

# Thames Valley Skiff Club

## Water Safety Code

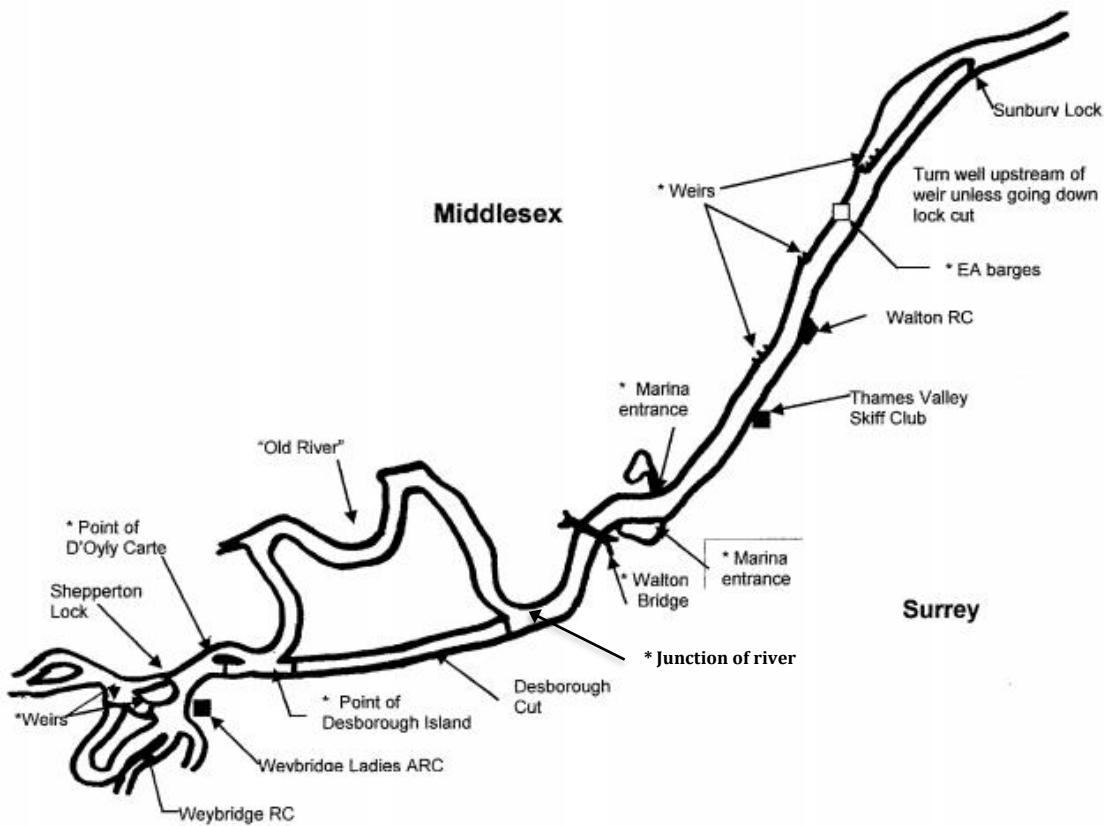
1. Almost any sport, and certainly any water sport, involves some risk. All those who take part should be aware of the hazards and must accept them, whilst trying to minimise the likelihood and consequence of them. **Parents and guardians of junior members should also acquaint themselves with the hazards.**
2. **As a general principle, every Club member is responsible for his or her own safety on and off the river.** However, every member must also:
  - a) not behave in a way which endangers other members or the general public;
  - b) assist and advise other members who are less experienced; and
  - c) help, as far as practical, any person who gets into difficulty on the river.
3. When you applied to join the club, you certified that you could swim 50 metres in light clothing. This is a minimum requirement; if you are not a strong swimmer, you should visit a swimming pool regularly and should aim to swim at least twice this distance in a tracksuit. Do not underestimate how difficult this is, as the buoyancy and water temperature in the river can be significantly different than in a swimming pool.
4. If you are in any doubt about your fitness to skiff, punt or train, ask your doctor before starting or restarting. Start gently, building fitness as you go. If you have any medical conditions, which could affect you when taking part in activities, make sure your crew know about it.
5. **Crews taking out a club boat must ensure that it is river-worthy.** Note any minor defects and report them to the Captain as soon as possible. Defects that could cause the boat to be dangerous must be repaired before the boat is used. Leave a prominent note on the boat to warn other users, and Report the damage details in the Damage Report Book kept in the main club house, kitchen cupboard.
6. Skiffing generally has a good safety record (at least as far as major injuries are concerned). But many minor injuries could be avoided:
  - a) make sure that you wear suitable clothes and non-slip shoes;
  - b) take care when lifting and moving boats, if in doubt ask for help.
7. A First Aid kit is kept in the skiff bay of the boathouse and also in the clubhouse kitchen. A committee member checks their contents at least once a month, but if you use any item, fill in the Accident Report Book and write down what you have used. Members are strongly encouraged to attend first aid courses run by St John Ambulance, and other organisations. The Club will consider requests for financial assistance to attend these courses.
8. An Accident Report Book is kept in the clubhouse kitchen, and **MUST** be used to record the date and details of any incident, however minor, affecting safety in and around the club and on the river. Any incident involving a motor vessel **MUST** be reported the Environment Agency on their 24hr Incident Hotline Centre Tel. 0800 80 70 60.  
Members, wishing to draw the committee's attention to any matters requiring attention on safety grounds, may also use this book.
9. **It is a crew's own responsibility to judge whether river and weather conditions are suitable for boating.** In cases of doubt, you must err on the side of caution. Inexperienced members must seek advice. The Committee has published in a prominent notice in the clubhouse, guidance notes for boating in various river conditions. It is also included as Appendix A to this document. If you cause damage to a club boat when boating in conditions the committee judges unsuitable, you may be held liable for the cost of any repairs.
10. On the river, crews must steer a course appropriate to the stream conditions and other craft on the river. The normal River navigation rules to be followed are noted on the map attached to this code, and which is displayed in the boathouse. If you take a different course for any reason, you must use exceptional care to avoid obstacles and other boats.
11. If you do fall into the river, stay with the boat and swim with it to the bank.
12. A crew must obey its coxswain's orders at all times on the water. The stroke or coach of the crew, must also take some responsibility for steering and avoiding collisions and must train inexperienced coxswains.

