

HSOBC Safety and Boating Plan

Rowing and sculling are by their nature, outdoor activities and as such are subject to weather in all its forms. It is therefore important to recognise that contending with difficult weather conditions is part of the sport. Safe enjoyment is the aim, not foolhardiness. Even though accidents are rare in the sport, it is important that one not become complacent and adhere to the ARA's Water Safety Code.

The ARA's water safety code places emphasis on the individual's and club's responsibility for their actions and is a guide to the minimum standard of safe practice. It does not prevent a club or individual from taking further measures they may deem necessary to ensure safe rowing.

The code is used as the basis for Headington School Oxford Boat Club to reflect upon when making decisions on their own local safety rules and practices for members to follow. Water Safety is a permanent agenda item for the clubs coaches meetings.

Headington School Oxford Boat club follows and supports the A.R.A Water Safety Code. The Clubs Safety Advisor will ensure that Headington School Oxford Boat Club follows the A.R.A Safety Code and he / she will encourage and enforce these rules.

All members and coaches of Headington School Oxford Boat Club must comply with the Safety Code at all times. Copies of the Safety Code are available on the A.R.A website.

Every club member must assist in improving safety practice by adhering to these safety instructions.

YOU MUST

1. Be able to swim 50m in light clothing.
2. Be in good health and wear suitable clothing.
3. Wear buoyancy aid for coxing, coaching and launch driving.
4. Know the local navigation rules.
5. Record any accident in the log provided.
6. If coaching, be aware of overall responsibility for the crew.

ALL members should directly challenge any member or water user who is seen to be non-compliant with the Code or the above guidelines.

The Headington School Oxford Boat Club Safety Adviser will undertake periodic safety inspections/audits of the Club's fleet and equipment, and will arrange for necessary repair/rectification work to be carried out promptly.

All members should similarly report any unsafe, damaged or missing equipment to the Director of Rowing and to the Boatman (Safety Adviser) a.s.a.p. so that it may be remedied – a REPAIRS BOOK/NOTICE BOARD is located in the hut by the boat house, and is regularly checked by the aforementioned officer(s).

DO NOT REMOVE EQUIPMENT FROM ONE BOAT TO REMEDY A DEFICIENCY OR DAMAGE IN ANOTHER!!

This causes more problems long-term than it solves short-term...

A SAFETY/ACCIDENT book is in the small hut next to the boat house and should be brought to every to every coaches meeting. ALL accidents on the water, whether involving personal injury or damage to equipment or not, and involving either club or private boats should be noted in the book.

Give as much detail as you can in your report - this will be needed if a report has to go to the A.R.A. Regional Safety Adviser and/or the insurers - when, where, how, types of boats, clubs involved, weather conditions, any injury/damage, and medical treatment received, etc. Further more, contact details of individuals involved must be recorded.

Members are reminded that the Director of Rowing will not hesitate to take disciplinary action against any members who act in an irresponsible or unsafe manner on the water, whether in HSOBC boats OR their own.

Equipment Safety

Before using HSOBC or private boats please check the following items to make sure the equipment is safe to use.

- **bow ball** –
 - Securely fitted, no cracks or splits
- **heel restraints** –
 - In good condition and not frayed
 - Heels only come up so far above the stretcher to allow full movement.
- **bungs or corks** -
 - Check these are in place and secure
- **steering equipment**
 - Check rudder cables are free and have full movement.
 - Check for frayed cable.
- **rudders & Fins**
 - Check rudder and fin are not bent.
 - Free and full movement of rudder.

As above, please report any defects to the Boatman (1st) and the Director of Rowing (2nd). Please also enter the defects in the repair book as set out above. Any such defects in a private boat should be rectified before the boat is used.

Launches

Coaches and coaching launch drivers shall wear life jackets or buoyancy aids when accompanying crews and at other times whilst afloat.

All coaching launches and safety boats shall carry the following safety aids:

- a. A sound signalling warning device, capable of attracting attention over at least 200 metres.
- b. A throw line at least 15m (50ft) long with a large knot tied in one end to assist throwing (ideally a purpose made rescue/heaving line - 'throw bag').
- c. Thermal exposure blankets.
- d. A basic first aid kit (contents recorded and checked as before).
- e. A sharp knife in carrying sheath.
- f. A paddle.
- g. Simple handholds fixed to the side of the launch to give help to any person being rescued and provide self-help should the driver fall overboard.

