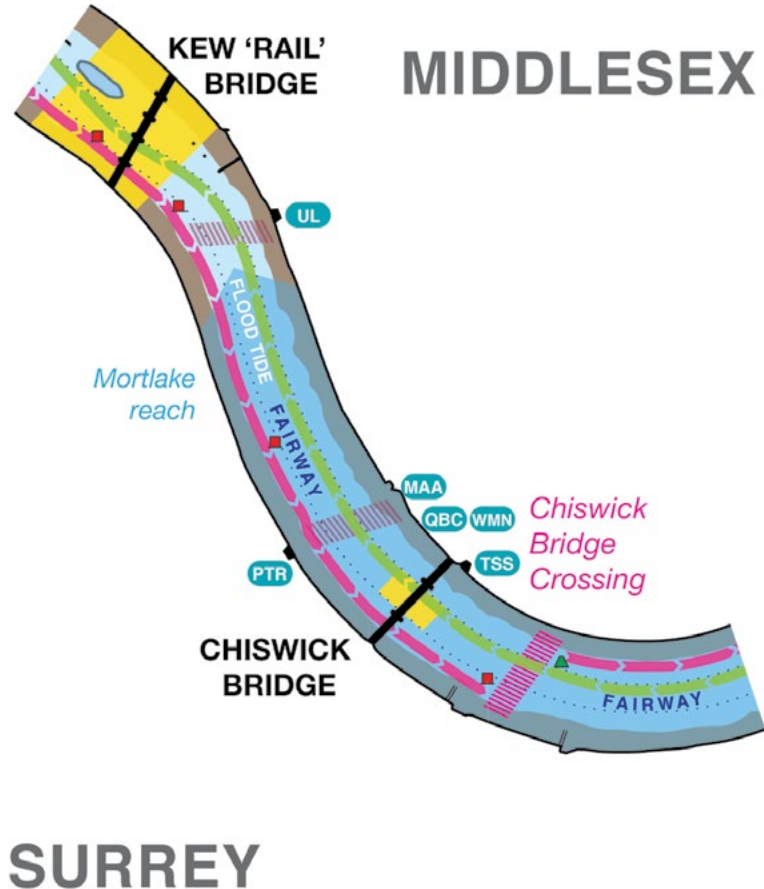


Looking downriver at Chiswick Bridge from Putney Town steps



Mortlake Reach – Navigating on the flood tide

- Rowing inbound/upriver **with the FLOOD** tide, stay on the **Starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the Middlesex bank
- Rowing outbound/downriver **against the FLOOD** tide stay on in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Surrey bank as is safe and always inside the red buoys
- Be aware of crews using the **two local crossings** between the **Inshore Zone** and the clubs on the Middlesex bank

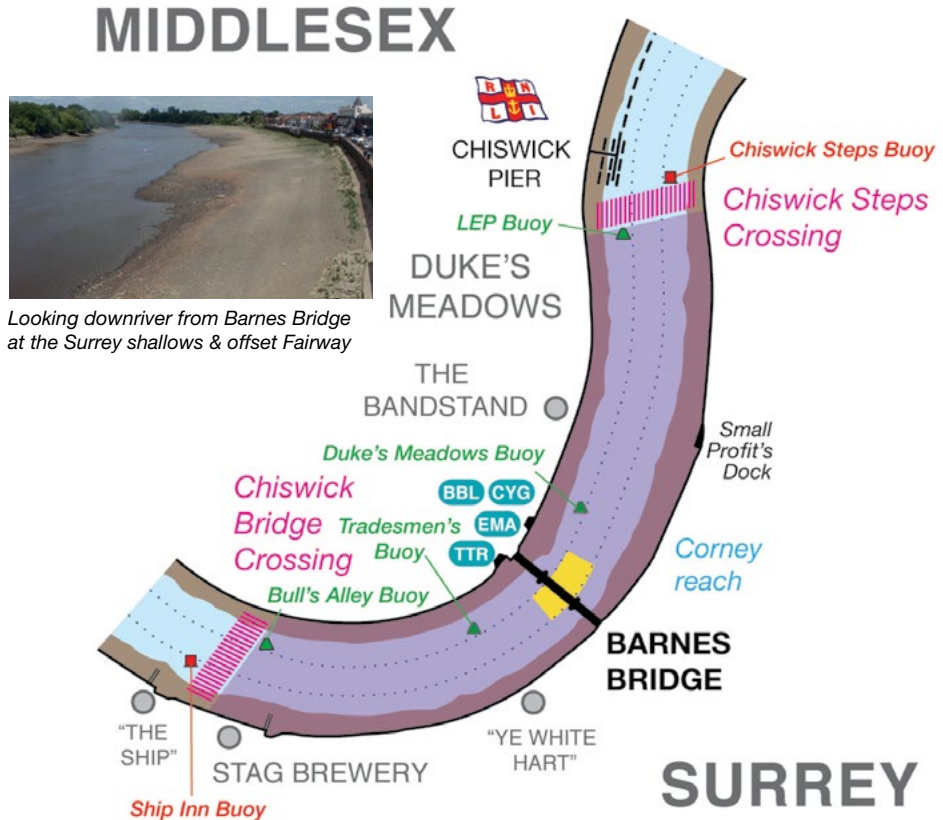
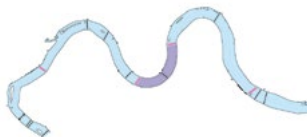


Corney Reach – including Barnes Bridge

This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Barnes Bridge
(Restricted Zone)
- Extensive shallows at low tide on the Surrey side causing the **Fairway** to be well over to Middlesex below Barnes Bridge (see inset photograph)
- **The Chiswick Bridge and Chiswick Steps Crossing Zones**
- Four green navigation buoys
- Three **boathouses**

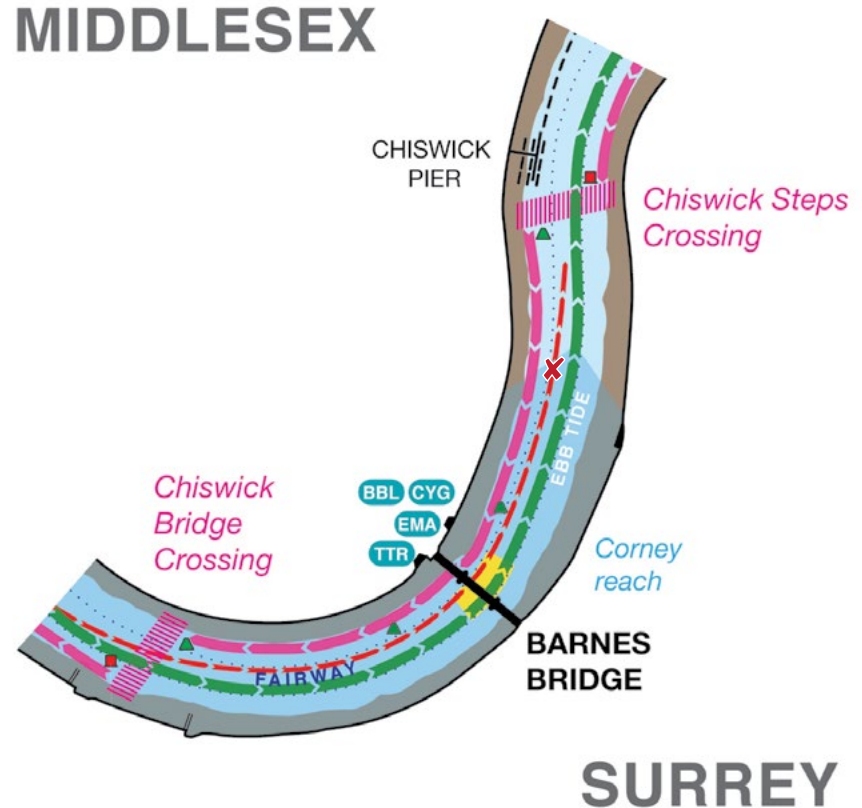
This is the only section of the river where the **Inshore Zone** is on the Middlesex (north) bank.



Corney Reach – Navigating on the ebb tide

- When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB** tide, stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Middlesex bank as is safe and always inside the green buoys
- When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB** tide stay on the **Starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the Surrey bank but outside the red buoys

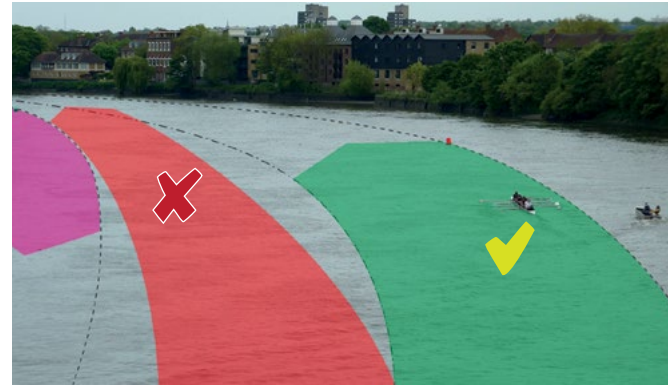
X Take extra care not to 'cut the corner' on the **port**/Middlesex side of the **Fairway** on the ebb tide



Corney Reach – Navigating with the ebb tide

When rowing **with the ebb** tide, not staying to the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** is the biggest navigational issue in this section. The diagrams illustrate this problem:

- **Inshore Zone** – for rowing upriver against the tide
- ✓ **Starboard side** of the **Fairway** – the correct navigation line. It is also the fastest water
- ✗ This **port** side line is incorrect and is caused by steers 'cutting the corner'. It can cause problems for other vessels especially at Barnes Bridge

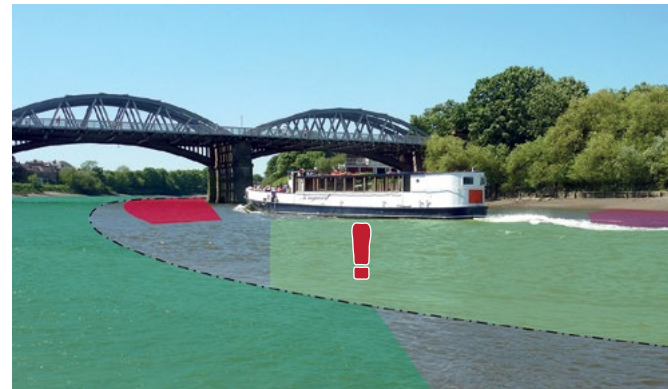


Looking downriver at Barnes Bend from Chiswick Bridge

Looking downriver at Barnes Bridge from the Fairway

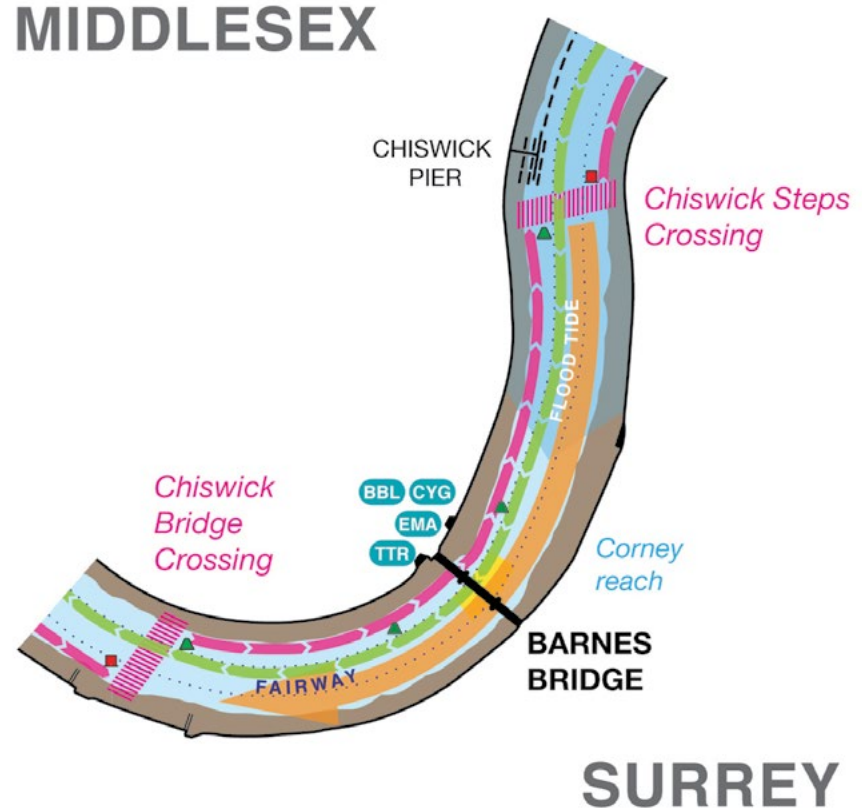


Looking upriver at Barnes Bridge from Barnes Terrace
– This is why you don't cut the corner!



Corney Reach – Navigating on the flood tide

- Rowing inbound/upriver with the **FLOOD** tide, stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway**, closer to the Middlesex bank but outside the green buoys
- Rowing outbound/downriver **against the FLOOD** tide stay on in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Middlesex bank as is safe and always inside the green buoys
- Take extra care not to be pushed over to the **port/** Surrey side of the **Fairway** by the **set of the FLOOD** tide

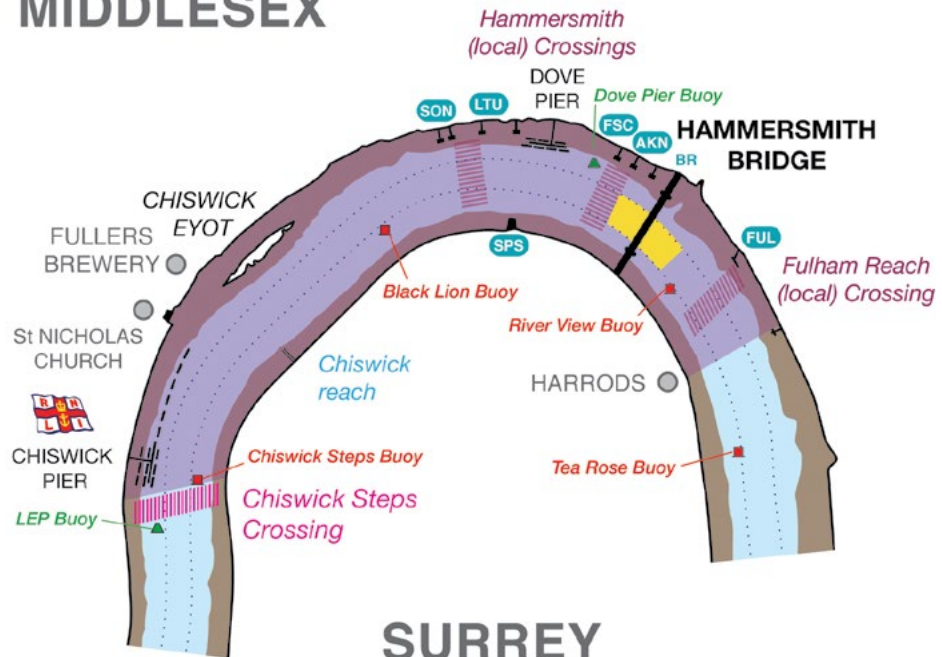


Chiswick Reach – including Hammersmith Bridge

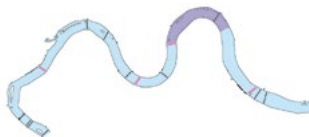
This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Hammersmith Bridge (**Restricted Zone**)
- A very irregular and shallow foreshore at low tide in the Surrey **Inshore Zone**
- **The Chiswick Steps Crossing Zone**
- Three local crossings
- Four red navigation buoys
- Multiple piers, moorings and pontoons
- Dove Pier
- A strong tidal set
- Chiswick Eyot
- Seven **boathouses**