13. The club does not normally provide coaches. Where a member is invited by a crew to give advice, he or she does not assume liability for the crew's actions or for any injury or damage, but must exercise reasonable care.
14. Members who take out young family in boats are encouraged to provide their own life jackets.
15. Under strong stream conditions there are particular hazards at the top of d'Oyly Carte island and at the top and bottom of Desborough island, at Walton Bridge and at the three weirs. Give these all a wide berth. Most accidents on the river involve collisions; steersmen of coxswainless boats must look round frequently.
16. If in doubt - ask!

References:

- Skiff Racing Association: Rules for Racing – Section J, Safety Regulations
- British Rowing: ARA “Row Safe – A Guide to Good Practice in Rowing, 2008 V1”

**Map of Walton Reach (danger points indicated by \*)**



**Going Upstream**

1. Cross to Middlesex Bank as soon as it is clear
2. Keep close to Middlesex Bank all the way up
3. You may take either the “Old River” or Desborough Cut
4. If turning above D'Oyly Carte Island, do so close to Shepperton Lock

**Going Downstream**

1. Stay on the Surrey side of the centre of the river.
2. Ensure that the river is clear ahead and behind the skiff before stopping, turning or crossing to come in to the Club landing stage.

The above guidance is in line with EA Navigation Rules for the River Thames [www.gov.uk/guidance/river-thames-bridges-locks-and-facilities-for-boaters#rules-of-navigation](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-thames-bridges-locks-and-facilities-for-boaters#rules-of-navigation). Additional voluntary rowing/sculling navigation rules to help avoid collisions agreed by representatives of local rowing and sculling clubs in Jan 2002 is included as additional guidance and information (Appendix B).

## APPENDIX A

### **Guidance Notes for members of the TVSC on use of club boats in varying stream, weather conditions and at night**

We want to ensure our members are able to enjoy use of the river whenever possible but safety of our members, other river users and our equipment is important to us. It is not possible for officers and committee members to always be on hand to make decisions on whether conditions are safe for skiffing and consequently we ask all members to consider and observe the guidance notes below when deciding whether to use club boats on the river. In addition there is some further guidance provided on navigation and best practices to help avoid incidents on the river.