SPECIFIC SAFETY PROCEDURES FOR THE RIVER

Before boating the Director of Rowing or Andy Green, should make a decision if the river conditions are suitable for rowing.

This decision will be FINAL and WITHOUT APPEAL. The decision will be indicated using the coloured boards on the sign next to the St Edwards boat house. No one will be allowed to boat if they are a member of Headington School Oxford Boat Club.

The river conditions are categorised as follows:

Green Boards – All crews can boat

Amber Board – Restricted access to river. It could include any or all of the following

- No juniors unless the Director of Rowing says it is safe for coxed quads to go out.
- No Sculling restricted to Seniors.
- No rowing below rainbow bridge.

Red Board – No rowing by any crew unless a risk assessment has been done by RM Demaine, Andy Green, and Sam Wells (Water Safety Officer) together with other coaches. Then specific boats with competent athletes may go out if it is safe for them to do so. See River Thames Navigation Warnings and HSOBC Procedures. Plus see Safety in Strong Stream Conditions.

REMEMBER: IF IN DOUBT - DON'T GO OUT!!!

STREAM

If the stream appears to be fast flowing and/or there are significant floating objects moving down the river (tree trunks, dead livestock, etc.), crews should seriously consider not boating - you should be able to make progress against the prevailing stream without rowing at firm pressure & be able to spin the boat without moving a significant distance along the river - if this is not possible, you should not go out.

Flow rates: 100 CMtr/secs = No access to river
75 – 100 CMtr/secs = Restricted Access
<75 CMtr/secs = Full Access to all crews.
CMtr/secs = Cubic Metre per second

TEMPERATURE

Crews are reminded that, especially during the winter months, the risk of hypothermia from wearing insufficient clothing or with inexperienced crews not moving vigorously enough to generate sufficient body heat is a REAL DANGER. Ensure that you are all wearing several thin layers of appropriate clothing, preferably with a waterproof garment on top. Coxes, especially, should be well protected, including hats and gloves (preferably waterproof).

Coaches, it is negligent to allow crews to boat if they are not dressed appropriately.

ROWING ACCIDENTS:

- Hypothermia and Drowning

If you capsize, it is VITAL that the following is adhered to:

STAY WITH YOUR BOAT!! Your boat is a floatation devise and you must stay with it.

The choices you make are vital. As you realise you are about to capsize, it is important that you remain calm. As you fall into the water you will immediately shudder from a Cold Shock Response. You may feel dizzy, have shortened sharp breathing, and a rapid rise in your heart rate. This can result in panic.

If you are in a single, free your feet from the clogs/ shoes in the boat (you should have heel restraints and this will allow your feet to slip out.

If you are in a crew boat, check that everyone in the crew is accounted for. You must now do the following: to retain buoyancy, by climbing up on your boat. It floats. This will also allow you to retain your body's warmth. Help will be at hand shortly. **Do not attempt to swim for the bank.**

EXPERIENCE

NO beginners crews should go out unaccompanied AT ANY TIME. They should ALWAYS be accompanied by a coach, preferably in the launch.

No novice/inexperienced coxes should cox inexperienced crews - ensure that novice crews have an experienced and competent cox and that novice coxes are trained in an experienced and competent crew.

NIGHT/AFTER DARK ROWING/ FOG

If you must go out at night, make sure that you carry appropriate lights on the boat so you can be clearly seen by other boats/crews.

Carry WHITE lights at the bow and stern of rowing and sculling boats and a WHITE light in launches. Single scullers should preferably not go out at night unaccompanied.

Crews should not be coxed by novice/inexperienced coxes at night. Beginner crews should preferably not go out after dark - if unavoidable, they MUST be accompanied by a coach, again preferably in the launch.

If there is reduced visibility, due to fog, a risk assessment will be done before crews are allowed to go out. ONLY IF THERE IS SUFFICIENT VISIBILITY for crews to row safely will crews be allowed out.

FOG:

If there is fog, we will often wait to see if it lifts. During this time, the whole group will do a circuit or game of some description. These circuits and games are important so please do not feel that it is a waste of time if your daughter does not get onto the water.

