

# Walbrook Safety Policy

February 2023

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These safety notes are designed to provide essential information to all club members.

Main document by Peter Lukes 2011

Updated by Diane Graham 2016

Updated by Diane Graham and Andy Robinson 2021

Updated by Andrew Nyman 2023

To be read by all  
club members &  
coaching staff

## Welcome

Welcome to Walbrook Rowing Club. We hope you enjoy being a member of the club. You may choose to row socially i.e., for fun or to join one of our competitive squads who enter competitions – senior men, senior women, masters men, masters women or juniors.

We offer various training programmes which you can opt into as much or as little as you like. Please ask the coaches for details. Boat allocation for crew boats – (to be fair to all) is operated by the Men's and Women's Coordinators for competitive and social rowing. Single sculls can be booked via the Google Docs sheet available to all. Boats are reserved for juniors at certain times of the day. In addition, some boats are marked as men/ women only. Please see the notice in the clubhouse for details as this may change, according to the season. Please read these safety notes carefully to protect yourself and others. Also note the requirement for training and the need to pass the Steers' test before you take out a club single, double or quad and that you may only take out a boat unaided if your steersman has passed the club proficiency test.

### Promoting a safety culture and learning from events

It is expected that all incidents are reported online via the British Rowing incident reporting portal – <https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org/>

Before boating or land training all members should ensure the following:

1. All rowers are comfortable with the proposed outing/session
2. All rowers are familiar with the local navigation rules
3. All rowers have appropriate clothing and refreshment
4. All rowers have confirmed the boat fittings are safe and secure including:
  - a. Heel restraints are in order
  - b. Emergency shoes release (laces) are in order
  - c. Compartment hatches are closed and water tight
  - d. Bow ball is present and appropriately secure
  - e. Riggers are secure
  - f. Fin and/or rudder are present before the outing
5. All rowers are familiar with the equipment to be used
6. An appropriate risk assessment is done – Please refer to “Safe to Boat” for guidance.

### Additional resources can be found via British Rowing

- British Rowing Row Safe - <https://www.britishrowing.org/about-us/policies-guidance/rowsafe/>
- British Rowing introducing to coxing / steering - <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/online-learning/coxing/introduction-to-coxing-steering/>
- British Rowing cold water and hypothermia - <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/online-learning/safety/cold-water-and-hypothermia/>
- British Rowing capsize video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6un3TkbQUQ>

## Insurance

But first, for your benefit and that of others, please read this summary of insurance requirements,

The relevant types of insurance include,

- **Personal Accident Insurance:** covers an individual for accidental death or a specified injury to themselves.  
Individuals are responsible for arranging own cover. It is provided as part of British Rowing's membership package. There is a British Rowing age limit on the standard cover of 80yrs. Walbrook has taken out a 'group' policy (no names) with Towergate to cover those who aren't able to arrange their own cover e.g. Learn to Rows (junior and senior), visitors & guests until they can do so. This should not be viewed as an alternative to arranging private cover
- **Equipment Insurance covers damage or loss to club property or equipment used in our activity.** Walbrook takes out insurance with Towergate. The insurance of private equipment is the responsibility of the owner and not the club.
- **Public Liability Insurance:** covers the cost of claims made by members of the public for incidents that occur in connection with our activities. Covers the cost of compensation for personal injuries, loss of or damage to property, and death.  
Walbrook takes out insurance with Howden.
- **Professional Indemnity Insurance:** covers the cost of compensating people for loss or damage resulting from negligent services or advice provided by the committee or by an individual committee member.  
Walbrook takes out insurance with Howden.
- **Insurance relating to the site:** TWC own and manage the site so are responsible for ensuring all equipment and buildings etc. which belong to TWC.

## Crews, Coaches and Steersmen

Boats are allocated to each section to enable coaches and squad co-ordinators to be able to plan outings effectively. If you would like to use a boat "allocated" to another section, then please contact your section coordinator (see Walbrook RC Website) - <https://walbrookrc.co.uk/whos-who/>

No Juniors are allowed out by themselves unless they have specific permission from the Head Junior Coach who will assess their ability and the weather conditions. No Juniors under 16 will be allowed out unless supervised by a coach at any time.