MIDDLESEX



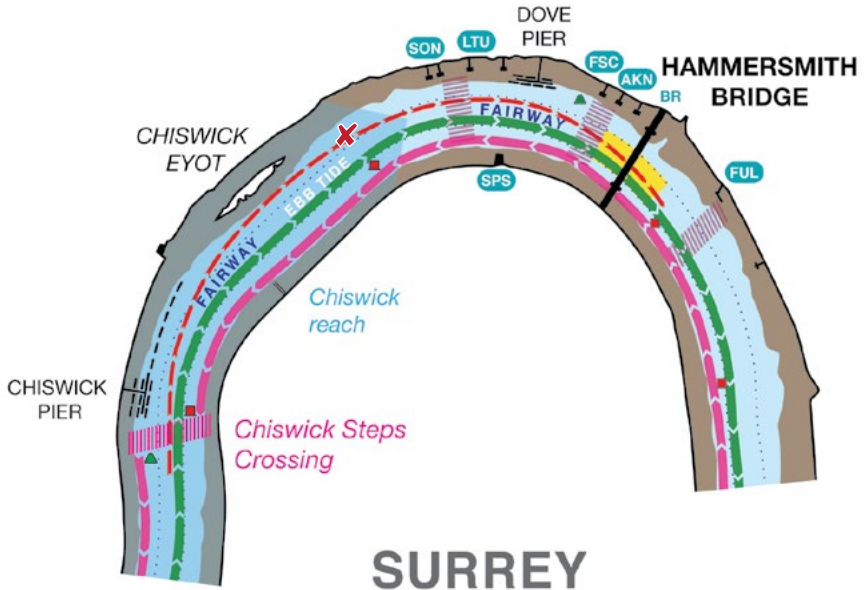
SURREY



Chiswick Reach – Navigating on the ebb tide

- When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB** tide, stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Surrey bank as is safe and always inside of the red buoys
- When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB** tide stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the Surrey bank but outside the red buoys
- ✗ Avoid straying onto the **port**/Middlesex side of the **Fairway** along Chiswick Eyot and round the bend on the ebb tide. This Head ‘racing line’ should not be taken unless the river is closed for a race!
- Be aware of crews using the **local crossings** between the **Inshore Zone** and the clubs on the Middlesex bank at Hammersmith

MIDDLESEX



SURREY

Chiswick Reach – Navigating with the ebb tide

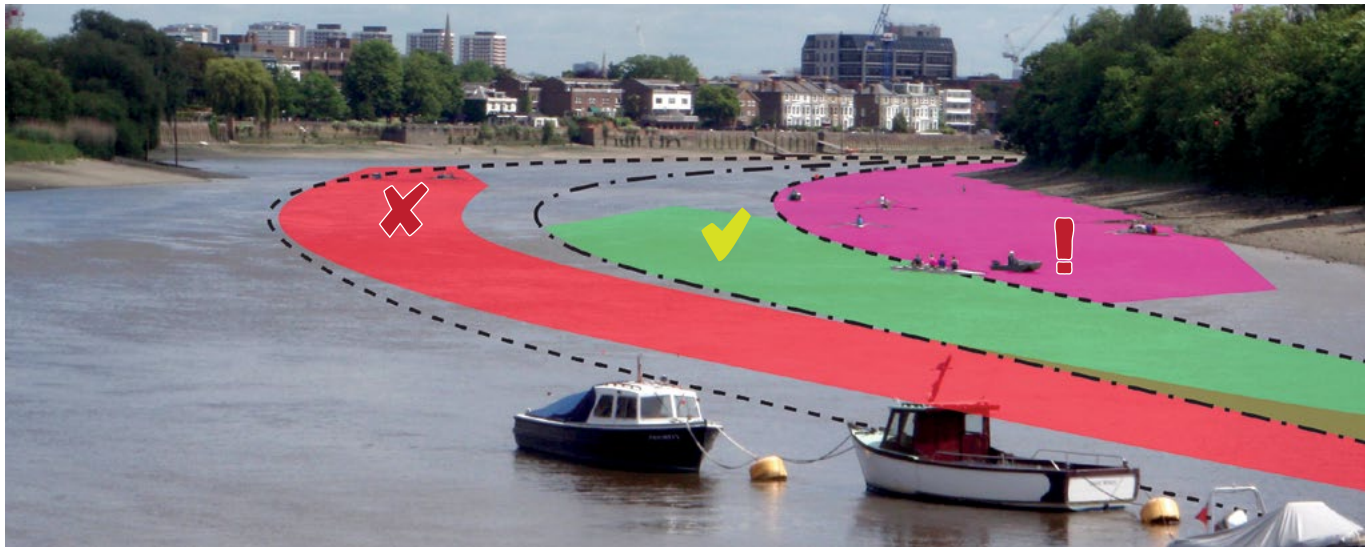
When rowing **with the ebb** tide, not staying to the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** and the very shallow foreshore in the **Inshore Zone** are the biggest navigational issues in this section. The diagram below illustrates these problems:

- **Inshore Zone** – for rowing up river against the tide
- ! The shallows are already showing and inbound crews do tend to row well off the bank around the corner but this crew were too far off the bank!

✓ **Starboard side** of the **Fairway** – the correct navigation line outbound with the ebb

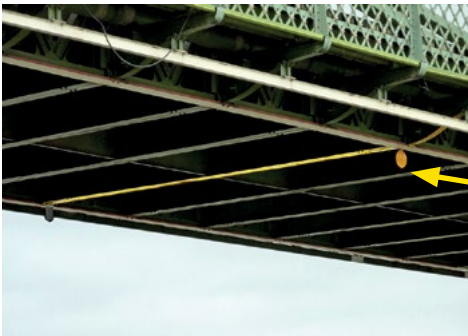
✗ This **port** side line is incorrect and puts crews on the inbound side of the **Fairway**. There is no significant tidal set here and this crew has chosen to take the Head ‘racing line’ in the faster stream rather than stay correctly on the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** – under the instruction of a coach!

Looking downriver towards Hammersmith from Chiswick Pier



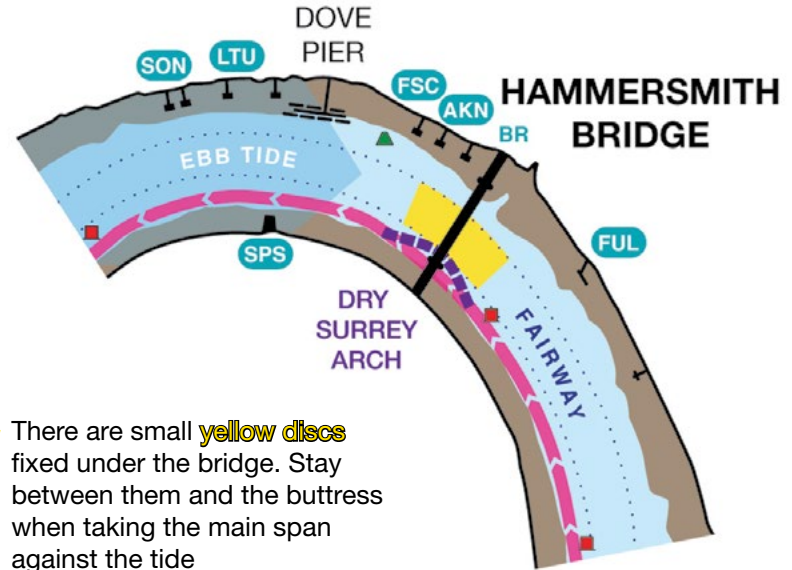
Hammersmith Bridge – Navigating **against the ebb tide**

If there is sufficient water, always use the Surrey (#3) arch of Hammersmith Bridge when **rowing against the ebb** tide. However, the Surrey (#3) arch of Hammersmith Bridge can ‘dry out’ at low water.



If the Surrey (#3) arch of Hammersmith Bridge is dry, crews may **carefully** navigate through the main (#2) span as follows:

- Stop well before the bridge and check the **Fairway** is clear
- If the **Fairway** is not clear you must wait. Crews outbound in the **Fairway** have right of way
- If it is clear, move into the **Fairway** and row quickly through, **staying between the yellow markers and the buttress**.
- Move immediately back into the **Inshore Zone** once beyond the bridge buttress



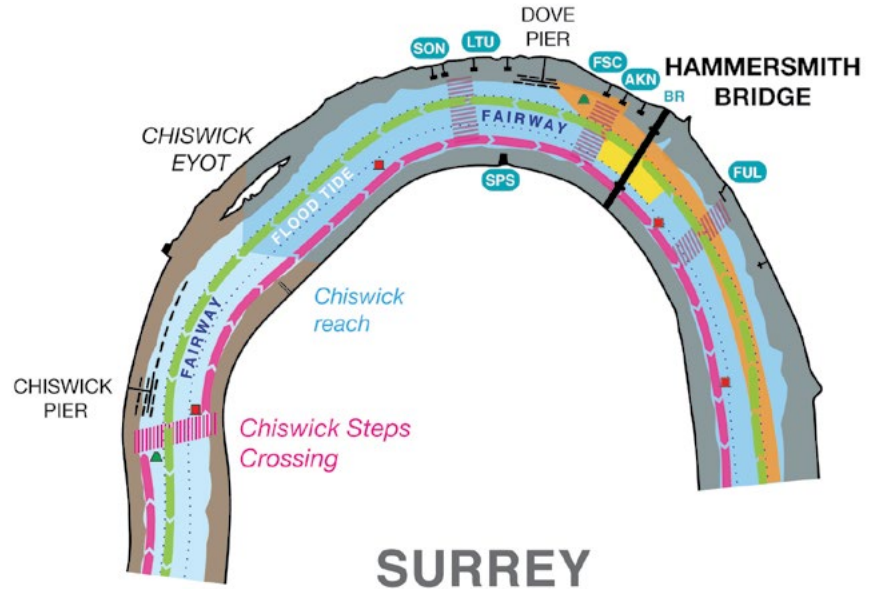
There are small **yellow discs** fixed under the bridge. Stay between them and the buttress when taking the main span against the tide



Chiswick Reach – Navigating on the flood tide

- Rowing inbound/upriver **with the FLOOD** tide, stay on the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** closer to the Middlesex bank
- Rowing outbound/downriver **against the FLOOD** tide stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Surrey bank as is safe and always inside the red buoys
- Take extra care not to be pushed over to the **port/** Surrey side of the **Fairway** by the **set of the FLOOD** tide
- Be aware of crews using the **three local crossings** between the Inshore Zone and the clubs on the Middlesex bank at Hammersmith

MIDDLESEX

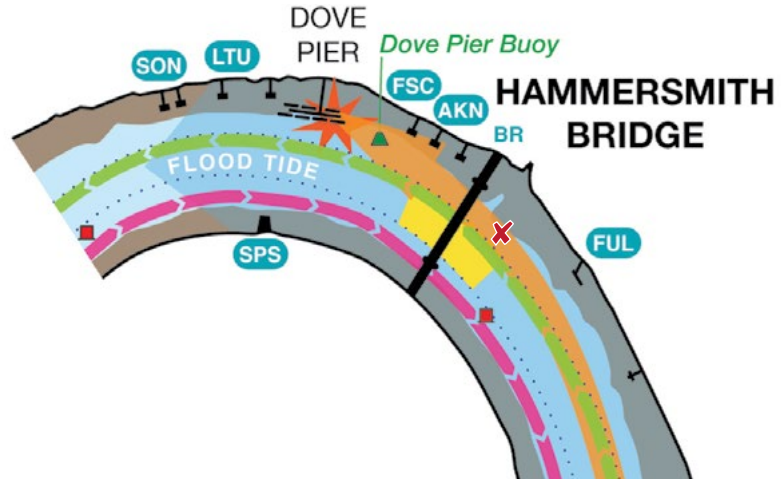


SURREY

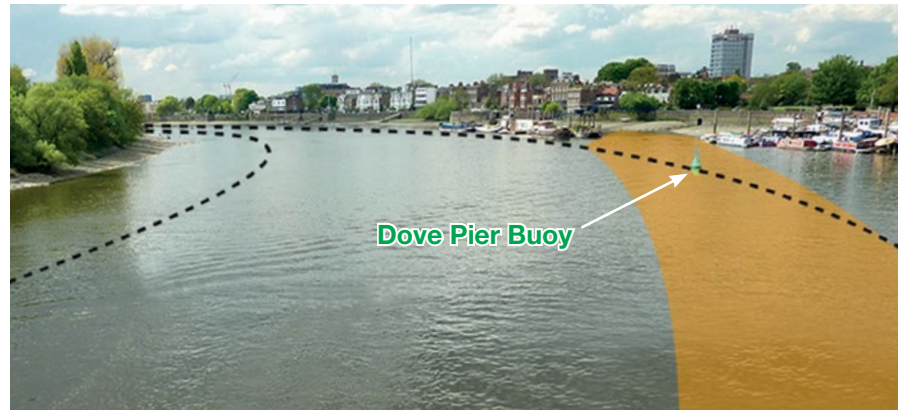
Hammersmith Bridge – Navigating with the flood tide

Just upriver of Hammersmith Bridge is **Dove Pier**. It has seen several very serious rowing incidents in the past few years:

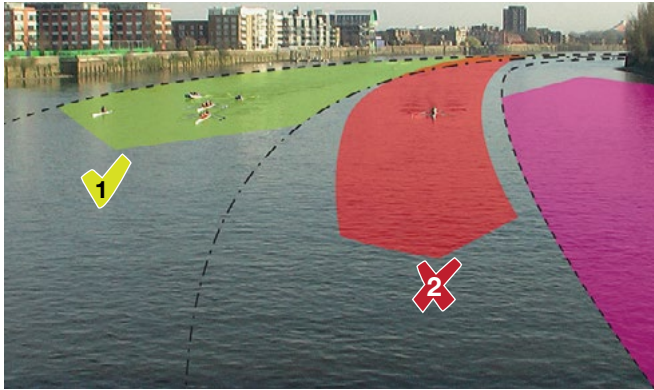
- Inbound crews should be to the **starboard** side of the **Fairway**
- But the **set of the FLOOD tide** will push boats towards Dove Pier potentially causing a **collision** with some very large barges on the pier
- A green buoy (**Dove Pier Buoy**) has been positioned on the edge of the **Fairway** downriver of Dove Pier as a guide to help steers, who should stay to **port/Fairway** side of this buoy
- **If you find yourself between this buoy and the bank stop and correct your course immediately**
- The FLOOD tide is very fast so situations can develop very quickly unless you navigate correctly



Looking upriver from Hammersmith Bridge

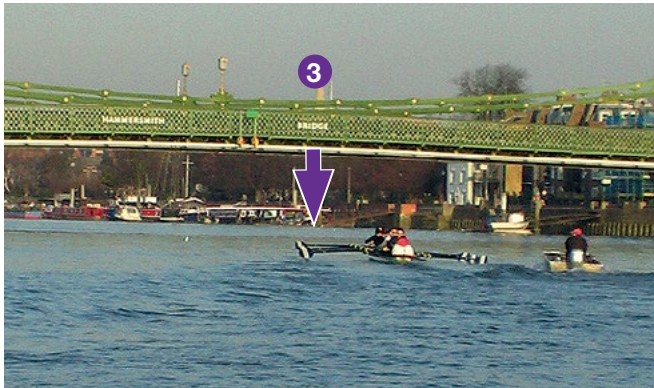


Hammersmith Bridge – Navigating **with the flood tide**



Looking downriver from Hammersmith Bridge

Looking upriver at Hammersmith Bridge



To avoid problems at Hammersmith Bridge and Dove Pier when rowing inbound **with the flood tide** you need to get set up well below the bridge:

- 1 Inbound crews should be to **starboard** of the Fairway
- 2 Do not cut the corner below the bridge
- 3 Aim to pass under the word “Bridge”

Once under Hammersmith Bridge

- 4 Stay on the **starboard** side of the Fairway but pass to the **port**/Fairway side of the Dove Pier Buoy
- 5 However, do not cut the corner above the bridge

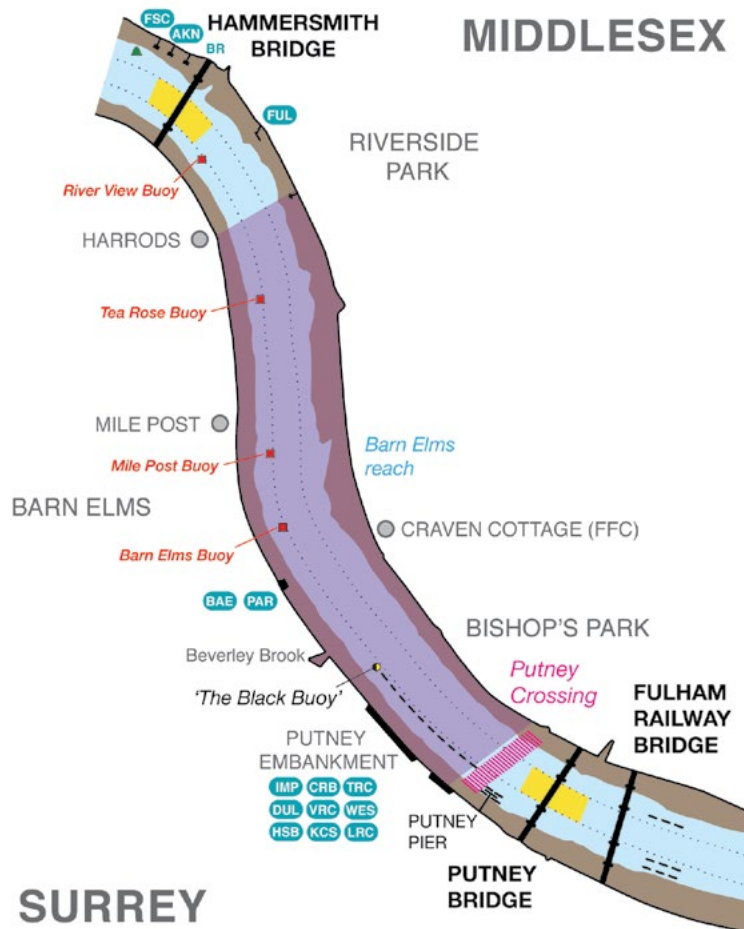
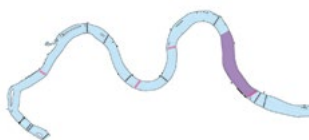
Looking upriver from Hammersmith Bridge



Barn Elms Reach – including Putney Bridge

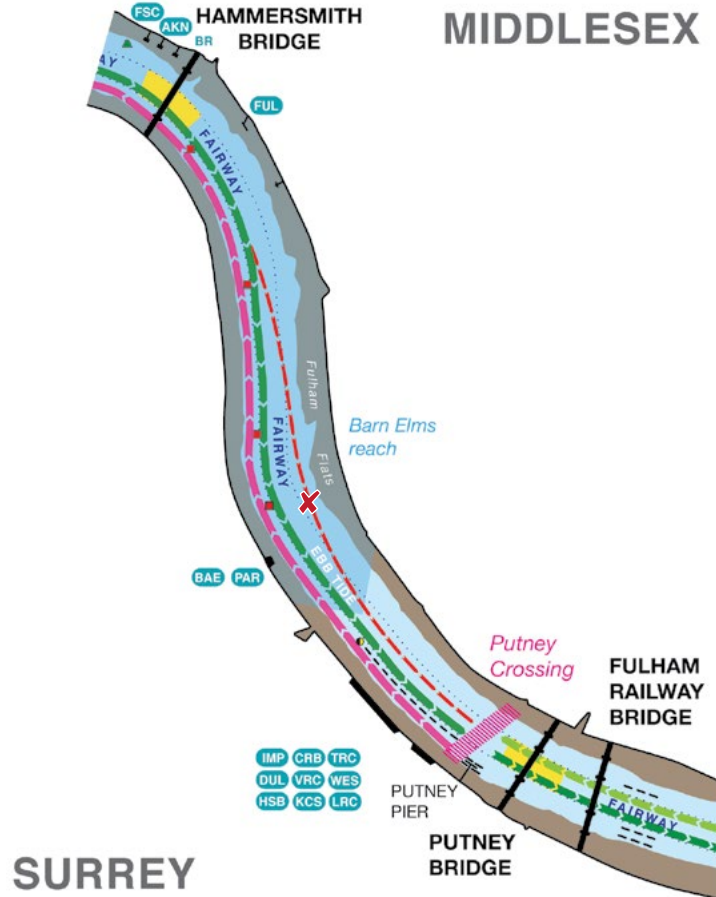
This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Extensive shallows on the Middlesex side at low tide (Fulham flats)
- The **Fairway** over to Surrey side below Hammersmith Bridge
- The **Putney Crossing Zone**
- Three red navigation buoys
- Multiple piers, moorings and pontoons including boats moored on the Surrey edge of the **Fairway**
- Ten **boathouses** containing multiple clubs
- The end of the **Rowing Area** including special rules for turning at Putney



Barn Elms Reach – Navigating on the ebb tide

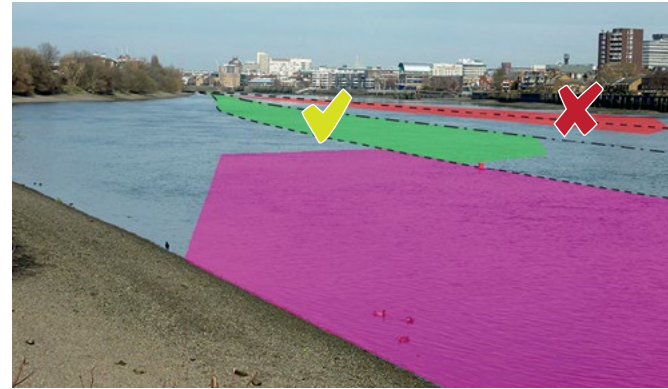
- When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB** tide, stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the Surrey bank as is safe and always inside the red buoys
 - When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB** tide stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the Surrey bank but outside the red buoys
- ✗** Take extra care not to ‘cut the corners’ on the **port**/Middlesex side of the **Fairway on the ebb** tide. This can cause serious issues for Class Vs which have to avoid Fulham flats



Barn Elms Reach – Navigating with the ebb tide

When rowing **with the ebb** tide, not staying to the **starboard** side of the **Fairway** is the biggest navigational issue in this section. The diagrams illustrate this problem:

- **Inshore Zone** – for rowing up river against the tide
- ✓ **Starboard side** of the **Fairway** – the correct navigation line. It is also the fastest water
- ✗ This **port** side line is incorrect and is caused by steers '**cutting the corner**'. It also runs the risk of grounding on Fulham Flats at lower tides

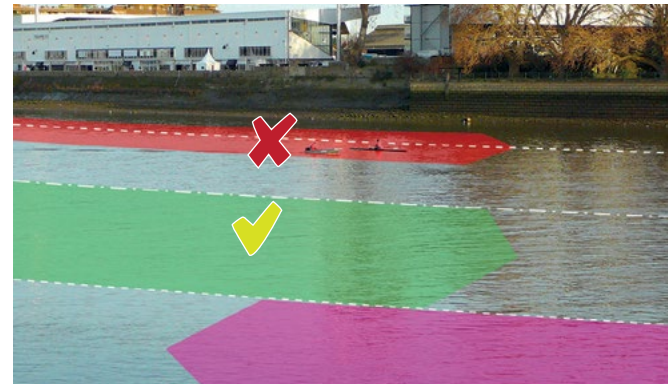


Looking upriver at Barn Elms Reach from the Mile post on Surrey

Looking across at Fulham Reach from Harrods on the Surrey Bank

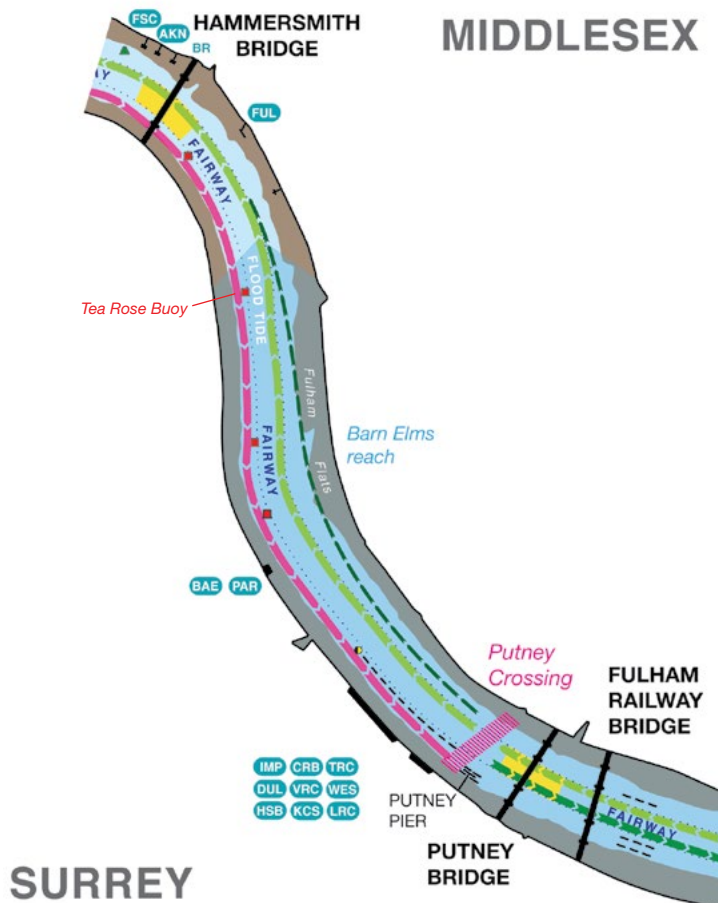


Looking across at Craven Cottage from the Surrey Bank



Barn Elms Reach – Navigating on the flood tide

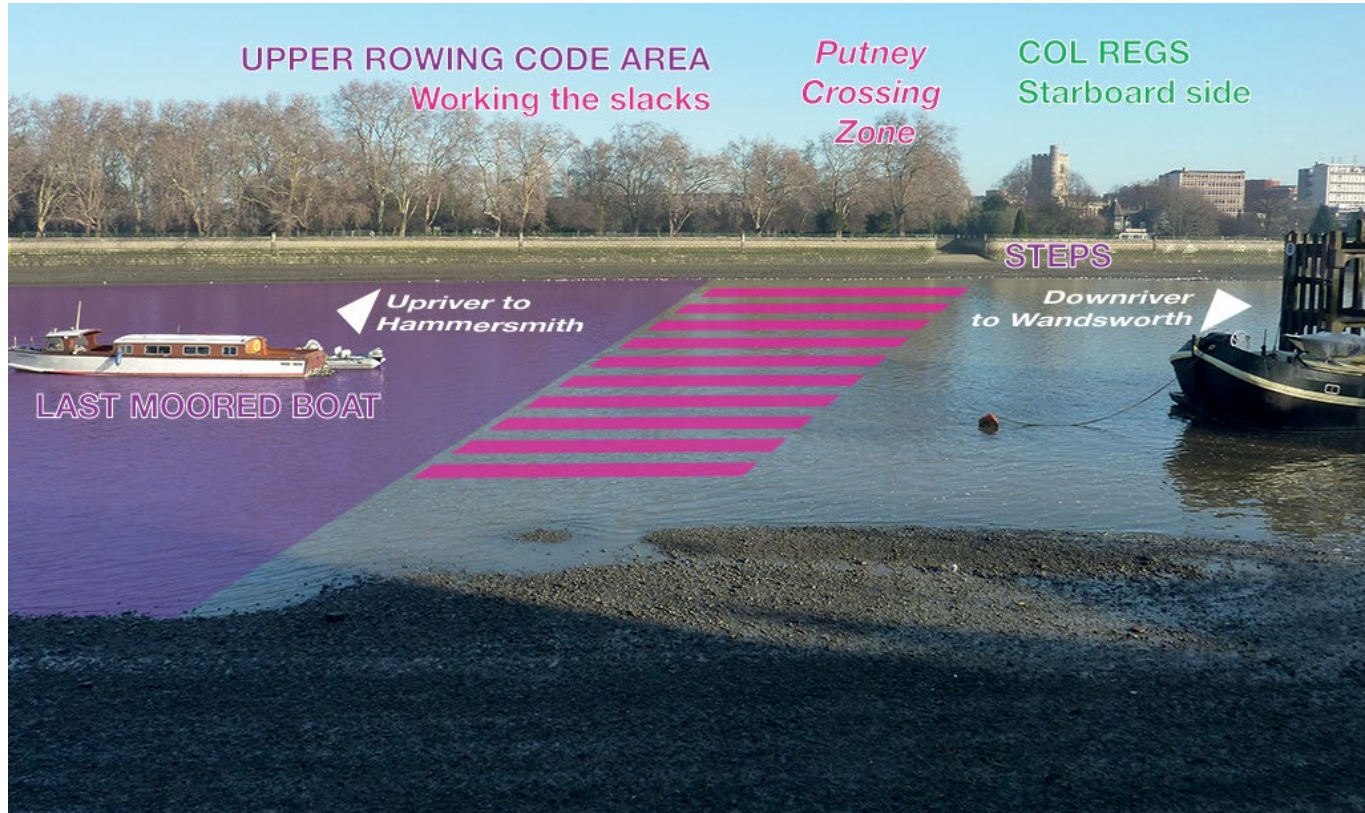
- Rowing inbound/upriver **with the FLOOD** tide, stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the **Middlesex** bank
- Rowing outbound/downriver **against the FLOOD** tide stay on in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the **Surrey** bank as is safe and always inside the red buoys
- If the water is high, rowing boats are encouraged to navigate outside of the **Fairway** to the **starboard/Middlesex** side – over **Fulham flats** – up until the **Tea Rose Buoy**



Putney Crossing

This is the *Putney Crossing Zone*, looking across at Bishop's Park steps from the Surrey bank.

It is where the navigation pattern changes from the *Upper Rowing Area* to Col Regs.