### **Guidance on navigation and best practices to help avoid incidents on the river.**

- If there is any chance an EA warning may be posted then check this and observe the clubs guidance to members on use of club boats in varying stream and weather conditions.
- We drive on the right.
- Keep a good lookout for other river users and potential hazards at all times.
- Take particular care at crossing points such as when leaving the club, at the junction of the old river and the cut, outside the canoe club at the top of Desborough Island.
- Powered craft should give way to unpowered craft but not everyone is well trained or considerate so the bottom line is keep a good lookout and avoid accidents - even if the other person is in the wrong!
- If there is a risk of collision with another boat shout a polite warning.
- Do not wear headphones in a boat, this may stop you from hearing any warnings.
- Unlike a road vehicle a boat hardly ever stops still - the river keeps you moving and even more so in the winter when there is more likely to be stream so be aware.
- In strong stream it should be assumed that a boat travelling downstream will not be able to stop and/or change direction as easily as those going upstream.
- Do not stop or turn near a weir particularly in strong stream conditions. In strong stream conditions it is recommended crews do not travel downstream of the club to keep a safe distance from the three weirs between the clubhouse and Sunbury lock.
- If swapping crews or turning around during the course of an outing consider where it is safe to do so. Avoid places where it is narrow or busy such as a lock cut or outside a rowing club.
- Not all river users go around Desborough Island the same way. Keep to the right on all the bends and keep a lookout for oncoming boats that may be cutting the corners.
- PLEASE WEAR A WHITE OR REFLECTIVE TOP AS THE BOW PERSON IN A DOUBLE OR IF IN A SINGLE AT NIGHT OR IN DULL WEATHER CONDITIONS.

### **To boat or not to boat?**

The Environment Agency provide information on their website <http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk/> informing river users of conditions that may make navigation difficult and dangerous. There are two levels of warning "Caution Stream Increasing / decreasing" (amber board) and "Caution Strong Stream" (red board) and the current status is regularly updated on the website for each lock to lock section of the river. The TVSC is located between Shepperton and Sunbury locks.

## **When amber board warnings apply:**

- Observe all instructions that may from time to time be posted in the clubhouse by an officer or committee member notifying members that boats are not to be taken out.
- No coxless doubles or singles are to be used during hours of dusk or darkness when an amber board warning is shown.

Beyond these two restricting factors, please consider the following:

- Consider the ability of your whole crew including the experience as a cox of anyone in the crew that may take a turn at coxing. It is not recommended that crews boat with an inexperienced cox when an amber board warning is shown.
- If it is windy, consider the ease with which you will be able to progress into the wind. If progress would be slow and tiring then boating is not recommended when an amber board warning is shown.
- If it is cold or wet or both consider if this could impact the performance of the crew and in particular the cox. If weather conditions are extreme boating is not recommended when an amber board warning is shown.

## **When red board warnings apply:**

- Observe all instructions that may from time to time be posted in the clubhouse by an officer or committee member notifying members that boats are not to be taken out.
- No boats are to be used during hours of dusk or darkness when a red board warning is shown.
- No coxless doubles are to be used when a red board warning is shown.
- Singles may only be used when a red board warning is shown by members authorised by the Captain to self assess the prevailing risks.
- No Junior (by age not status) members are to use boats when a red board warning is shown.

Beyond these five restricting factors, please consider the following:

- Consider the ability of your whole crew including the experience as a cox of anyone in the crew that may take a turn at coxing. It is not recommended that crews boat with an inexperienced cox when a red board warning is shown.
- If it is windy boating is not recommended when a red board warning is shown.
- If it is cold or wet or both consider if this could impact the performance of the crew and in particular the cox. If weather conditions are extreme boating is not recommended when a red board warning is shown.

## **When it is foggy**

- No boats are to be used during hours of dusk or darkness when it is foggy.
- No boats are to be used during hours of daylight when it is foggy if the opposite bank to the clubhouse cannot be clearly seen.

**IF IN DOUBT, DON'T GO OUT, THAT WAY THERE'S ALWAYS ANOTHER DAY.**

Refereneces 27/12/2014

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/leisure/amateur-sports-club.htm>

<http://riverconditions.environment-agency.gov.uk/>

**APPENDIX B**  
**Local Rowing/Skiffing/ Sculling Navigation Rules agreed Jan 2002**

**EA Rules of Navigation**

**All boats to pass PORT to PORT** (STROKE side to STROKE side) i.e. keep to the right (BOW side) at all times. This is particularly important when there is poor visibility and after dark.