## Making a risk assessment considering the river, weather conditions, experience and boat classes being used – (see Safe to Boat)

Boats are allocated by coaches, squad co-ordinators or experienced crew members. Recording of such allocation is done digitally on the “Boat booking form”

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1EHuXNjcO8iyEQoK-x5vDz41BN7HRJWHfAj3zsWgPH4Y/edit#gid=1909850090>

– if you do not have access, please inform your squad co-ordinator. By recording on this form, you confirm an appropriate risk assessment for the planned outing has been performed.

Club members are assigned to either adult or junior categories and assessed as to their rowing experience. Please check your experience level with your coach, squad co-ordinator or the club notice board. This will help guide you as to whether you can boat or not under certain conditions. A risk assessment is done based on experience, type of boat being used, presence of a safety launch and or coach as well as river and surrounding weather conditions. Electronic risk assessment can be filed via the link

<https://forms.gle/ntVhgcQK2Zxh71Ni7>

Although there is government guidance for people working with groups of children, it is essential in rowing that a separate Risk Assessment is taken for each group of children and that this is reviewed for each training session. Participants under the age of 18, even those qualified as coaches, should be supervised at all times.

1. **Wind** – if you have difficulty getting out of the Creek and there are “white horses” visible, assess whether it is sensible for you to boat/whether you can cope with the conditions. Remember that due to the ‘shape’ of our reach, effectively a ‘U’, that conditions can vary along the entire reach. A good indicator of wind conditions is the surrounding trees. Look at these as you approach the club. In addition to considering the wind whilst on the water, bear in mind that strong wind may also affect your ability to lift the boat on and off the water. Under adverse conditions boats can be blown clean off the trestles, so do not leave them alone in windy weather. Wind speed and direction can be checked online at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/6690829>
2. **Stream conditions** – There are currently four official levels of stream warnings/notifications posted by the Environment Agency. ‘All Clear’. ‘Stream decreasing’ (Yellow), ‘Stream increasing’ (Yellow) and ‘Caution Strong Stream’ (Red). In addition, Walbrook has a “Black” classification which prohibits anyone from boating. The status of any reach on the river can be obtained from either the Lock Gates (note it is Teddington Lock which controls the stream/flow on our reach), or on the Environment Agency web site: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-thames-current-river-conditions>. During spells of inclement weather, it is imperative to ALWAYS CHECK. Make sure you understand the difference. Please obey the notifications on the club notice board for each category. When Red Boards are showing no crews are allowed to boat at night i.e., darkness during conditions of strong stream. The club adopts these policies whether boats belong to the club or are owned privately. Treat the Yellow,

'Stream Increasing' boards as you would Red, it can take one change of the lock gates during the outing to rapidly change stream conditions.

Be particularly conscious of the way boats behave when turning under conditions of strong stream. Leave plenty of room for your turn and anticipate the effect of current.

3. **Proximity to lock** - Do not proceed any further downstream towards the lock than the Lensbury Club boathouse. In faster flowing stream it is advisable to turn close to the end of Trowlock Island.
4. **Stationary structures** - Pay special attention to bridges, islands and moored boats, and do not turn within 100m upstream of a bridge, island or moored vessel, particularly when there is any kind of stream running. Do not turn between the Railway Bridge or Kingston Bridge
5. **Navigation hot spots** - Beware Ditton's Bend and Ravens Ait, as crews tend to be drawn towards the moored boats here on the outside of the bend.
6. **Rain** – make sure that visibility is good – assess whether hypothermia may be a problem especially for coxes
7. **Light/Darkness** –All crews boating during darkness or reduced visibility, should wear reflective tops/high vis tops and no dark clothing, with white solid light on the stern and bow NOT fastened to a rigger. Ideally the beam of light should cover 180°.For consistency darkness is defined as before sunrise or after sunset - see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/6690829>. Head lights are only recommended IN ADDITION to solid white lights on the boat as these are easily missed due to the movement of the person wearing them. Flashing/flickering white lights do NOT meet EA requirements. Red bike lights MUST NOT be used as these can be confused with navigation lights. A club recommended light can be purchased. [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Riverside-Sculling-Drilling-Waterproof-Rechargeable/dp/B07ZVZ7YHX?ref =ast\\_sto\\_dp](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Riverside-Sculling-Drilling-Waterproof-Rechargeable/dp/B07ZVZ7YHX?ref =ast_sto_dp).
8. **Other activity on the river** – check the reach calendar and if there is an event being held on the river and avoid as indicated.
9. **Floating objects in the river** – always keep a good look out, in the winter and under conditions of strong stream large objects such as tree trunks are often carried downstream.
10. **Direction of launching** - Boats must be put in the water with stern pointing towards the Ferry and must not be backed out of the creek under any circumstances.