Putney Bridge & crossing – Turning on the ebb tide

Turning safely and correctly at Putney requires a bit of explaining:

On the Ebb tide, approach the crossing zone on the **starboard** side of the **Fairway**, close to the line of moored boats

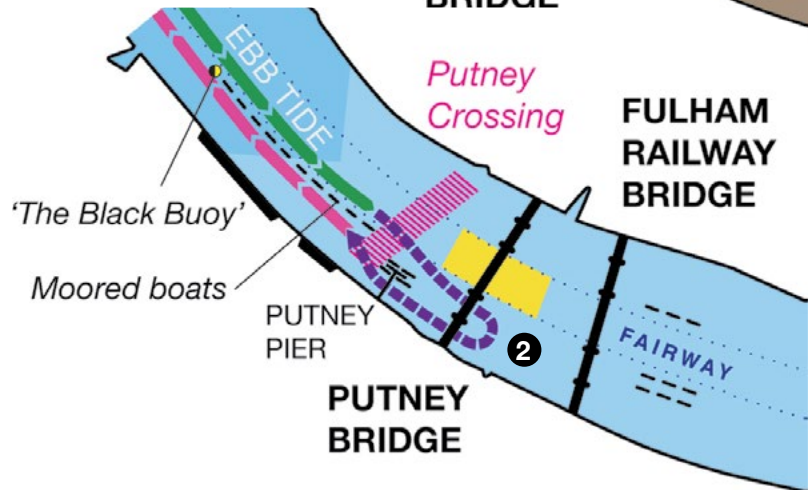
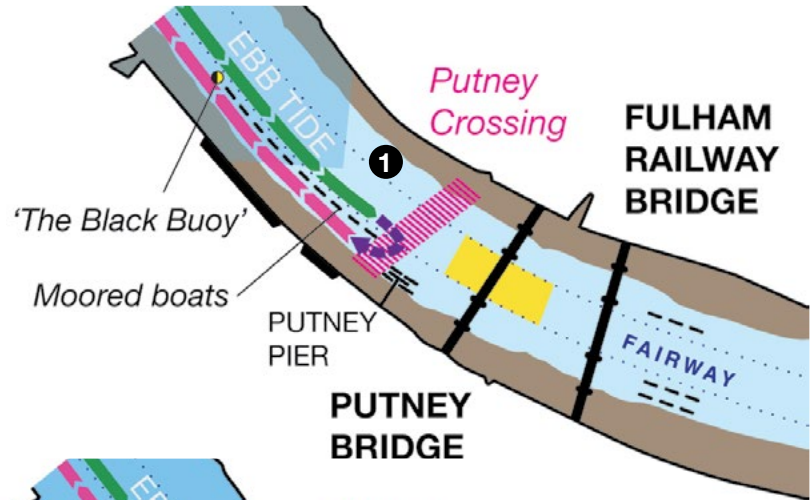
To turn and go back inbound up the Surrey **Inshore Zone** there are three options:

- 1 Turn around the last moored boat and into the gap between that boat and Putney Pier

This does run the risk of getting swept onto the pier if you get it wrong so you must start your turn *before* you reach the last moored boat

- 2 Continue through Putney Bridge, turn and return through the Surrey (#5) arch and *under* Putney Pier

This is the safest option but will only work if there is sufficient water under Putney Pier



Putney Bridge & crossing – Turning on the ebb tide

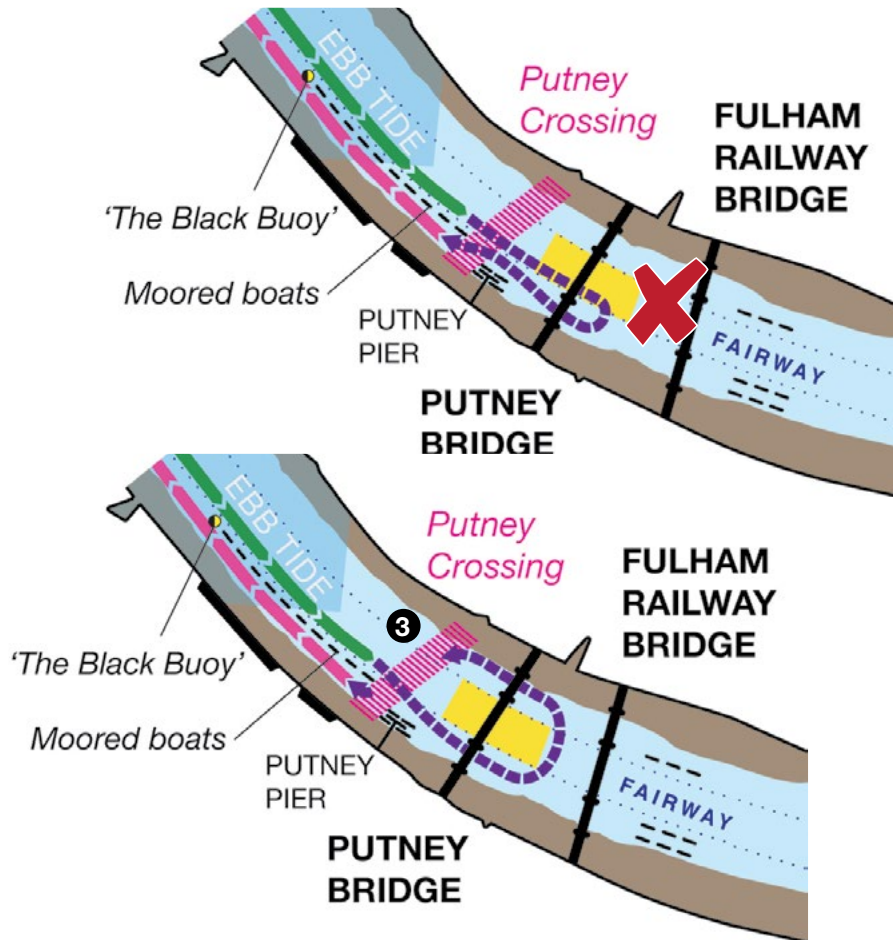
X If there is not sufficient water under Putney Pier, **under no circumstances** should you continue through Putney bridge, turn towards Surrey, return through arch #4 and then go *outside* Putney Pier

This manoeuvre is extremely dangerous and has caused several serious collisions

If the water is low you should either use Option 1 or –

- 3** Continue through Putney Bridge, turn onto the Middlesex bank and return through the #2 arch, then cross over the river back to Surrey using the **Crossing Zone**
- You must always give way to boats in the **Fairway** whenever you cross the river

IMPORTANT NOTE:
Rowing and coaching boats should never go straight through the moored boats opposite the embankment. This manoeuvre is extremely dangerous.

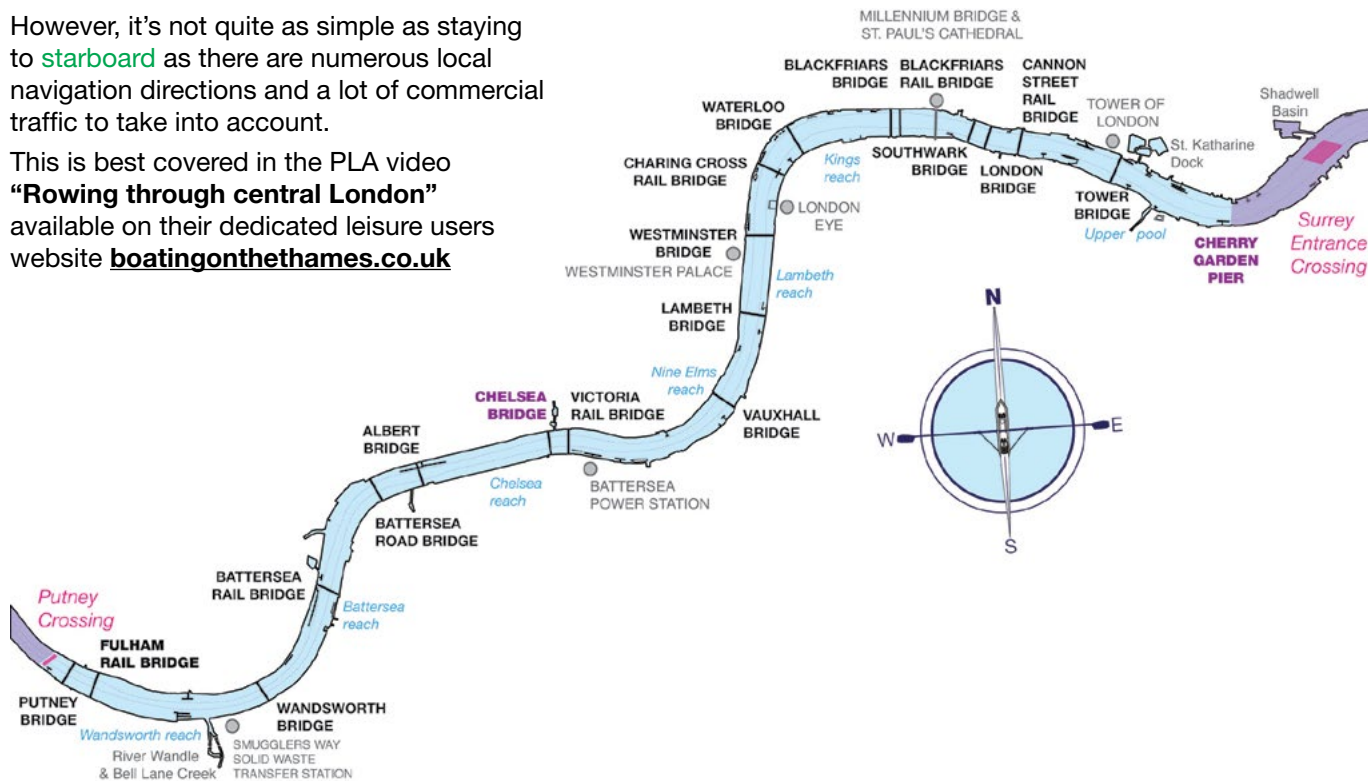


Rowing in central London

The section of river between Putney and Cherry Garden Pier is not a **Rowing Code Area** therefore Col Regs / **starboard side** navigation rules apply.

However, it's not quite as simple as staying to **starboard** as there are numerous local navigation directions and a lot of commercial traffic to take into account.

This is best covered in the PLA video **"Rowing through central London"** available on their dedicated leisure users website boatingonthethames.co.uk



Rowing in central London

Rowing through central London, especially in fine boats, is not recommended due to numerous hazards for small boats:

- 20 bridges
- Countless piers, moorings and wharves
- Large volumes of busy commercial traffic
- Often very poor water conditions
- Poor visibility to other, much larger vessels

However, if you do want to row into or through central London:

- You **must inform London VTS** before proceeding:
 - above Cherry Garden Pier
 - below Chelsea Bridge

It is very strongly recommended that excursions into central London are restricted to the **weekends before 10.00am**

For Upper Area-based clubs:

- Due to commercial barge traffic at Smugglers Way Solid Transfer Station, **rowers must not proceed below Fulham Railway bridge for two hours either side of high tide**
- **You must inform London VTS before rowing below Chelsea Bridge**
- There is no need to inform London VTS if you stay above Chelsea Bridge – *this is a concession, don't abuse it*

For Lower Area-based clubs:

- **You must inform London VTS before going above Cherry Garden Pier**
- If going above Cherry Garden Pier rowers should cross at Surrey Entrance Crossing and use the north bank
- If returning downriver rowers may stay on the south bank and turn before Cherry Garden Pier

To contact London VTS
(Vessel Traffic Services)

Telephone 020 8855 0315

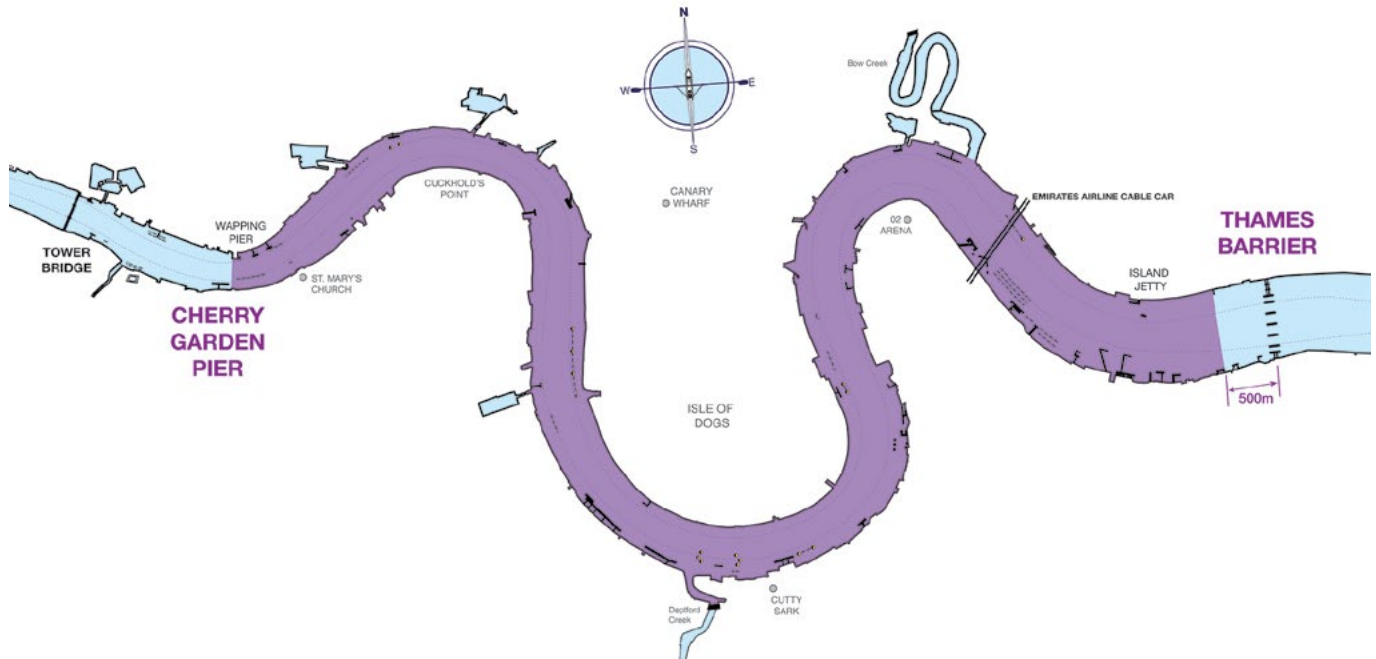
Use VHF Channel 14



The Lower Tideway Rowing Code of Practice Area

The **Lower Tideway Rowing Code Area** is between Cherry Garden Pier and 500m above the Thames Barrier. Within this area rowers must navigate according to the Rowing Code, i.e. **working the slacks** against the tide.

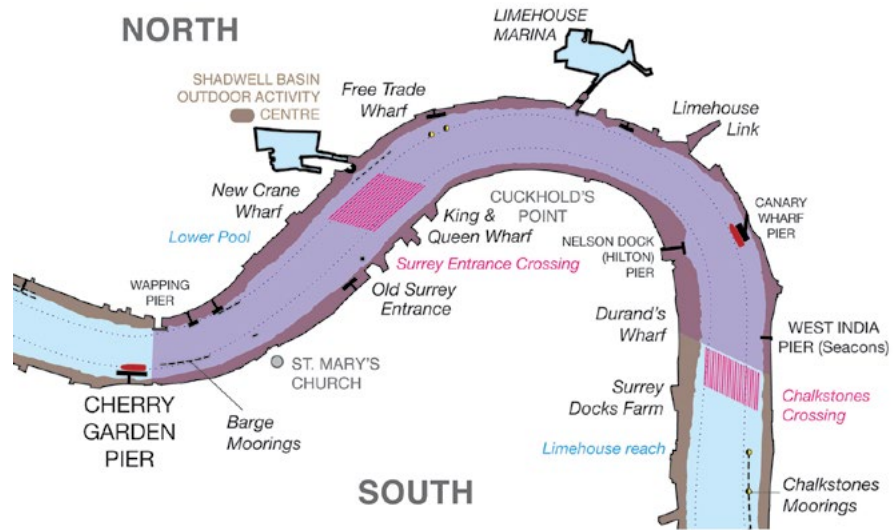
For general navigation rules in the rowing areas please refer to [Basic/Further Principles of Navigation](#). These directions describe specific details within the Lower Rowing Area. They are described in short sections, moving down river from Cherry Garden Pier. In each section, the ebb tide is described first, followed by flood tide descriptions.