**All boats of narrow beam out after dark must carry a white light visible through 360o.** White lights visible from back and front is generally accepted. It is also suggested that light coloured clothing be worn at night.

**Rules agreed by local Rowing/Sculling Clubs boating on the Walton/Weybridge Reach**

Boats from all clubs are to exercise caution at all times and take all necessary measures to avoid collisions.

D'Oyly Carte Island to be one way traffic round it, i.e. all boats pass around the island by going upstream on the Middlesex side and downstream on the Surrey side. E.g. crews coming up the Desborough Channel should go to the right as they leave the Channel and go round the Middlesex side of D'Oyly Carte Island; turning left at the top of the island if returning downstream or across to WLARC and Weybridge RC.

Similarly, boats leaving WLARC and Weybridge RC should proceed downstream on the Surrey side of D'Oyly Carte Island.

Clubs have the choice of which way they go round the old river circuit, either up the Desborough Channel and round the point at the top of the Channel into the old river or the reverse route. It is very important that corners are not cut when navigating in either direction and boats must keep to the right at all times.

It is suggested that boats do not lie out of the stream below D'Oyly Carte Island and turn into the stream across towards the Canoe Club before going downstream. It could be dangerous, as boats will be coming downstream on the Surrey side of the island. Safer places to rest are either over against the Middlesex bank opposite D'Oyly Carte Island or just below Shepperton Lock gates. Crews deciding to rest under the lee of D'Oyly Carte Island and then turn into the stream on the Surrey side of the island, should do so with extreme caution.

Boats should not stop in the Desborough Channel, in either direction, if there are other boats coming up behind. All boats should proceed in single file, except when overtaking. Any stopping should only be done on instruction from a coach on the bank.

Boats should not turn round in the river immediately below the bottom of the Desborough Channel to return upstream. Turns should be made, if required, well below the Channel, at the earliest by the Public Slip.

Boats should not turn round either immediately upstream or downstream of any bridge.

When boats are on the Walton Reach (Cowey Sale to Sunbury Weir) they should keep to the right of centre at all times. There is a tendency to go down or up the middle rather than to one side by boats going in either direction.

Boats when passing through Walton Bridge, in either direction, should do so using the arches to the right of the centre pier of the bridge. Remember Walton Bridge has four arches!

Boats should not cut the corner when going downstream at the Sea Cadet Unit 'Black Swan' bend.

Boats, when returning to either St. George's College BC or Walton RC, will continue past the clubs and turn at least 100 metres below the clubs, turning on to the Middlesex side. They will then proceed upstream and 'easy', before moving across towards the clubs, checking that it is safe to do so. Similarly, boats leaving either St. George's College BC or Walton RC will proceed upstream by crossing immediately to the Middlesex side, taking careful note of any boats coming downstream before doing so.

If boats want to go downstream from St. George's College BC or Walton RC, they should ensure that there are no boats coming downstream, before spin turning at the clubs and proceeding downstream.

Weybridge Rowing Club boats will use the stretch of water from the weir down to the canoe club as a light paddling/warm up piece ONLY.

WLARC, when boating, do so upstream and turn at the mouth of the Wey Navigation to go downstream, approaching the weir stream with caution.

WLARC boats, when returning from outings, will lie up adjacent to the Yacht club on the opposite bank and move across the river to their steps at a 45 degree angle, when it is safe to do so. They will give way to boats coming across the weir stream and heading for the Desborough Channel.

WLARC use the pool of water immediately in front of their clubhouse for the instruction of novice and junior scullers.

Thames Valley Skiff Club boat from their clubhouse between 'The Anglers' and Walton RC. Boats should be cautious when approaching this area because, in conditions of slack stream and/or Easterly winds, skiffs tend to swing out and remain perpendicular to the bank.

Clubs must make their own rules about the use the Sunbury Lock Cut. It is often done to give a longer upstream outing but there may be an EA Rule that says it should not be used for practise outings (?). A previous arrangement made with a Lock Keeper some time ago was that racing boats should only use the Cut before 8.00 a.m.

It is suggested that at least 11/2 metres distance is left between blade ends and the bank or moored craft. This will allow canoeists to pass through, whichever direction they are travelling.

These rules were agreed between representatives of all rowing and sculling clubs on the Reach of River Thames in an attempt to prevent accidents

9th January 2002