### Getting boats in and out of the water

- a) One person holding each end of the boat is recommended to make sure that the bows and stern do not hit hard objects and are damaged. For doubles and pairs hold halfway down the stern/bows. Pay particular attention on windy days.
- b) For singles – if in doubt of your ability to carry the single please ask for help so that the bows/stern are not "bounced" on the ground as this causes a significant amount of damage each year.
- c) Make sure that trestles are available before taking the boat off the water.

At the end of your outing please wash down the hull with clean soapy water and rinse off (Do not wash if freezing conditions are suspected. Boats should then be wiped with a sponge and dried with a clean cloth. Please wipe the inside of the boat especially slides to remove dirt particles which then cause the slides to deteriorate. Your outing will also be more effective if using clean slides. This should not be done on the rack but before putting the boat away.

## Getting into and out of the boat

- a) Please **remove shoes** before getting in the boat as shoes damage the connections to rate meters and transfer dirt onto slides etc.
- b) Only stand on the coloured areas of the deck.
- c) Remember that the hatched areas are NOT kit/drink stores - they are buoyancy compartments and so should be firmly closed.
- d) Check that heel restraints are firm and fixed. The heels should never be able to rise above the fixed point of the shoe.
- e) Check that the bow ball is firmly attached – this will help prevent injury to a third party in the event of an accident and help to protect your boat.
- f) Under no circumstances stand on the riggers. Holding the riggers to support the boat is acceptable practise, but do not use the rigger to support the entire weight of the boat.

## General notes on hazards and how to deal with them

- **Anglers** – fishing lines stretch a long way out and they are extremely hard to see. Be aware that mid-June (beginning of fishing season) and mid-March (End of fishing season) are particularly busy periods when large stretches of the reach may contain anglers and greater care to remain safe and avoid confrontation may be required. Do not antagonise anglers, and if a line should become entangled it is preferable to stop and untangle it.
- **Canoes** – are often travelling downstream against the bank and often do not show lights at night.
- **Rowing boats** - do not assume that everyone will be on the correct side of the river – British Rowing recommends that steersmen should look round every 6 strokes.
- **Skiffs** - like all rowing clubs, Skiff clubs too have novices, and the same rules apply as for other rowing boats. Please be aware that during the Autumn, Winter and Spring months the skiff clubs hold several long-distance races on the reach, please check the regatta calendar. Dittons Skiff Club also during these months hold informal races on a Saturday afternoon (to Kingston Bridge) and Sunday morning (from their club around Ravens Ait and back), please be aware these crews are racing and may not be looking as often as they should.
- **Sea Cadets** – often move across the river unexpectedly so in areas where they boat make sure you are looking to the right and left.
- **Sailing boats** – It is advisable for rowing boats to give way to sail (MUST is wrong, navigation rules state each vessel should give way to the less manoeuvrable craft, the sailing clubs advise their crews that although going forward and back rowing boats are good, sideways is not an option). This is often difficult to judge due to the speed and turning ability of these boats, if in doubt proceed slowly and with caution. Make sure you are not carrying out a training piece at firm pressure in areas where these boats are so that you can stop quickly.
- **Motorboats in private ownership and hire boats** – often exceed the speed limit, and do not always obey the rules of navigation. Very often they do not realise there is a speed limit and will cause a large amount of wash which could sink a rowing boat. Take care when passing these boats.
- **Large launches (Turks etc)** – cause a lot of turbulence in the water – take much care when passing these boats especially if they have just completed a turning manoeuvre as this can cause a whirlpool effect and may cause a single to capsize.