Lower Pool & Cuckhold's Point

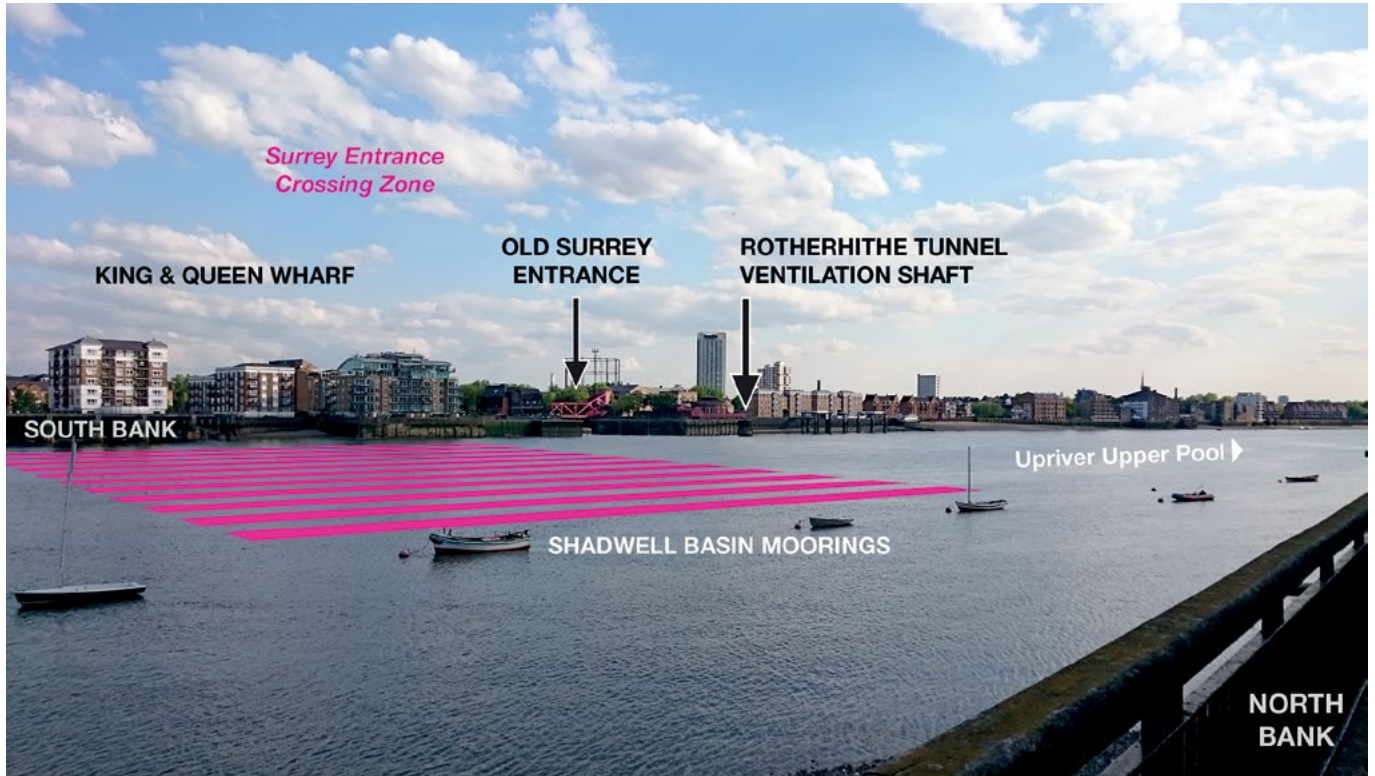
This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Busy commercial traffic movements particularly at Canary Wharf and Cherry Garden Piers
- Extensive shallows on the south side at low tide around Nelson Dock (Hilton) Pier
- Multiple piers, moorings and wharves
- **The Surrey Entrance and Chalkstones Crossing Zones**
- The entrance to the Limehouse Marina and Shadwell Basin
- **A strong tidal set** on the flood



Lower Pool & Cuckhold's Point – Surrey Entrance Crossing

This is the *Surrey Entrance Crossing Zone*, looking upriver from Shadwell Basin on the north bank.



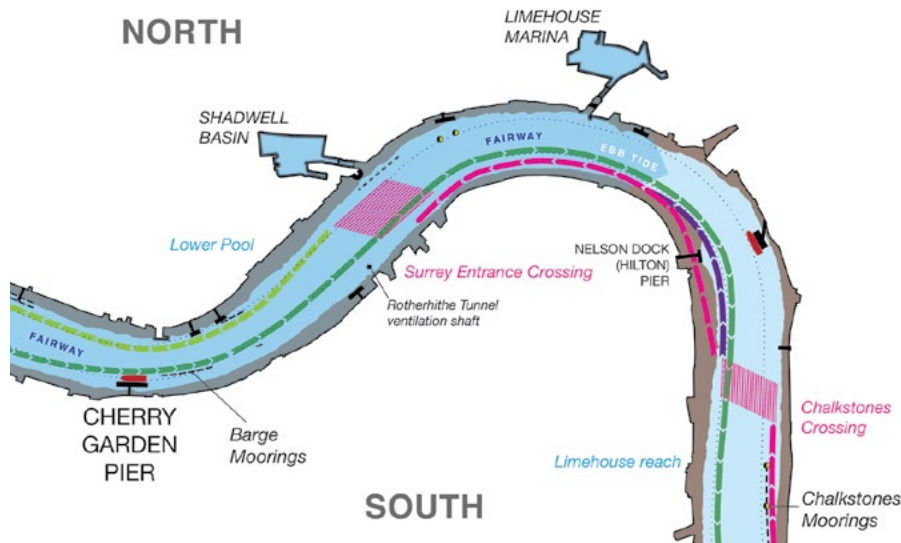
Lower Pool & Cuckhold's Point – Navigating on the ebb tide

When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB** tide:

- Stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the south bank as is safe
- Navigate under Hilton Pier if there is sufficient water to do so. If not, then go **outside the pier** but stay out of the **Fairway** if possible
- If crews intend to proceed upriver through Tower Bridge, they should cross at the **Surrey Entrance Crossing** and follow **Col Regs / starboard side** along the north bank, staying outside the **Fairway** where possible
- Crews who use this Col Regs navigation should not then turn at Cherry Garden Pier

For crews intending to proceed upriver through Tower Bridge against the ebb or coming downriver from Tower Bridge with the ebb

*NOTE: You **must** inform London VTS if you intend to proceed above Cherry Garden Pier and should only do so at weekends before 10.00am. [See page 90](#)*



When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB** tide – from above Cherry Garden Pier:

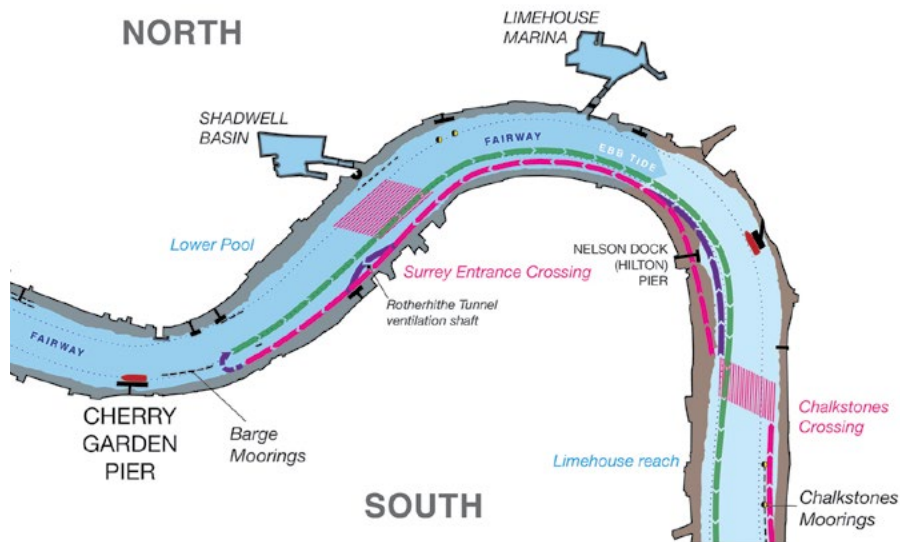
- Navigate outside Cherry Garden Pier and barge moorings
- Stay on the **starboard edge** (south side) of the **Fairway** and outside the Rotherhithe Tunnel ventilation shaft
- Be aware of other crews rowing **inbound against the ebb in the Inshore Zone** on the south bank (inside the ventilation shaft)

Lower Pool & Cuckhold's Point – Navigating on the ebb tide

When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB** tide:

- Stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the south bank as is safe
- Navigate under Hilton Pier if there is sufficient water to do so. If not then go **outside the pier** but stay out of the **Fairway** if possible
- If crews intend to return **downriver**, they should remain in the **Inshore Zone** on the south bank, navigating 'inside' the Rotherhithe Tunnel ventilation shaft, if there is sufficient water to do so. If not, then go **outside**.
- **Turn** anywhere before the downriver end of the barge moorings and return as described below –

For crews intending to return downriver to their clubs with the ebb



When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB** tide:

- Stay on the **starboard edge** (south side) of the **Fairway** and outside the Rotherhithe Tunnel ventilation shaft
- Be aware of other crews rowing **inbound against the ebb in the Inshore Zone** on the south bank (inside the ventilation shaft)

Lower Pool & Cuckhold's Point – Navigating on the flood tide

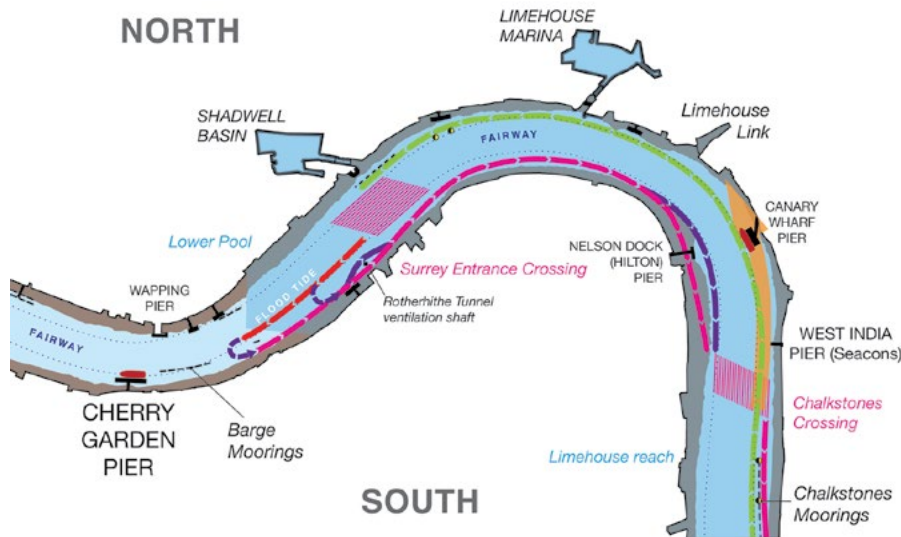
Rowing inbound/upriver with the FLOOD tide:

- Stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the north bank
- Be aware of the tidal set which will push boats towards Canary Wharf Pier on the north side of the Fairway. Rowers should navigate outside this Pier.
- Be aware of vessels using Limehouse Marina entrance (not used 2 hours either side of low water)

Any crew rowing inbound/upriver with the FLOOD tide but intending to return downriver against the flood tide:

- **Cross** at the **Surrey Entrance Crossing** and continue upriver on the **port side** of the **Fairway**
- **Turn** anywhere before the downriver end of the barge moorings into the **Inshore Zone** on the south bank and return as described right –

For crews intending to return downriver to their clubs against the flood



Rowing outbound/downriver against the FLOOD tide:

- Stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the south bank as is safe

- Navigate 'inside' the Rotherhithe Tunnel ventilation shaft and under Hilton Pier, if there is sufficient water to do so. If not, then go **outside these obstacles** but stay out of the **Fairway** if possible

Lower Pool & Cuckhold's Point – Navigating on the flood tide

Rowing inbound/upriver with the FLOOD tide:

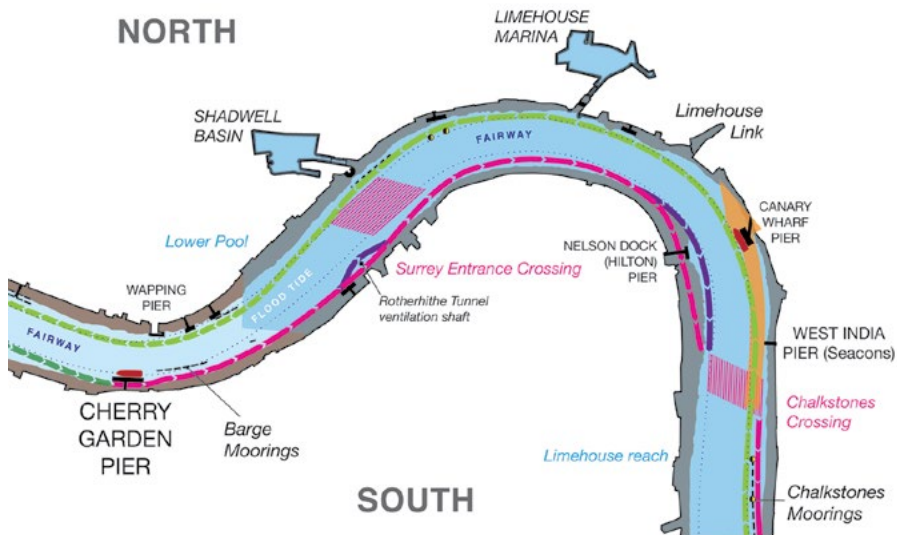
- Stay on the starboard side of the Fairway closer to the north bank
- Be aware of the tidal set which will push boats towards Canary Wharf Pier on the north side of the Fairway. Rowers should navigate outside this Pier.
- Be aware of vessels using Limehouse Marina entrance (not used 2 hours either side of low water)

Any crew rowing inbound/upriver beyond Cherry Garden Pier with the FLOOD tide:

- Do not cross but remain on the north bank and navigate according to Col Regs / starboard side of the Fairway
- Crews who use this Col Regs navigation should not then turn at Cherry Garden Pier

For crews intending to proceed upriver through Tower Bridge on the flood or coming downriver from Tower Bridge against the flood

NOTE: You **must** inform London VTS if you intend to proceed above Cherry Garden Pier and should only do so at weekends before 10.00am. [See page 90.](#)



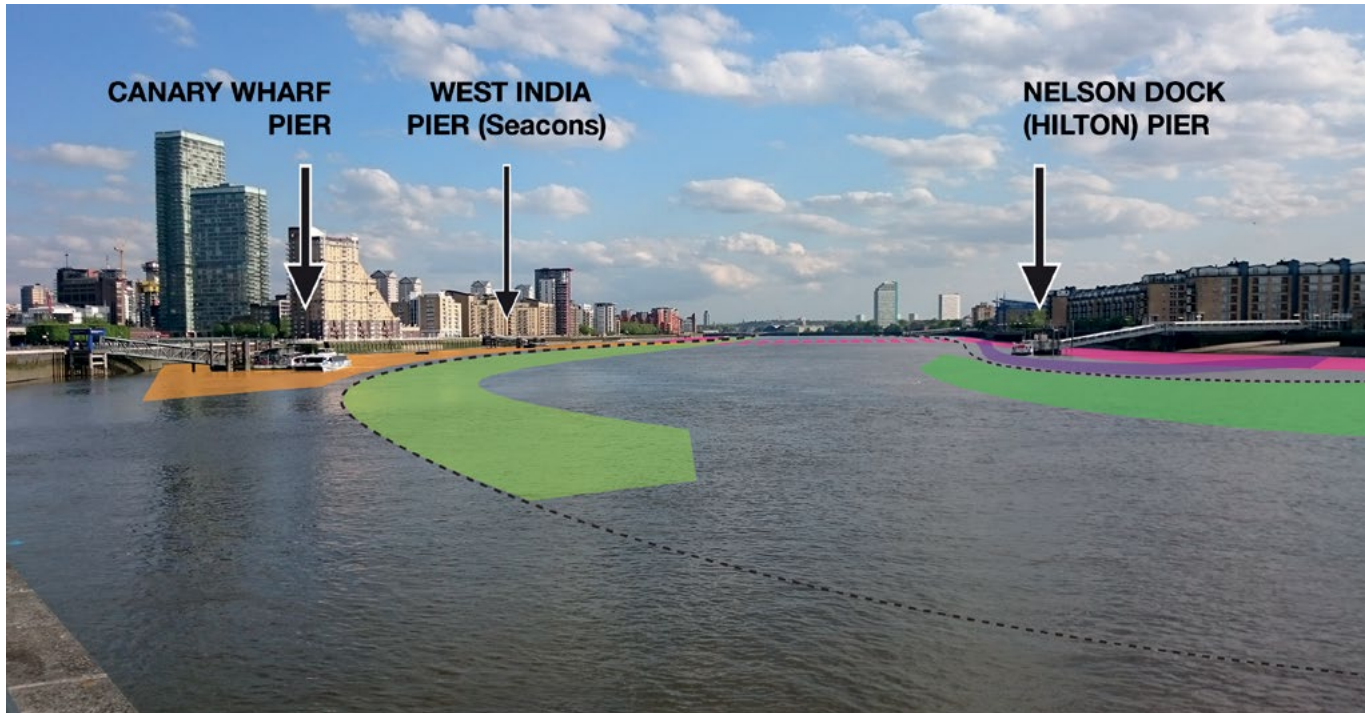
Rowing outbound/downriver against the FLOOD tide – from above Cherry Garden Pier:

- Navigate inside the pier and barge moorings and stay in the Inshore Zone, as close to the south bank as is safe
- Navigate 'inside' the Rotherhithe Tunnel ventilation shaft and under Hilton Pier, if there is sufficient water to do so. If not, then go outside these obstacles but stay out of the Fairway if possible

Isle of Dogs – Limehouse Reach navigation

- Beware of the **Set of the flood tide** at Canary Wharf Pier
- Go outside Canary Wharf Pier when navigating **with the flood tide**
- **Inshore Zone** against either tide under Hilton Pier
- **Alternative line** if it's dry under Hilton Pier
- Go outside Hilton Pier when navigating **with the ebb tide**

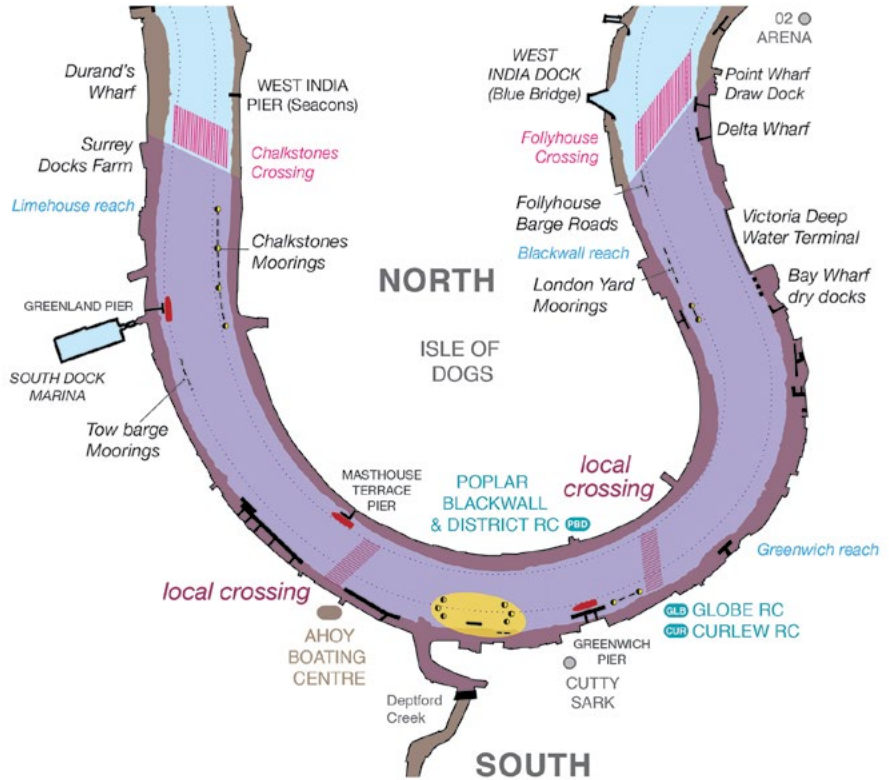
Looking downriver at Limehouse reach from Limehouse Link on the north bank



Isle of Dogs – Limehouse and Greenwich Reaches

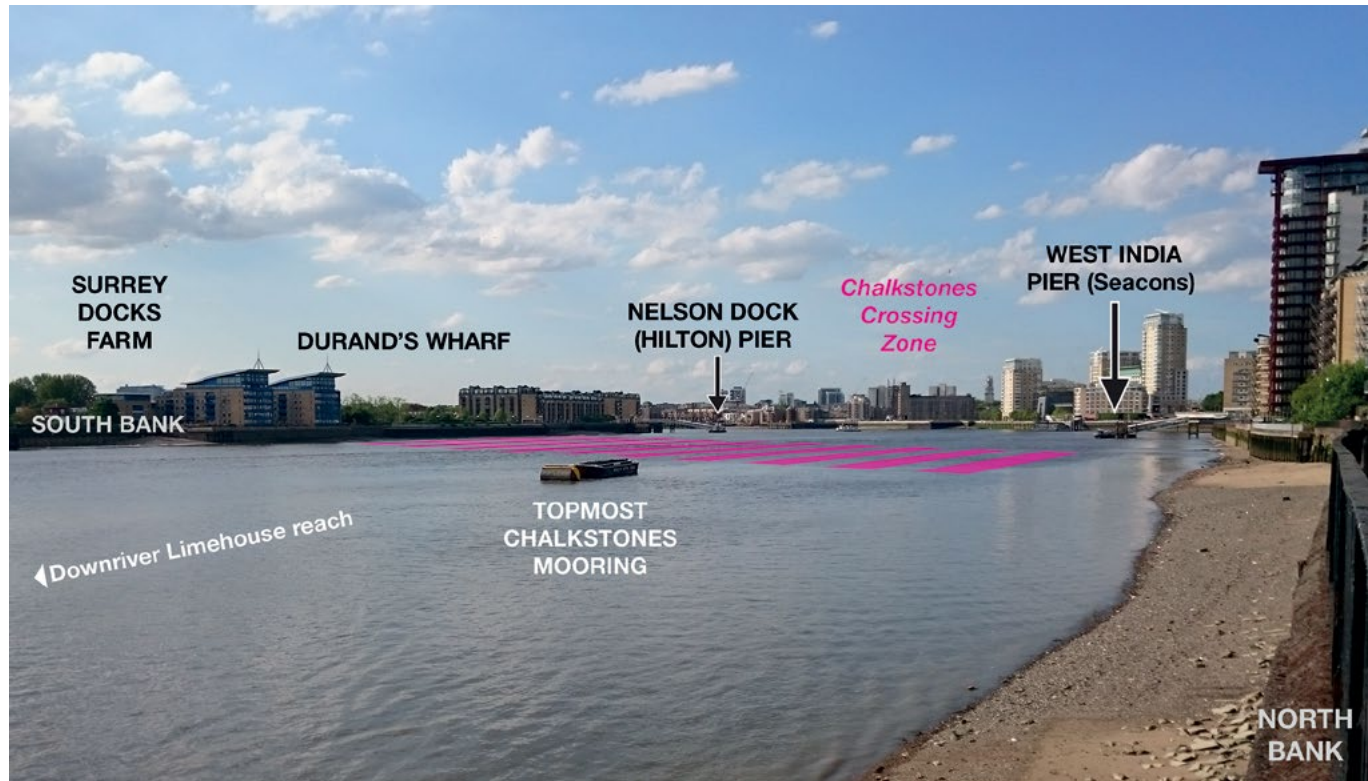
This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Busy commercial traffic movements particularly at Greenland, Masthouse Terrace and Greenwich Piers
- Shallows on the north side at low tide
- Multiple piers, moorings and wharves including the dry docks at Bay Wharf
- Greenwich Ship Tier
- Restricted Zone
- The Chalkstones and Follyhouse Crossing Zones
- Two Local crossings
- A strong tidal set on the ebb
- Four Rowing clubs



Cuckhold's Point to Limehouse Reach – Chalkstones Crossing

This is the *Chalkstones Crossing Zone*, looking upriver from Ocean Wharf on the north bank.



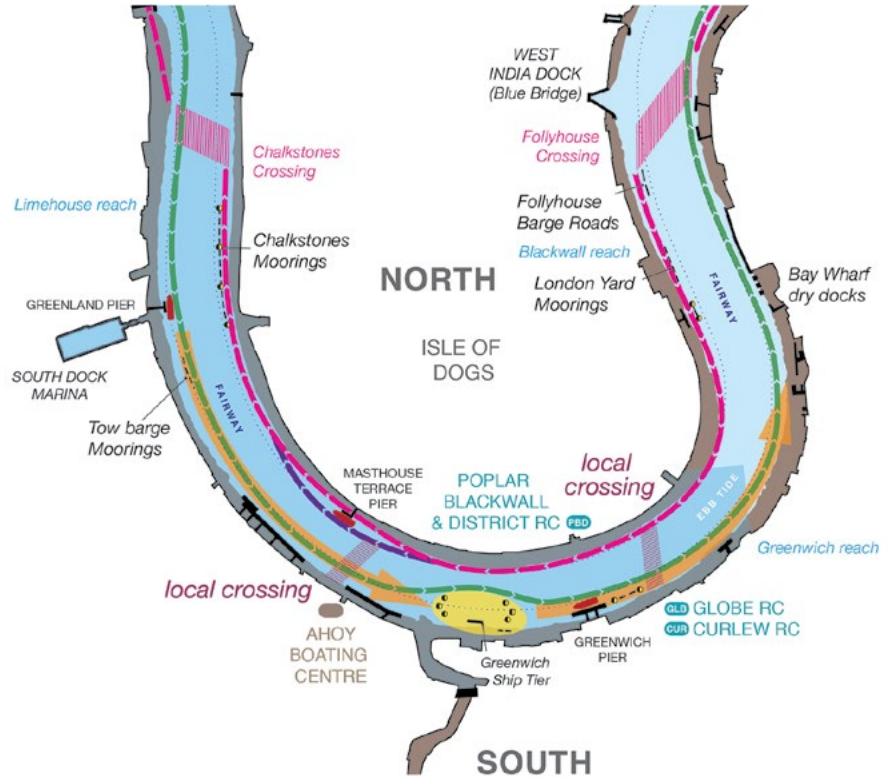
Isle of Dogs – Navigating on the ebb tide

When rowing inbound/upriver **against the EBB** tide:

- Stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the north bank as is safe
- Navigate under Masthouse Terrace Pier if there is sufficient water to do so. If not then go **outside the pier** but stay outside the **Fairway**
- Navigate inside London Yard and Chalkstones moorings

When rowing outbound/downriver **with the EBB** tide:

- Stay on the **Starboard edge** (south side) of the **Fairway**
- **Be aware of the tidal set** which will push boats towards **Greenwich Ship Tier** on the south side of the **Fairway** – ensure that you get set-up early so as to avoid the **Restricted Zone** around Greenwich Ship Tier
- Vessel movement at Bay Wharf dry dock over high water periods



Isle of Dogs – Greenwich Ship Tier Navigation

- **Inshore Zone** against either tide
- Line when navigating **with the flood tide**
- Use the Fairway to go outside the Greenwich Ship Tier **Restricted Zone** when navigating **with the ebb tide**
- Beware of the **Set of the ebb tide** pushing you onto Greenwich Ship Tier

Looking downriver at Greenwich Ship Tier from the north bank



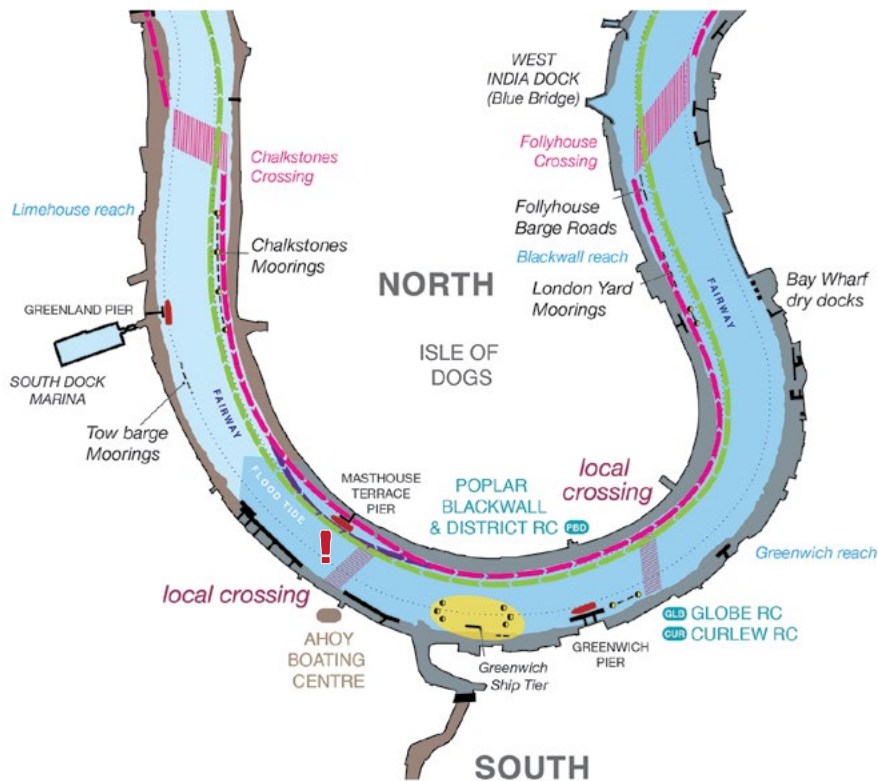
Isle of Dogs - Navigating on the flood tide

Rowing outbound/downriver
against the FLOOD tide:

- Stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the north bank as is safe
- Be aware that crews rowing **inbound on the flood** will be on the north edge of the **Fairway**
- Navigate under Masthouse Terrace Pier if there is sufficient water to do so. If not then go **outside the pier** but stay outside the **Fairway**
- ! If going outside Masthouse Terrace pier, you must give way to any rowing crews inbound with the flood
- Navigate inside London yard and Chalkstones moorings

Rowing inbound/upriver
with the FLOOD tide:

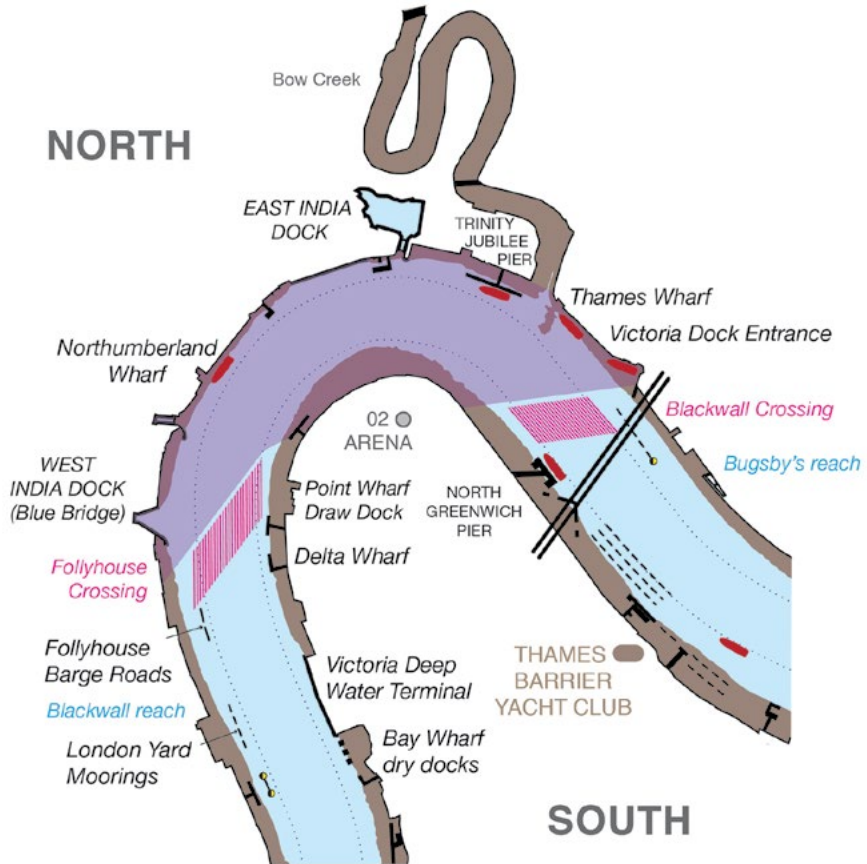
- Stay on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** closer to the north bank
- Be aware of other crews rowing **outbound against the flood in the Inshore Zone** on the north bank



Blackwall Point (O2 Arena)

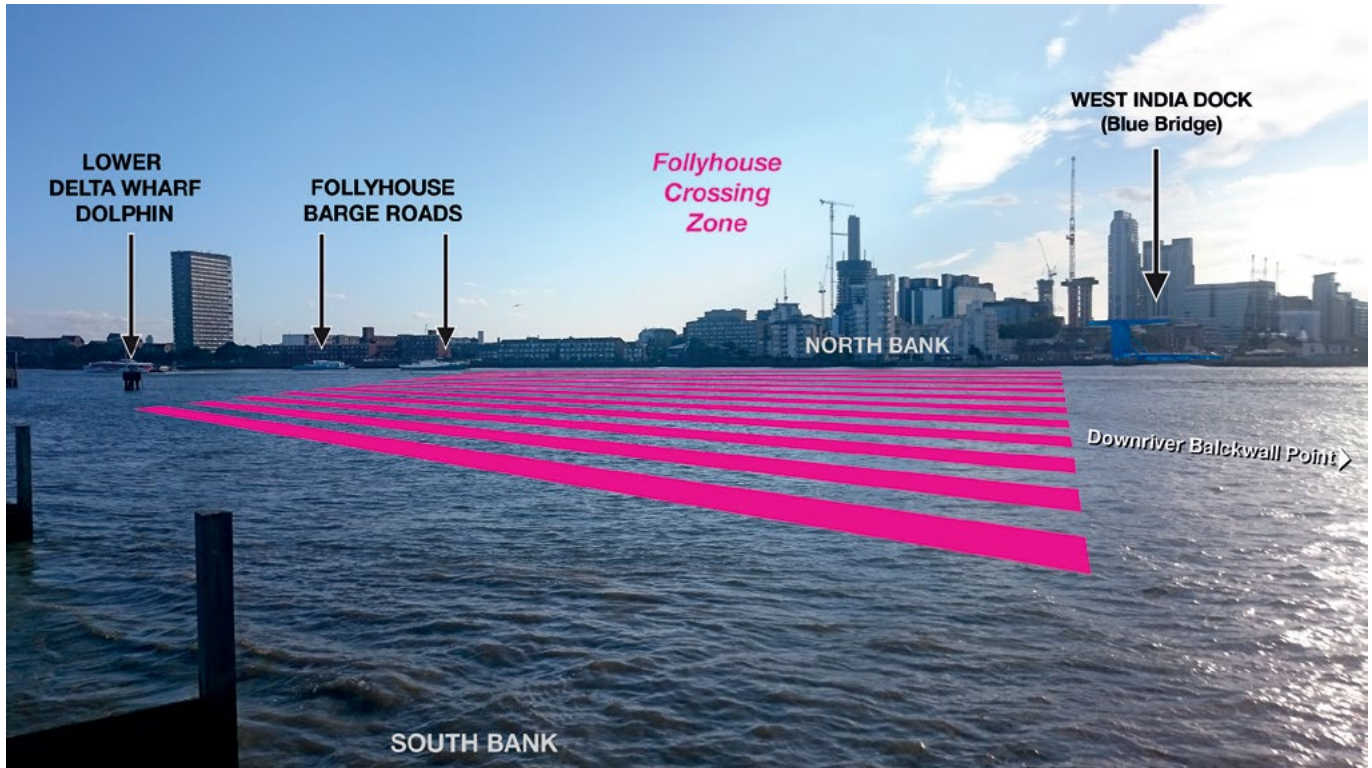
This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Busy commercial traffic, particularly around Trinity Jubilee Pier, Victoria Dock Entrance, Thames and Northumberland Wharves
- Shallows on the south side at low tide
- Multiple piers, moorings and wharves
- The entrances to Bow Creek, East India and West India docks
- **The Follyhouse and Blackwall Crossing Zones**
- **A strong tidal set** on the flood



Blackwall Reach to Blackwall Point – Follyhouse Crossing

This is the *Follyhouse Crossing Zone*, looking upriver from Point Wharf Draw Dock on the south bank.



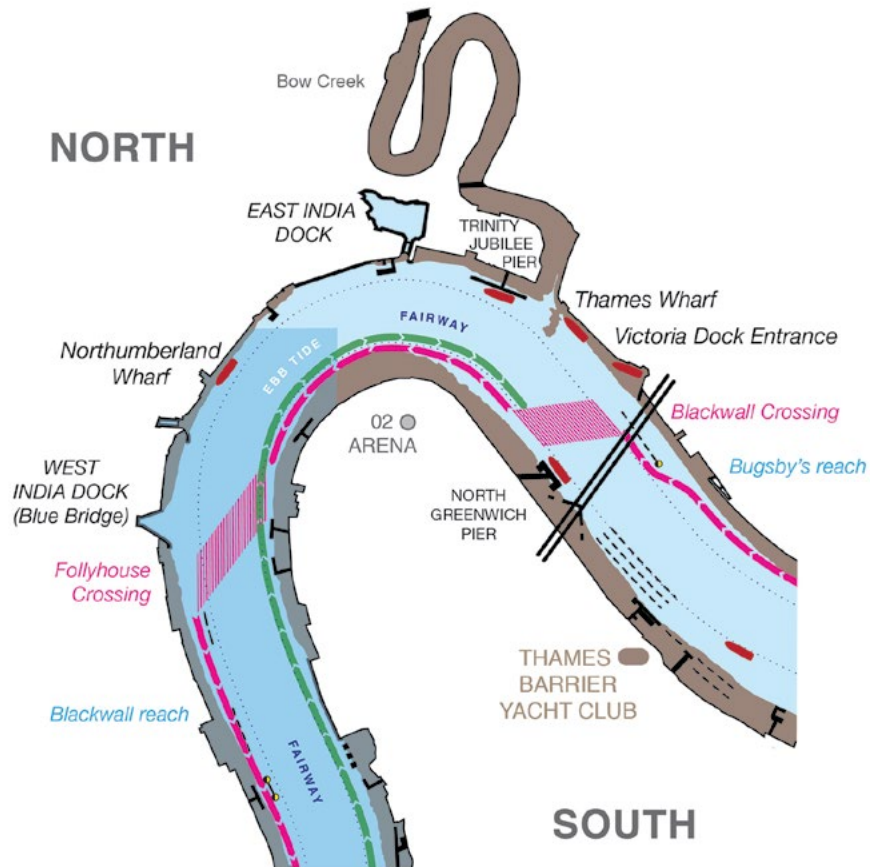
Blackwall Point – Navigating on the ebb tide

When rowing inbound/upriver
against the **EBB** tide:

- Stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the south bank as is safe
- Be aware of the shallows around Blackwall point
- Be aware that crews rowing **outbound on the ebb** will be on the south edge of the **Fairway**

When rowing outbound/downriver
with the **EBB** tide:

- Stay on the **starboard edge** (south side) of the **Fairway**
- Be aware of other crews rowing **inbound against the ebb** in the **Inshore Zone** on the south bank



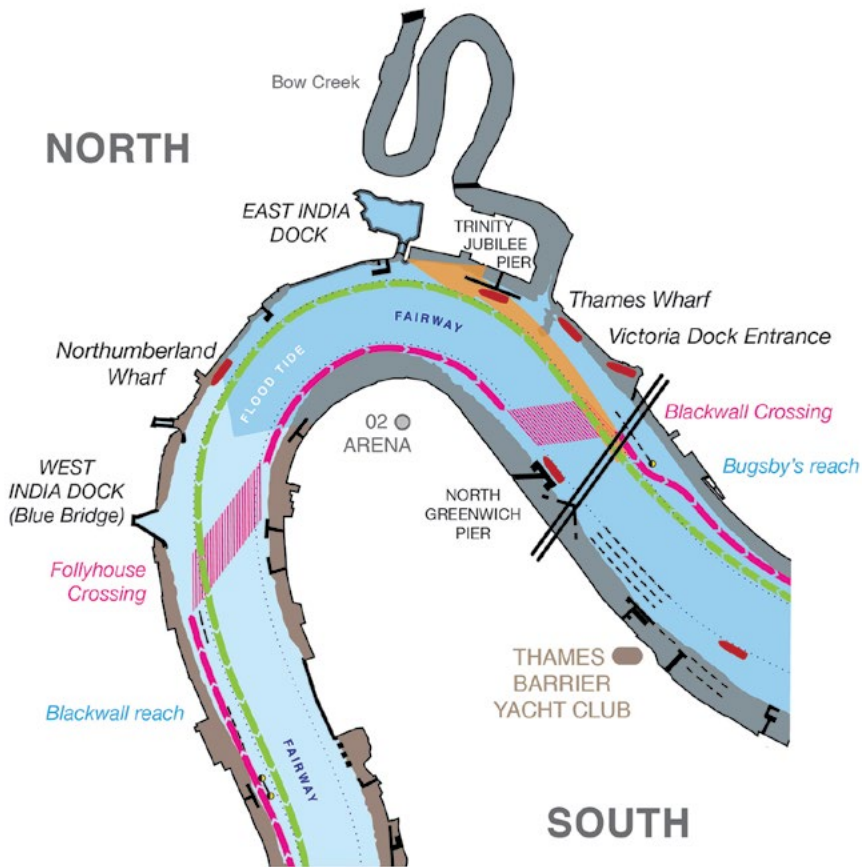
Blackwall Point – Navigating on the flood tide

When rowing inbound/upriver with the FLOOD tide:

- Stay on the starboard edge (north side) of the Fairway
- Be aware of the tidal set which will push boats towards Trinity Jubilee Pier (Clipper base)

When rowing outbound/downriver against the FLOOD tide:

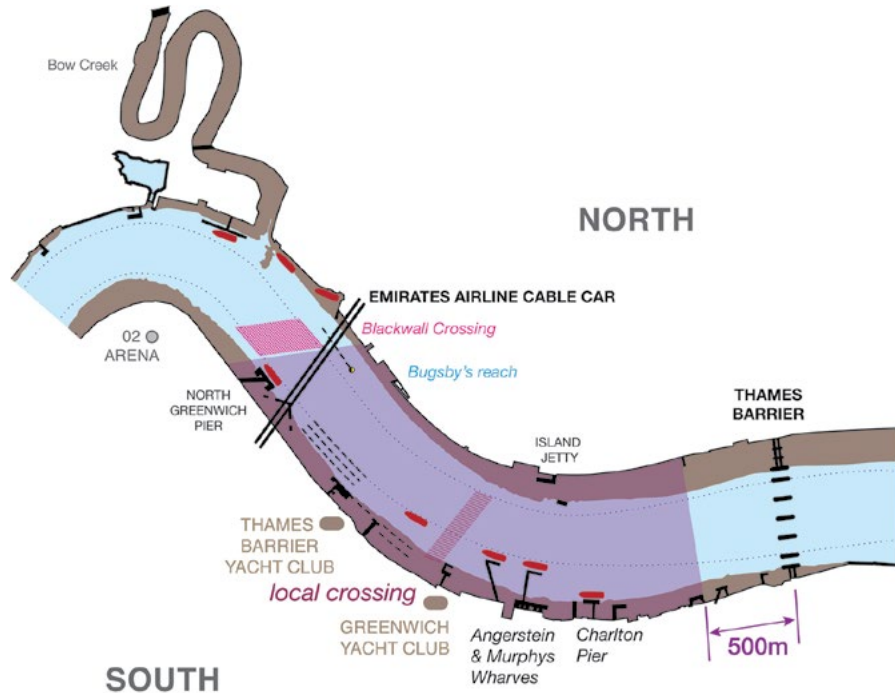
- Stay in the Inshore Zone, between the crossing points as close to the south bank as is safe
- Be aware of the shallows around Blackwall point



Bugsby's Reach & the Thames Barrier

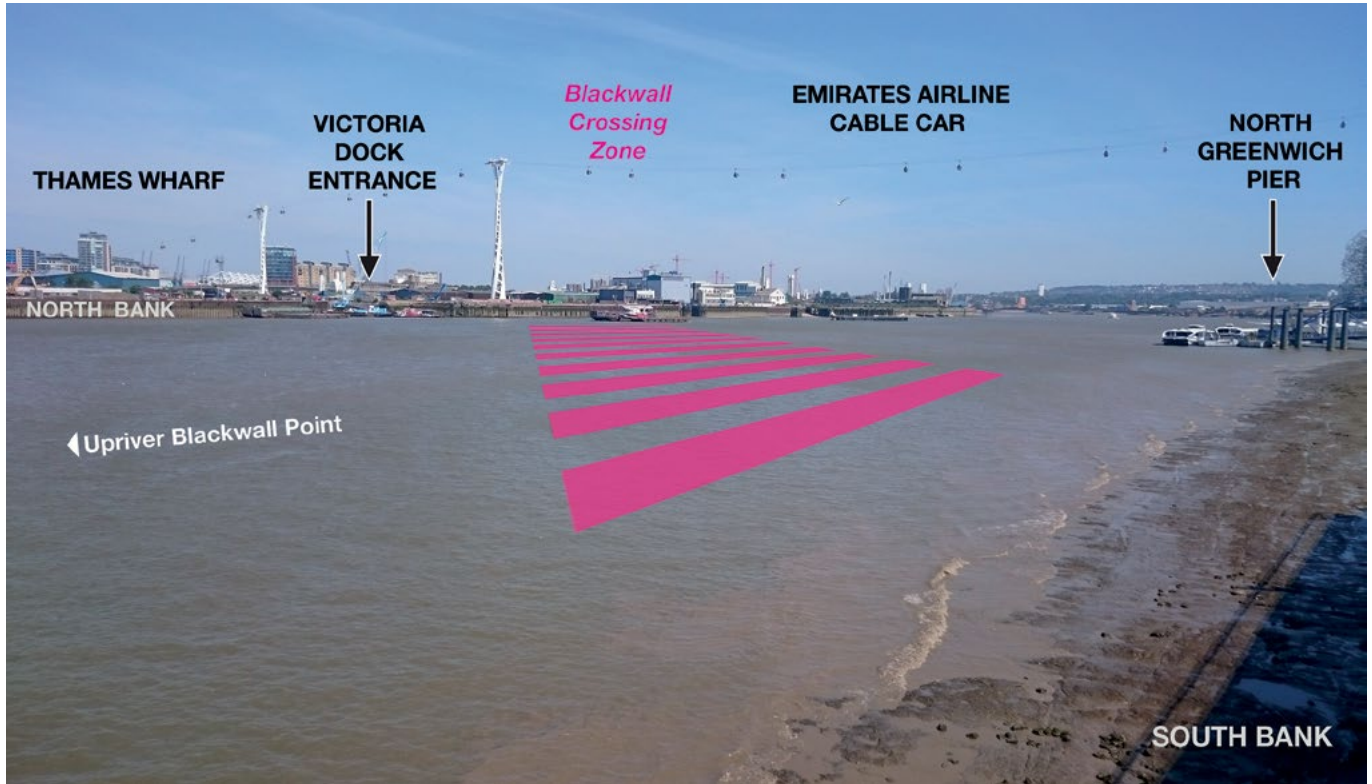
This section of river is in the **Rowing Area** and has many hazards including:

- Busy commercial traffic
- Shallows on the north side at low tide
- Multiple piers, moorings and wharves
- **The Blackwall Crossing Zone**
- One local crossing
- One rowing club
- The Thames Barrier



Blackwall Point to Bugsby's Reach – Blackwall Crossing

This is the *Blackwall Crossing Zone*, looking downriver from the O2 Arena on the south bank.



