

THE SCHOOLS HEAD OF THE RIVER RACE 2025

Tuesday 25th March START TIME 13.00

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL COACHES, COXSWAINS AND STEERS TO READ

This year's the race should be run from the usual start **just below Chiswick Bridge** (start timing taken from the bank) and will finish in line with the **Ranelagh Sailing Club flagpole** on the Putney Embankment.

Before and on race day club coaches and club captains must ensure that their crews are fully briefed and competent to race in the conditions likely to be experienced on the Tideway. On the day of the event, every individual participant must, with the help where appropriate of a responsible adult, carry out his or her own personal risk assessment before boating. That risk assessment must include their fitness, health, equipment, and technique to determine whether or not they are able to race in the conditions as they find them. **Crews must be adequately dressed for the prevailing conditions and keep warm clothing in the boat in a waterproof bag for waiting before the race and the return paddle**. Control commission will not permit a crew to go afloat that is inadequately dressed.

CREWS RACE AT THEIR OWN RISK, THE RACE ORGANISERS ACCEPT NO LIABILITY FOR ACTIONS OF THE CREWS OTHER THAN WHEN DIRECTLY INSTRUCTED BY THE HEAD ORGANISERS AND MARSHALS.

Coaches are reminded that radio communication with crews during the race is strictly forbidden, but we would like **every crew to carry at least one waterproof mobile phone in case of emergency**. As a result of previous altercations between cyclists and pedestrians, **following crews by bicycle on the towpath is forbidden**. It is the club's responsibility to inform parents and supporters that cycling alongside a racing crew may result in that crew's disqualification and that no spectators will be permitted to stand on Hammersmith Bridge

Parking in Putney

As in previous years, a one-way system will be in operation at Putney with severely restricted parking. Trailers should be parked as far upriver as possible or in trailer bays on the host boathouse side of the river.

No large buses or coaches are allowed onto the embankment at Putney although the Road is not closed to the public. Buses must drop off on the Lower Richmond Road. All crews MUST be warned to be vigilant when crossing the Embankment road with boats and oars.

NUMBERS Boat numbers will be available at Ranelagh Sailing Club on the Putney Embankment for all crews registered as boating at Putney or unknown. Other numbers will be distributed to **FIVE** other locations in the morning in school/club bags 1/ **St. Pauls** [crews listed boating there] 2/ **Fulham Reach BC** [for all Hammersmith area boating crews] 3/ **Emanuel** [for crews listed as Emanuel/Cygnet/BBLRC] 4/ **Tideway Scullers** [for crews listed as boating from TSS and PTRC] 5/ **Quintin**, for MAABC and ULBC and Brentford BC

Please return all slot numbers to Westminster School Boat house in Putney

If not returned, Empacher slot numbers will be charged for at the replacement cost of £15.

Crews will be given **FOUR** numbers **all of which must be used**. It is the crew's responsibility to make sure that their numbers are firmly attached and clearly displayed.

- **One** number will be an **Empacher type plastic slot number**.
- The **second** will be a waterproof paper number, to be pinned to the *coxswain's* back with four fixings.
- The **third** will be a waterproof Paper number, to be pinned on to bow's back, with four safety pins.
- The Fourth number is a vinyl stick on number that should be affixed to the sax board next to bow on the bow side of the boat, to be seen by the timing team in the Putney moorings [Surrey side].

Every cox must be given a copy of these instructions by a master / coach and a check made by simple test that he/she has read and understands them. Other crewmembers should also read and understand. They must also have a copy of the full course map, the start marshalling map (within the body of these notes) and the finish area map (which is the one at the end of these notes).

COXES – Marshals and umpires on the bank may ask you questions about these instructions as you take your boats to the river. You must be able to demonstrate that you have read and understood them.