They should **sound horns** to indicate their intentions as follows: -

- One short blast – I am altering my course to STARBOARD.
  - Two short blasts – I am altering my course to PORT.
  - Three short blasts – I am going ASTERN.
  - One long blast – I am about to get underway, enter the fairway or I am approaching a blind bend.
  - Five short blasts – I do not understand your intentions – keep clear – I doubt whether you are taking sufficient action to avoid a collision.
  - One long blast followed by 2 short blasts – I am unable to manoeuvre – not under command.
  - IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND the navigation signals, do not attempt to pass one of these launches once a horn has been sounded unless 100% sure of its intentions.
  - For additional signals visit -  
<https://www.thamesvisitormoorings.co.uk/information/boating/sound-signals/>
- **Debris in the river** – there is often debris in the river after rainfall. Keep a look out but often it may not be possible to see it. Be aware that debris may cause you to capsize.

### **Actions in the case of emergency capsize**

All single scullers should have completed a capsize drill before they are allowed out on the water. In the case of capsize “STAY WITH THE BOAT”, swim to the side and try and get out. Try and get on top of the boat to get as much of your body out of the water as you can. For crews the steersman or cox is in charge. Upon surfacing the steersman/cox should call for a head count i.e., “number off from bow”. This ascertains that everyone has surfaced and is conscious. Swim to the side. Try and fix the boat to the side and if you cannot get back in actively do measures to keep warm. Call for help and if you meet a passer-by with a phone contact appropriate emergency service on 999 or the club. If someone is injured or there is an emergency one person should go for help and the rest of the crew should carry out first aid and try to keep warm.

You should watch the British Rowing Capsize Video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6un3TkbQUQ>

### **What to take with you**

- A warm top
- A phone – recommended in a floatable waterproof case
- Emergency contact details committed to memory
- Water to rehydrate especially in hot weather

## Navigating the River – You should always pass other river users “Port to Port”

### General Rules

- Navigating upstream keep to the Middlesex bank (Walbrook). Try to maintain approximately 10-feet between yourself and the bank. Do not leave enough room for another boat to pass between you and the bank unless you are deliberately giving way to let them pass.
- Navigating downstream keep to the Surrey bank (Kingston)
- Avoid any action which is likely to interfere with another crew
- Do not overtake immediately prior to, or whilst passing an obstacle (Bridge, bend, protruding moored boat etc)
- Navigate with consideration for other users including anglers
- Show understanding for others when they are involved in competition
- Be prepared to give way to sail
- Craft have joint responsibility to avoid collision
- Craft in the navigation channel have priority over those crossing it
- Always use lights in poor visibility
- Stroke is responsible for a boat taken out, but the Cox has control. All members of a crew (but particularly the most experienced) are responsible to ensure that Cox's experience or instructions/supervision is adequate.
- If stopping, ideally stay tucked in towards the bank and in single file with other boats to allow passing by.

### No Stopping Zones

These are:

- Along Stevens Ait
- on the bend by the sea scouts (situated on Middlesex bank - downstream of Stevens Ait)
- 0 to 100m downstream of the Rail Bridge
- Between the Bridges
- 0 to 100m upstream of Kingston Bridge
- 100m either side of Raven's Ait
- Upstream from start of Ditton Island to the Mushroom
- 0 to 100m upstream of Hampton Court Bridge

Please take note of the Thames navigation map displayed on the club notice board.