RIVER NAVIGATION

Boats travelling in a direction from the boat club (boat houses) towards the Lock should be on the Godstow Meadow side of the river Approx 1 – 2 ½ Blade Lengths from the bank. There is a sand bank in the middle of the river. Boats travelling from upstream (from the lock towards the boat club (boat houses)) must give way to crews travelling downstream. In both cases, crews should stop and then manoeuvre around the other crew (with respect to navigation rules (crews to stay on BOWSIDE BANK)).

When rowing on the river, crews must stay on the **bow side bank** at all times. Take corners as close to the bow side bank as possible to avoid collision.

Particular care should be taken to remain on the correct side around bends and resist the temptation to cut any corners, as this is potentially extremely dangerous.

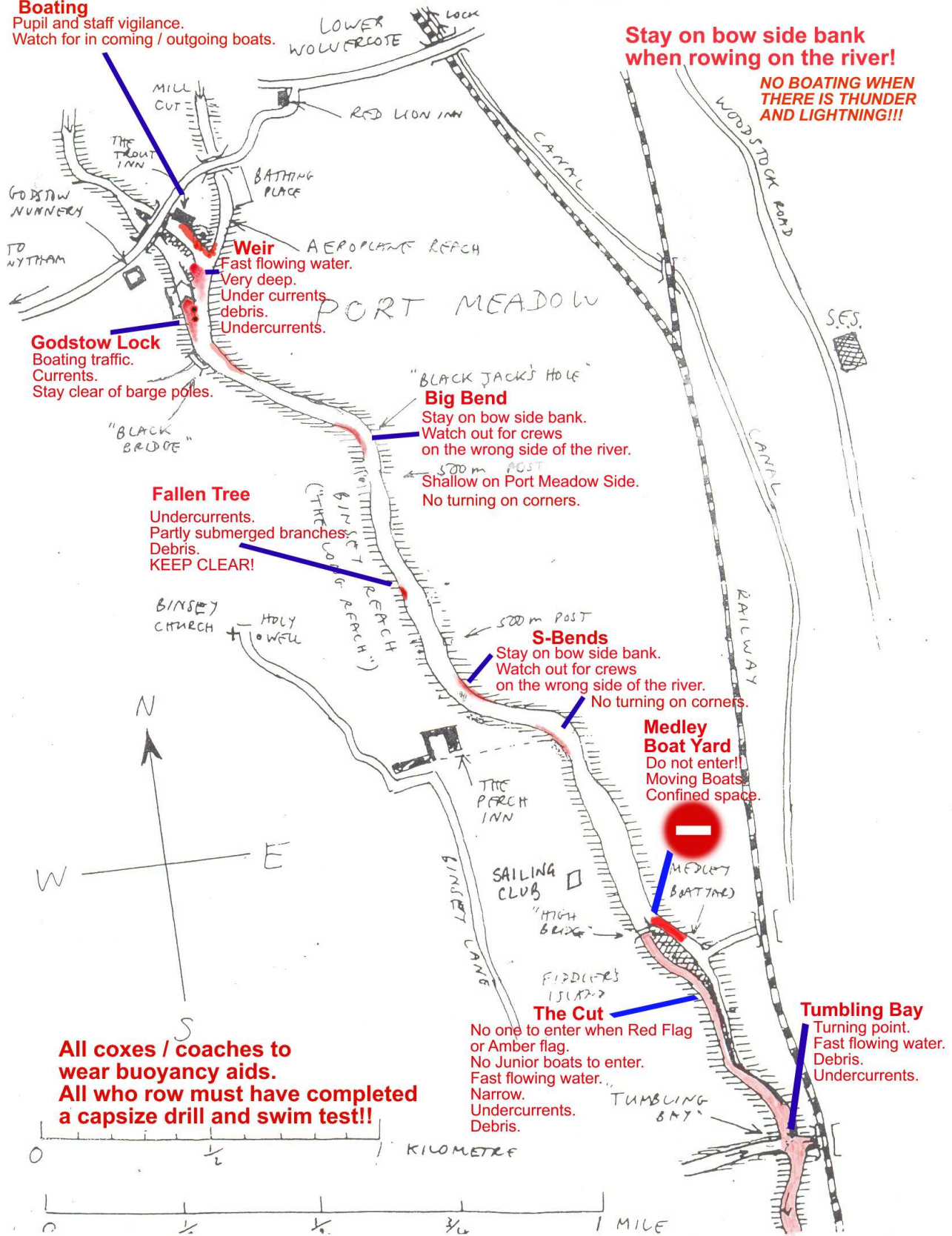
Particular danger areas include:

- *Departing from Aeroplane reach (the Boat house area) in front of the lock.*
- *The Weir. Fast flowing water and debris.*
- *The lock area itself. Fast flowing water, boats, barges and debris can prove to be hazardous.*
- *The turning areas and bends in river. These are often a problem as crews cut corners.*
- *College crews (they are often inexperienced and often have absolutely no regard for other crews).*
- *Debris in the river (Branches etc).*
- *Undercurrents especially when the stream is up.*
- *The fallen tree half way down the course stretches into the river. There are other such obstacles that need to be watch out for.*
- *Medley Boat Yard. Pleasure boats are often seen coming out of this area.*
- *No junior crews are to row below Rainbow Bridge.*
- *No development crews are to row below Rainbow Bridge in Single sculls or double sculls / pairs.*
- *All crews that go below Rainbow Bridge are only to do so if there is a coach present (Coaches need to use common sense when going below rainbow bridge (now when it is red or amber flag).*

Headington School Oxford: The Thames: Godstow to Oxford.

Boating

Pupil and staff vigilance.
Watch for in coming / outgoing boats.



If there is any doubt to the above, please consult the Director of Rowing.

Water Borne Diseases

The water we row upon is not always as clean as we would choose and certainly is not pure enough to be swallowed without giving more than a passing thought to the possible effects it will have upon our internal systems.

The ARA Water Safety Code has as its primary concern, the prevention of accidents involving physical injury, damage to equipment and at the worst, drowning.

There are other risks to health associated with water based activities which arise from the micro biological or chemical quality of the water itself and of its immediate environs. The use of inland waters can never be risk free and it is essential that as users, we are aware of the risks present.

Weill's Disease - Leptospirosis

The risk of contracting Leptospirosis from recreational water is small, however the serious nature of the disease is such that we must be aware of the dangers and should take simple precautions to reduce the risk of infection.

- Cuts and abrasions (including blisters) should be covered with waterproof dressings.
- Wear footwear to avoid cuts and protect feet when paddling in the water (launching a boat).
- Shower after contact with the water.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating and drinking.

If 'flu like symptoms develop shortly after contact with the water (1-3 weeks) then your doctor should be contacted and advised of the circumstances of exposure.

Blue-Green Algae – Cynobacteria

Cynobacteria are commonly found in fresh and brackish water during mid to late summer. In Favourable, stable conditions, blooms may form. Algal scums accumulate downwind on the surface of lakes and slow moving water. Toxins produced by large blooms have caused the death of sheep and dogs and skin and other disorders in humans, although no particular illness has been identified that can be linked with Blue-Green Algae.

By way of precaution:

- Avoid immersion or contact with water affected by algal scum.
- Minimise contact with water by wearing close fitting clothing.
- After any contact hose down all equipment to avoid contact with residual scum.
- All clothing should be washed and thoroughly dried on returning home.
- Shower after contact with the water.

Gastro-intestinal illness

There are currently no micro-biological standards for recreational water and at present only the powers provided under the Public Health Act 1936 – Section 259 to deal with “any pond, pool, ditch, gutter or water course which is so foul or in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance” provide us with protection.

Assessing the risks posed by water quality is difficult as conditions can vary substantially in a very short space of time. In general, the health risk will depend on the number and proximity of sewage effluent discharges in any particular body of water.

The use of inland water will never be risk free and it is essential that users are aware of the risks involved in using a particular stretch of water. By way of precaution after immersion or contact with water of uncertain quality –

- Do not eat or drink before showering/washing.
- If 'foul' water has been swallowed refer to your doctor with full details of incident.

The possible conditions are listed according to the nature of the hazard. No such list can be exhaustive, or cover every eventuality, but they provide a clear framework with which to judge if the conditions are suitable for boating. Bear in mind that the river conditions/weather can change rapidly - crews must be prepared to abandon an outing at any time if the conditions deteriorate once they are on the water.

Above all this, the unwritten rule of common sense must prevail. If in doubt about any issue please ask the Director of Rowing, Heads of Squads, or consult the ARA.