Before boating, Masters in charge make sure your coxes know how to navigate properly when there is no river closure. Study all the links below for information:

- <http://www.boatingonthethames.co.uk/>
- <http://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/safety/tideway-navigation/>
- PLA code <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHeJ0M3L4ok>
- And helpful HERR video ! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfDvLHK58Ig>

You should also ensure that your coxes and crews know that:

- That the river closure is from 12.00 until 16:00
- or until then end of the race if earlier and the normal river rules apply before and after. Note that *“Every master of a vessel (of whatever age) is legally responsible for their actions.”*
- Where your marshalling position is (see instructions and plan below)
- How you are going to reach it complying with the navigation requirements before, during and after the river closure.
- That if you are rowing back upriver after 17:00 that you have PLA compliant lights available in your boats (and ensure they are used properly)

If you are a cox and, in any doubt, as to the course you should follow, you **must** ask your coach.

Coxes must always wear a lifejacket or buoyancy aid when afloat.

When afloat, remember that you are on a tidal river. The tide will be running out for about 2 hours before you go afloat, and you must always check that you have enough water under your hull and

bank-side blades. This is particularly important as you wait for the start, as the water level will be dropping beneath you, and rocks etc. may lie just below the surface of the water. Beware of the danger of being swept downstream on to **Bridges and bankside moorings**. This is particularly important for crews marshalling near Barnes Bridge which has a new protruding bridge.

When marshalling, you must obey the marshals' instructions at all times. In addition, when you have reached your marshalling position, you must ensure that you do not drift up or downstream with wind and tide. Try to maintain your position relative to the bank. **You may find that this requires almost constant paddling on if the wind and tide are strong and at appropriate points you can be in contact with the bank with one set of blades (say by a bush, tree or other support) and only need to paddle on with one or two persons on the other side. The closer you are to the bank, the less paddling will be required.**

BEFORE BOATING:

Make sure that before you take your boats to the water your blades are close to the point you are going to put the boat on the water but not in the way of where people will walk.

Make sure that your boat will pass all Control Commission inspections – bow ball secure, heel restraints properly fixed, hatch covers secure, boat ID clear and correct, cox wearing buoyancy etc. If your boat fails any of these checks, you will be taken out of the queue for boating and you may miss the start of the race.

Make sure you have plenty of warm, dry clothing if it is cold, wet or windy kept in a drybag .

PROCEEDING TO THE START

Crews are warned to leave their boathouses in good time - allowing 60 minutes to get to the start from Putney and 40 minutes from Hammersmith to allow for congestion of crews on the river.

Crews in Divisions 1[pink], 3[blue] and 5[green] proceeding to the start from Hammersmith and below should proceed, and stay, on Surrey bank until they reach their marshalling point. Crews in Divisions 2[yellow], 4[orange] , 6[White] should proceed on Surrey bank until they reach the red buoy at Chiswick Pier at which point they should cross to Middlesex and proceed up river to their marshalling points.

NO CREW should cross the river after **12.50** –any crews proceeding upstream from Hammersmith after this time will be instructed to stay on the Surrey bank and may be started at the end of Division 4.

With 300 crews afloat all are asked to be alert to the needs of other crews at all times. From **12.50** the centre of the river between CHISWICK BRIDGE and PUTNEY BRIDGE must be kept clear for crews racing. **ONLY CREWS RACING AND PROCEEDING TO START UNDER MARSHAL'S ORDERS ARE ALLOWED TO PROCEED DOWNSTREAM (towards Putney) AFTER 12.50. ANY OTHER CREW DOING SO WILL BE DISQUALIFIED.**

This means any crew boating upstream of their marshalling position must allow themselves sufficient time when boating to arrive downstream of their marshalling position and turn into the side facing upstream before **12.50**. Any boat attempting to start other than in its correct position without having received instructions from a Marshal will be **disqualified**.

START & MARSHALLING

This will be on time and without reference to absentees. There may be a short pause between Divisions at the discretion of the marshals.

Although the marshalling instructions may look complicated, they are not. Essentially each division (group of crews) marshal with the highest number in the group furthest upstream – this might seem a bit odd to competitors in Divisions three four five and six (below Chiswick Bridge) as, when you are first marshalling you will think you are furthest from the start in your group. YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE – so don't try to move upriver unless you are told to.