### Upstream to Hampton Court (Via Teddington Lock)

1. Cross the river to go towards Teddington lock, beware other boats on the Middlesex Bank when coming out of the club, take a good look in each direction before crossing the river. You proceed on the Surrey side of centre
2. Proceed to the lock, beware over hanging trees, moored boats, swimmers and other river users.
3. Do not proceed any further than the Lensbury Boathouse.
4. Approaching the lock, beware Skiffs, Canoeist, Sailors and other river traffic arriving from the lock and turning in this area
5. Turning watch out for Lensbury craft



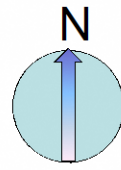
6. Coming back upstream, do not hit Trowlock Island
7. Beware approaching Walbrook for other club craft (Skiffs, Canoes, Rowing boats) and Tamesis Sailing boats.
8. Beware Craft from Steadfast and other sea cadet groups.
9. Passing the club watch out for the piers protruding from Tamesis.
10. Going past Stevens Ait, the river narrows and bends, keep tucked in and look out for sea cadets and larger boats.
11. Along the stretch past Kingston Rowing Club, watch out for other craft crossing the river.
12. Watch out for protruding pole (mooring point)
13. Approaching Kingston Railway Bridge look out for protruding moored boats. Shoot the bridge using the Middlesex Arch. Be careful of strong currents around the bridges during winter.
14. Watch out for moored boats between the railway and the road bridge.
15. After the road bridge be aware of crews which may be stationary.
16. Proceed upstream to Ravens Ait, look out for trees. The bank curves round in a deceptive way.
17. Approaching Ravens Ait, the river narrows and bends, sometimes craft (especially motor craft) proceed downstream on either side of the river. Be aware of this and make sure you have a good look. Be aware of strong currents in this section as the river narrows.
18. Following Ravens Ait, a lot of sailing activity takes place, the water can also be severely affected by wind.
19. Navigate through Ravens Ait on the Middlesex Bank.
20. Keep carefully into the bank avoiding overhanging trees.
21. As the river bends going past the Marina, beware of skiffs and other traffic coming downstream.
22. A local group of sea cadets are based locally and can be found out in large slow-moving craft or canoes.
23. Approaching the Dittons bend watch out for the sand bank which extends out into the river. It is essential to keep tight into the bend when heading upstream. This is one of the most dangerous sections of the river. It is a blind corner and many crews cut this bend on their way back downstream especially if they are carrying out training pieces. They may be more than 2 abreast! Be particularly aware of the summer evenings when Thames Dittons Sea Scouts are on the water, canoes can suddenly appear from behind the permanent moorings on this bend.
24. Along the Thames Ditton Island, be watchful for skiffs from Dittons club. They tend to be out in groups.
25. Passing Dittons, watch out for sailing activity and motorboats coming downstream from the lock. This section of water can be the nicest part of the river! Enjoy!
26. Approaching Hampton Court Bridge the river makes a series of bends pay close attention to these, also be aware that motorboat activity in this area is considerable. At certain times of year (Hampton Court flower show, Dittons Regatta, Thames Ditton Regatta) considerable traffic is operating. Be aware of swimmers especially during summer months.
27. Turn before Hampton Court Bridge to avoid being “washed back down” onto the bridge.

## Navigating the River Downstream from Hampton Court to Teddington Lock

The points above should be noted but on navigating downstream the following additional points should be considered.

- 1) Kingston Grammar School and Dittons Skiff Club – watch out for crews crossing the river coming in to these stages.
- 2) Ditton Bend – don't navigate too wide in strong stream conditions as you may be pulled on to the moored boats. Do not cut the corner round the bend.
- 3) Ravens Ait – navigate to the Surrey side, be aware of the moored boats and the effect they have on narrowing the bend.
- 4) Kingston Bridge – you are recommended to use the Surrey Arch NOT the middle arch. Many motor craft use the middle arch travelling upstream.
- 5) Kingston Rowing Club – watch out for crews crossing from KRC to the Middlesex bank.
- 6) Downstream of Stevens Ait – watch out for crews crossing from Middlesex to the channel leading to KRC.
- 7) To enter Walbrook – row past the entrance and turn downstream and approach the creek entrance from downstream.