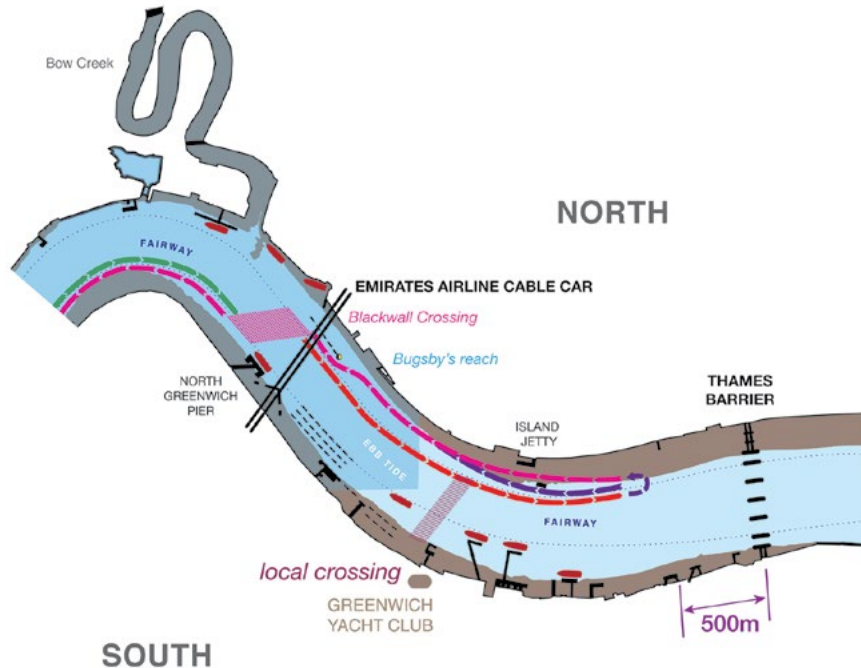
Bugsby's Reach – Navigating on the ebb tide

When rowing inbound/upriver
against the EBB tide:

- Stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the north bank as is safe
- Navigate inside Island Jetty if there is sufficient water to do so. If not then go **outside the pier** but stay outside the **Fairway**
- Navigate outside the moorings below the crossing point

When rowing outbound/downriver
with the EBB tide:

- **Cross** at the **Blackwall Crossing** and continue downriver on the **port side** of the **Fairway**
- **Turn** after Island Jetty but at least 500m before the Thames Barrier into the **Inshore Zone** on the north bank and return as described above

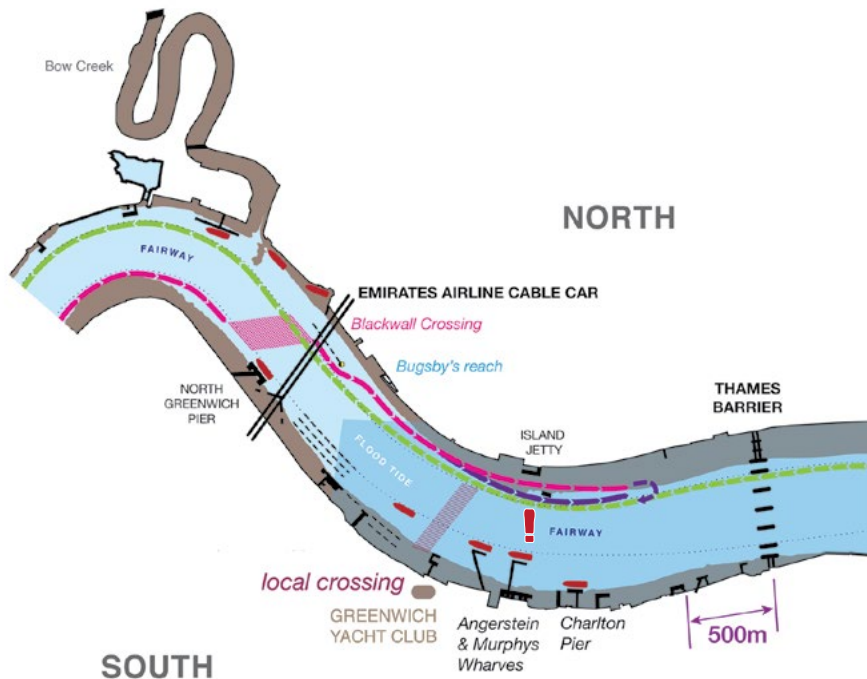


Bugsby's Reach – Navigating on the flood tide

Any crew rowing outbound/downriver **against the FLOOD** tide but intending to return upriver against the flood tide:

- Cross at the **Blackwall Crossing Zone**, navigate outside the moorings then stay in the **Inshore Zone**, as close to the north bank as is safe
- Navigate inside Island Jetty if there is sufficient water to do so. If not then go **outside the pier** but stay outside the **Fairway**
- ! If going **outside** Island Jetty, you must give way to any rowing crews inbound with the flood
- **Turn** after Island Jetty but at least 500m before the Thames Barrier onto the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** and return as described below

For crews intending to return upriver to their clubs



When rowing inbound/upriver **with the FLOOD** tide:

- Stay on the **starboard edge** (north side) of the **Fairway**
- Navigate outside Island Jetty and be aware of other crews rowing **outbound against the flood in the Inshore Zone** on the north bank

Bugsby's Reach – Navigating on the flood tide

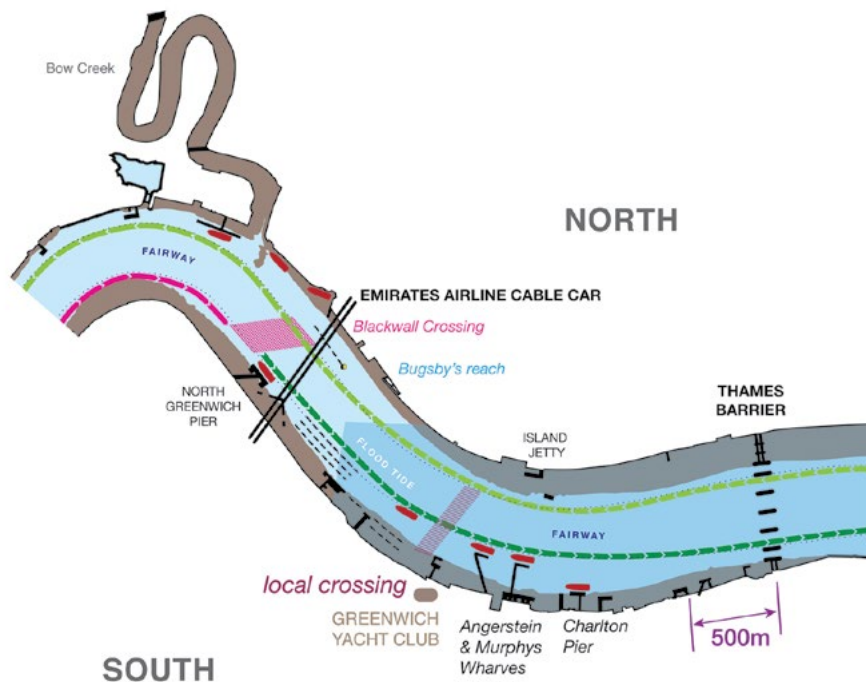
Any crew rowing outbound/
downriver beyond the Thames
Barrier **against the FLOOD** tide:

- Do not cross at the **Blackwall Crossing Zone** but remain on the **starboard side** of the **Fairway** and navigate according to Col Regs
- Crews who use this Col Regs navigation should not then turn at Island Jetty i.e. in front of the Thames Barrier

When rowing inbound/upriver
with the **FLOOD** tide – from below
the Barrier:

- Stay on the **starboard edge** (north side) of the **Fairway**
- Navigate outside Island Jetty and be aware of other crews rowing **outbound against the flood in the Inshore Zone** on the north bank

For crews intending to proceed downriver through The Thames Barrier



NOTE: You **must** inform London VTS if you intend to proceed through the Thames Barrier. Please do so before Blackwell Crossing. [See page 90](#)

Life Jackets

Coxes, coaches, umpires and launch drivers **MUST** wear a correctly fitted and well maintained life jacket at all times while afloat.

This is because they are generally wearing more/heavier clothing and footwear than the athletes.

If you cannot swim then you must also wear a life jacket. Rowing-friendly Personal Floatation Devices are available.

A fully inflating life jacket is preferred to a buoyancy aid.

Recommended Specification

- minimum 150N capacity
- self-inflating
- includes a crotch strap

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Self-inflating life jackets must not be used in bow-loaded coxed boats. They run the risk of inflating with the cox still in the boat and trapping them under the bow canvas.

Fitting

- **The Jacket must be worn on top of all other clothing**
- The jacket should be a snug but not tight fit. Loose-fitting life jackets may come off in an emergency so please ensure that your jacket is properly adjusted and use any crotch strap or harness, if fitted
- Ensure that the manual inflation toggle is showing and readily available to use

If you are unsure about any aspect of your life jacket do not go afloat with it.

Storage

- Jackets should be stored in a warm, dry place when not in use but away from direct heat or sunlight.
- They should be stored hung up on racks or hooks and never left compacted in a bag or box
- Wet jackets should be allowed to air-dry naturally

Maintenance

- Jackets should be checked for obvious signs of damage every time they are used and inflated at least once a year to check for leaks
- Servicing and replacement depend on usage but it is recommended that regular servicing by an approved retailer is undertaken at a maximum interval of three years
- Any repairs must be performed by the manufacturer
- A maintenance log should be kept of servicing

If you are unsure about any aspect of a life jacket, contact the manufacturer or approved retailer.

Further information regarding life jacket choice, fitting, storage and maintenance is available on the [RYA website](#).



Don't run out of luck

They're called **Life** jackets for a reason: always consider wearing one when afloat. Life jackets are recommended when fully clothed and buoyancy aids for participating in water sports. Both types should be properly fitted, well maintained and tested periodically.



www.pla.co.uk
www.boatingonthethames.co.uk

The Port of London Authority (PLA)
 London River House,
 Royal Pier Road,
 Gravesend, Kent
 DA12 2BG

Head Office: 020 7743 7909

Richmond Lock: 020 8940 0634

www.boatingonthethames.co.uk

www.pla.co.uk

London Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)

Telephone 020 8855 0315

VHF Channel 14

**The Thames Regional
 Rowing Council (TRRC)**

www.thames-rrc.org

British Rowing

www.britishrowing.org

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA)

www.rya.org.uk

Thames Water

<http://www.thameswater.co.uk>



AKN

Auriol Kensington RC



AWL

Alpha Women's ARC



ASL

American School in London BC



BAE

Barn Elms RC



BBL

Barnes Bridge Ladies RC



CDH

Cold Harbour BC



CHK

Chiswick School BC



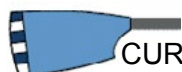
COL

Colet BC



CRB

Crabtree BC



CUR

Curlew RC



CYG

Cygnets RC



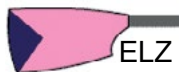
DAC

Dacre BC



DUL

Dulwich College BC



ELZ

Elizabethan BC



EMA

Emanuel School BC



ERT

Erith



EYR

Eyre Club



FSC

Furnivall Sculling Club



FUL

Fulham Reach BC



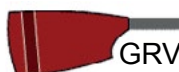
GLB

Globe RC



GLT

Godolphin & Latymer School BC



GRV

Gravesend RC



HCR

Hounslow Community RC



HSB

HSBC Rowing Club



IMM

Imperial College School of Medicine



IMP

Imperial College BC



KCL

King's College London BC



KCS

King's College School Wimbledon



LOS

London Oratory School BC



LOT

London Oratory RC



LRC

London RC



LSE

London School of Economics



LTU

Latymer Upper School BC



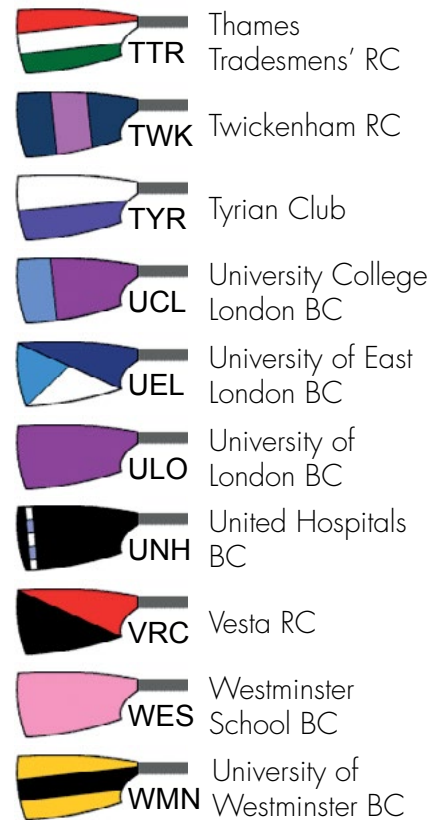
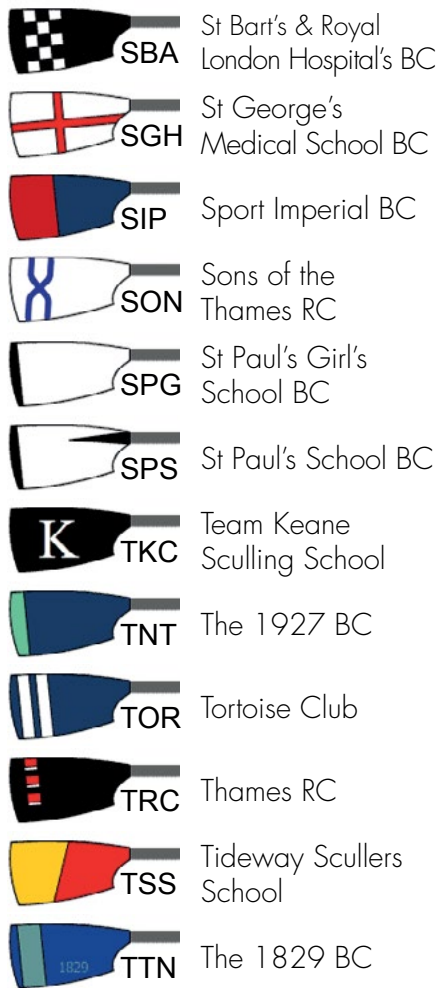
MAA

Mortlake Anglian & Alpha BC



ORI

Orion RC





We hope that you have found this guide useful and informative. If you have any further questions regarding the Rowing Code or have any queries or suggestions regarding anything in this document, please contact the PLA or TRRC. Additional copies are available from the PLA or you can download a pdf version from their website. See page 114 for contact details and web addresses.