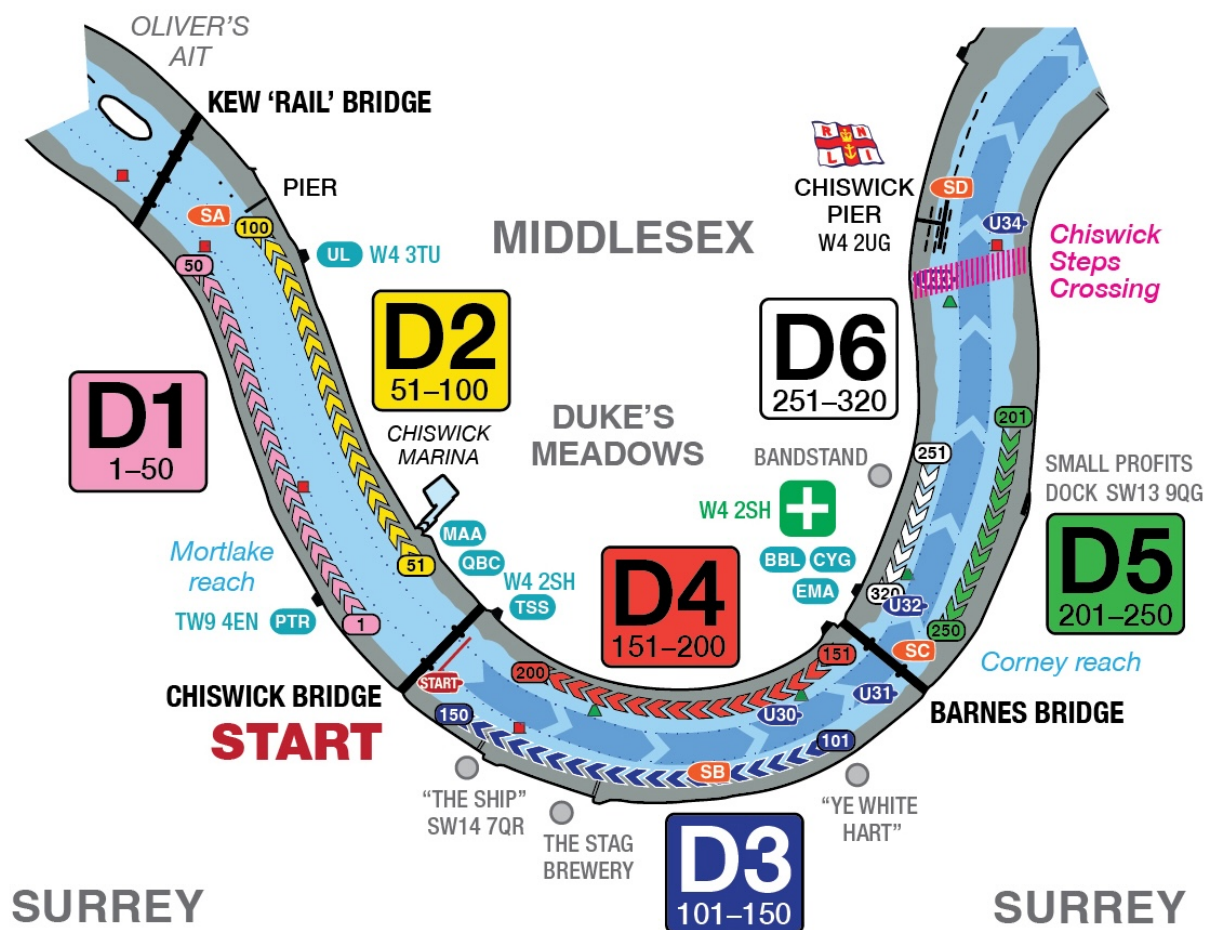
This is because the whole group will be told to move up together so that the crew with the lowest number in each group will be closest to the start when you are told to turn.