# River Thames Teddington Lock to Molesey Lock Navigation Map



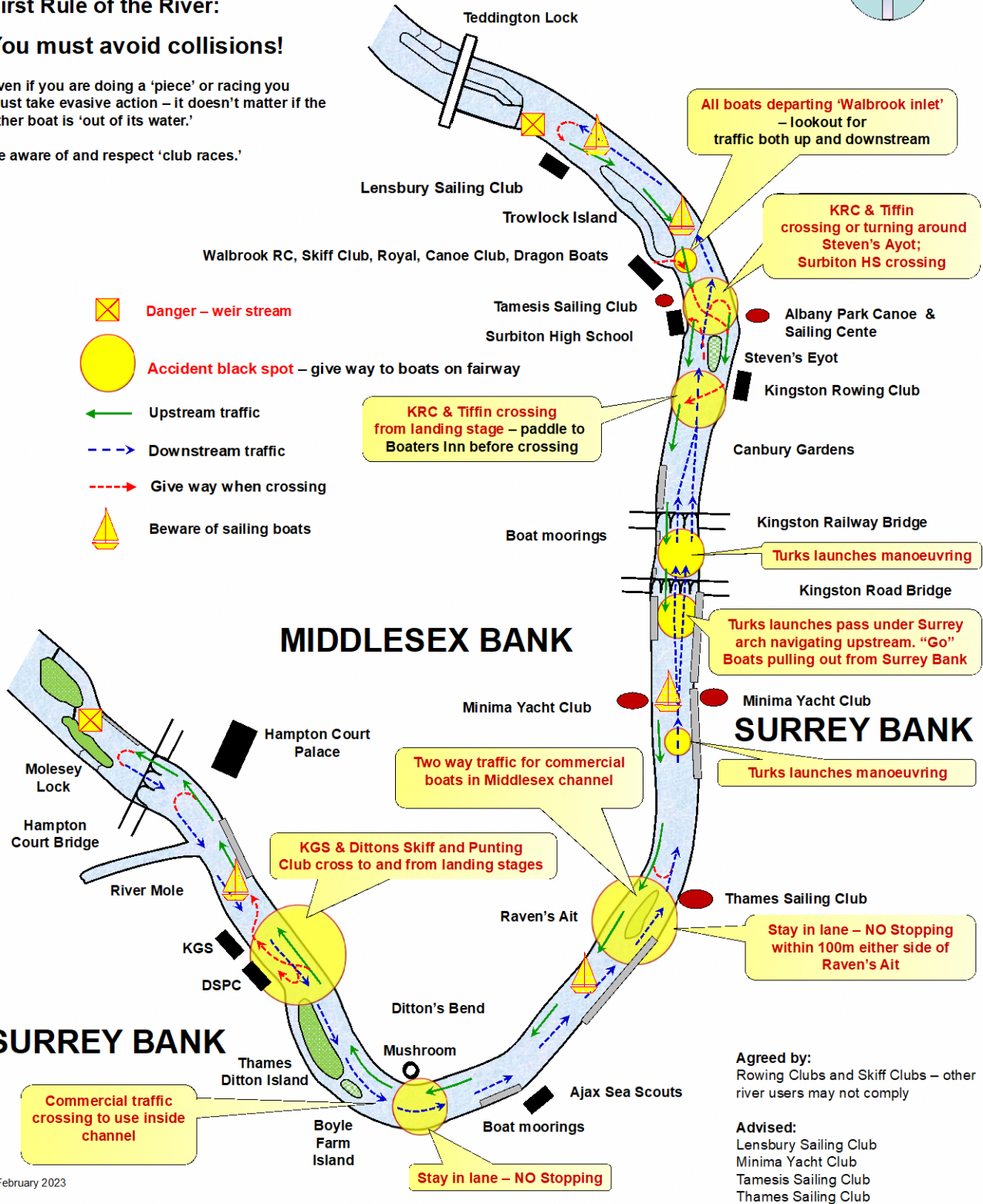
## First Rule of the River:

### You must avoid collisions!

Even if you are doing a 'piece' or racing you must take evasive action – it doesn't matter if the other boat is 'out of its water.'