Crews will be in the marshalling positions shown on the map at 12.50. It is imperative that crews in the first two Divisions are in place above Chiswick Bridge at this time. Division one will turn at 12.55. While marshalling, crews must keep as close to the bank as possible. Boats must maintain their position against the tide and neither allow themselves to become bunched together or allow gaps of more than one length of clear water to open up between them. Once in the marshalling area, crews will be under marshals' instructions who must be obeyed at all times.

Please proceed carefully, keeping a very good look out when in the Marshalling area.

No crew is to undertake any bursts of full pressure anywhere within the marshalling area or you risk time penalty or disqualification.

Specific details on how crews should marshal are set out later in these instructions but have a look at the map first:



This is how it works:

Two important points; when marshalling make sure you do not get too close to the Bridges when you are sitting still – there should be a good clear zone. As you approach the start make sure you leave a small gap to the crew in front of you – there is no point in overlapping, it will slow you down and risk you not being timed.

Now, read all of the following not just those instructions relating specifically to your division.

Division One: Numbers' 1-50 pink , Surrey

At **12.50** marshals will sound sirens for approximately five seconds to signal tops off and ready to turn. Crews must not turn until ordered to do so by the turning marshals.

On being told to do so Division One will turn under instructions from the marshals in launches who will work upriver from Crew No 1 to Crew 50. Crews should not turn until told to do so but when told should turn by moving their bows into the stream and turning towards the middle of the river.

Once turned crews should proceed downstream in numerical order to the Starter at Chiswick Bridge who will start them by saying "Number ... Go!" Timing will begin shortly after the Starter says "Go". All crews will have a flying start. Boats are to be closed up until there is only one length of clear water between them at the start. **On no account are boats to be overlapping when crossing the start line.**

Division Two: Numbers' 51 –100 yellow, Middlesex

Crews will have seen how Division 1 was turned so should know what to do!– read on.....

Tops off on second siren. The order to turn will not be given until crew 50 (the last crew in Div 1) is proceeding downstream. Then crew 51 will be turned as soon as crew 50 has passed. Again, do not turn until told to by the marshals who will work up river from crew 51 to 100.

Division Three: Numbers' 101-150 blue, Surrey

Once division 1 has turned, this division (3) will immediately proceed upstream, passing under Chiswick Bridge, to take the place vacated by the now turned Division 1 (upstream of Chiswick Bridge with 101 nearest the Bridge).

On the third siren this division (3) will tops off and ready to turn. A marshal will give the instruction to turn and will again work upriver from crew 101-150.

Division Four: Numbers' 151-200 orange, Middlesex

Once division 2 has turned, this division (4) will immediately proceed upstream to take its place (upstream of Chiswick Bridge with 151 nearest the Bridge).

On the fourth siren this division (4) will tops off and ready to turn. A marshal will give the instruction to turn and work upriver from crew 151-200

Division Five: Numbers' 201-250 green, Surrey

Marshals downstream of Barnes Bridge with 250 nearest the Bridge

Once division 3 has moved up, this division (5) will immediately proceed upstream to take its place.

On the fifth siren this division (5) will tops off and ready to turn. A marshal will give the instruction to turn and work upriver from crew 201-250

Division Six: Numbers' 251-332 White , Middlesex

Marshals from below Emanuel BC to the bandstand downstream of Barnes Bridge with 332 outside Emanuel Once division 4 has moved up, this division (6) will immediately proceed upstream to take

its place . On the sixth siren this division (6) will tops off and ready to turn. A marshal will give the instruction to turn and work upriver from crew 251-332.

DURING THE RACE

The River is closed during the race so, contrary to the normal navigation rules, you **are** allowed to follow the deep water line in the middle of the river, **which is the fastest course**.

If you are being overtaken, you must move out of the way of the overtaking crew leaving them with the best stream. Any crew impeding an overtaking crew will be liable to a time penalty or to disqualification.