Be aware of and respect 'club races.'

-  **Danger – weir stream**
-  **Accident black spot** – give way to boats on fairway
-  **Upstream traffic**
-  **Downstream traffic**
-  **Give way when crossing**
-  **Beware of sailing boats**



**Agreed by:**  
Rowing Clubs and Skiff Clubs – other river users may not comply

**Advised:**  
Lensbury Sailing Club  
Minima Yacht Club  
Tamesis Sailing Club  
Thames Sailing Club

## Launch Driving

- 1) No one should use the launch unless they have received instruction and are on the Walbrook “approved launch driver” list.
- 2) Ideally club members using the launch should hold either the RYA level 2 or have demonstrated to the Club Captain or Safety Adviser that they are competent to drive.
- 3) No juniors should drive a launch unless they are on the club “approved launch driver” list.
- 4) No one under the age of 16 shall drive a launch.
- 5) Drivers should make sure they have sufficient petrol, have checked the contents of the launch bag and carry it, make sure they have a paddle
- 6) Drivers should use the “kill cord” at all times.
- 7) The launch is only licenced to exceed the speed limit when it is in attendance with a crew. It is not licenced to exceed the speed limit to “catch a crew”. Please make sure that if your crew goes on ahead that it waits for you. It is only licensed for 2 people when coaching. No one shall steer a boat in any capacity unless they have passed the “Walbrook Proficiency Test” or have a coach in attendance. Launches may only take 3 people when obeying the speed limit (walking pace)

## Taking Out Club Boats Unsupervised

Club members should have passed the Steers’ Proficiency test which has 4 distinct levels:

- Cox
- Single
- Double/pair
- Quad/coxless four

Club members must have passed the relevant part to be allowed out unsupervised in a particular boat. Club members may request a “test” from the Safety Officer, or any person nominated by him/her if he/she is unavailable. The test requires a club member to show a knowledge of the rules of the river (short verbal test) and be able to demonstrate that they follow navigation rules to a high standard and in the case of single scullers can demonstrate that they can embark/disembark rack and re-rack safely and carefully.

## Cold Water - How to increase your chance of survival

The most important advice is whenever possible **stay in your boat**. This does require planning:

- Make sure your boat is fully buoyant, and in good order.
- Know and understand local collision avoidance and navigation rules.
- After dark make sure you have appropriate lighting, wear white/reflective clothing.
- Know and understand local hazards in the water.
- Check up to date local weather forecasts and water state before boating – and don't go out if conditions are not favourable or may become unfavourable before you plan to return.

No matter how good a floater or swimmer you are, sudden unexpected immersion in icy water can cause an initial cold shock that affects muscular co-ordination and impairs the ability to float or swim. Heat loss from immersion can quickly cause hypothermia. Any of these factors can lead to drowning. Everyone has a responsibility to assess and manage the risk of immersion in icy water and to know what to do if it occurs.

### Everyone is expected to:

- Take all precautions to prevent immersion in the first place.
- Have studied the effects by completing the British Rowing Cold Water & Hypothermia online learning module <https://www.rowhow.org/course/view.php?id=165> and the Safety Alert - Cold Water Kills <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-Cold-Water-Kills-1.pdf>.
- Know and watch for the symptoms of mild hypothermia (such as complaints of feeling cold and tired, poor comprehension, disorientation, poor concentration, irrational behaviour, violent outbursts and confusion).
- Understand the effects of cold-water immersion and hypothermia.
- Be prepared for those effects if immersed in icy water.
- Wear clothing appropriate to the conditions.
  - Not dry robes, denims, jeans or heavy cotton clothing at any time when afloat
  - Not hoodies when rowing or sculling as the thumbs tend to catch in the pocket, or when coxing in a bow-loader as it could become entangled and impede a rapid exit.
- Report incidents to the club and British Rowing using the online incident reporting system <https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org/>