There are a number of marker buoys along the course. They are about a metre tall and are green on the cox's left hand side and red on the cox's right hand side. You must steer to the Surrey (right as the cox views it) side of the green buoys and to the Middlesex (left as the cox views it) side of all the red buoys. **Any crews passing the wrong side of these buoys may well be disqualified.** Anyway – there is no point in going the wrong side of the buoys as it is a much slower route down the course.

Towards the end of the course there is a line of moored boats marked by a very big black and yellow buoy (looks like a big oil drum on its side). You must pass these boats and buoy at least five metres to the Middlesex side (left as cox sees it).

If a member of your crew falls overboard, you **must stop and help them**. Shout loudly to any crews behind if you do. Following crews must take avoiding action. If help is needed for any reason, the crew should raise an arm and shout to the nearest marshal, safety boat or official to attract attention. All parts of the river are within vision of an official or marshal.

There is a good chance there will be driftwood in the river on race day. If this gets stuck in your fin or rudder and stops your steering, you must pull into the bank in a safe position and call; the nearest marshal or safety boat – there will always be one in line of sight. IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES MUST YOU ATTEMPT TO CONTINUE RACING (no point because if you did you would be disqualified anyway!)

There is a very, very small chance that the race may have to be stopped whilst you are racing. If this happens you will be told by the nearest marshal who will be very obvious because he will be waving a red flag and shouting at you through a megaphone to **STOP**. If this happens you must stop – checking all around you to check that it is safe to do so and then **listen for instructions**. It is most likely you will be told to move to the side of the river and told to stop awaiting further instructions. As long as it is safe to do so you should get your crew to put tops on as soon as possible and to keep warm.

AT THE FINISH

The finish is marked with a **FINISH BANNER ON THE WALL** on the Middlesex (left as the cox sees it) side of the river. **At the finish, you must keep paddling (for about 20 strokes) to avoid impeding following boats.** You should then turn, as instructed by Finish area marshals, BEFORE Putney Bridge using the route shown on the Finish diagram below.

Under no circumstances should you:

- Cut through the line of moored boats.
- Turn so close to Putney Bridge that you might be swept onto the pillars of the Bridge
- Cut into the queue of boats waiting to pass behind the last moored boat .

All of the above actions could lead to a serious accident and your disqualification.

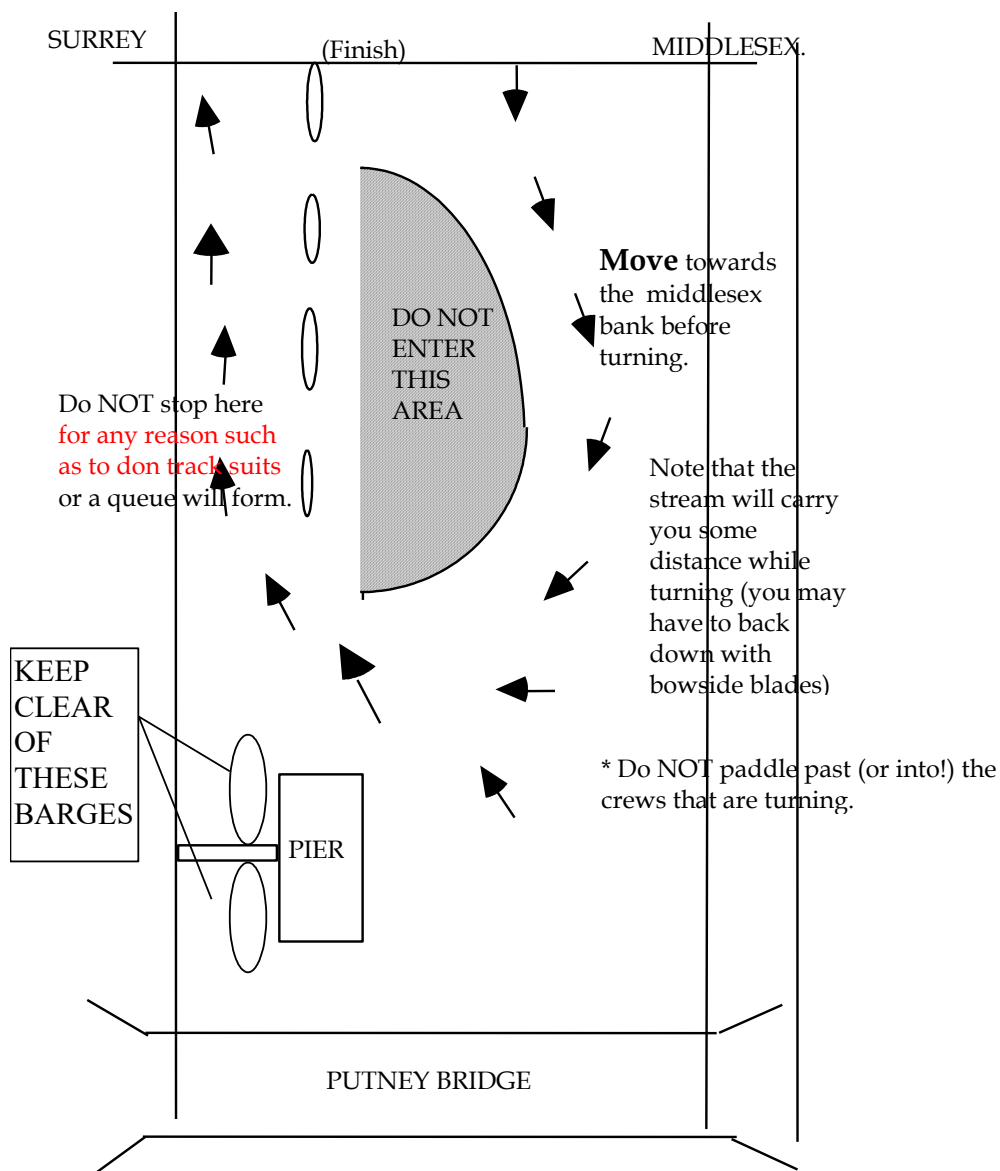
Having turned around you should return upstream on the Surrey (Putney – left as the cox sees it) side of the river passing inside the line of moored boats. You must keep well into the bank, away from other crews still racing. If you impede a racing crew, you will be disqualified.

If you are returning to points above Putney then you should keep close to the Surrey (left as the cox sees it) all the way up, and through, Hammersmith Bridge. You must stay in single file and do not overtake. You may have to queue to get through Hammersmith Bridge. Do not stop to put tops on until after Barn Elms Boat house or when disembarking. (when you do stop to put tops on move well into the bank). Crews returning to Fulham Reach Boat house will be instructed by a marshal to cross the river opposite the Crabtree **ONLY** when it is safe to do so.

By the time you get back to Hammersmith Bridge the river may be very low and you might have to pass through the centre arch. Listen to the instructions from the Marshal below the bridge.

Above Hammersmith Bridge crews must stay on the Surrey side of the marker buoys and if wanting to cross to a Hammersmith side [Middx] boathouse should **stop and await instructions to cross from the marshal who will be stationed at this point. Crews wanting to cross to Sons / Latymer should move up ABOVE ST PAULS and await instruction to cross.** Crews going further up river should continue upriver on the Surrey bank until you reach the crossing point at Chiswick Pier where you will be told when it is safe to cross.

LOOK AT THE FINISH AREA BELOW!



If you fail to turn before the pier, you may be instructed, by a marshal, to paddle through the bridge before you turn.

HAVE A GOOD RACE (NOW LOOK AT THE MAPS AND READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS AGAIN!)

If You need to Scratch Crews Please do so on BROE or email david.riches@westminster.org.uk

Results will be posted on the event website ASAP www.shorr.org.ok

Prizes can be collected from Ranelagh Sailing Club (with guest prizegivers and 2024 Olympic medallists Freddie Davidson and Lola Anderson) from the finish of the category until one hour after the end of the race.