



## Navigating Abingdon Reach

### Putting the boat in the water

Boats should always be put into the water with the bows pointing upstream. (At Abingdon this basically means that the boats go out from the stage with the bows pointing to the left.) Check the boat as it comes out of the boathouse to see if it needs to be turned round.

### Returning to the stage

The safest way of getting back onto the stage is upstream, so go past the end of it and then spin. Down by the school boathouse is best. Stop the boat; check that it is clear to begin the manoeuvre. If clear then spin the boat so that you end up facing upstream on the correct side of the river. Return upstream until you are in a position that will let you approach the downstream end of the stage at about 30–45 degrees. Wait there till it is safe to cross the river. If there is a following wind then you need to allow yourself more room! When clear cross the river slowly and when you are about a boat length away ask the crew to **“Easy oars”** apply right rudder and get 3/5&7 to hold it up lightly (harder if necessary). Make sure that strokeside lift their oars onto the stage! Only get one or two people (preferably bow) to grab the side as you land, otherwise the riggers drop and bounce off the stage.

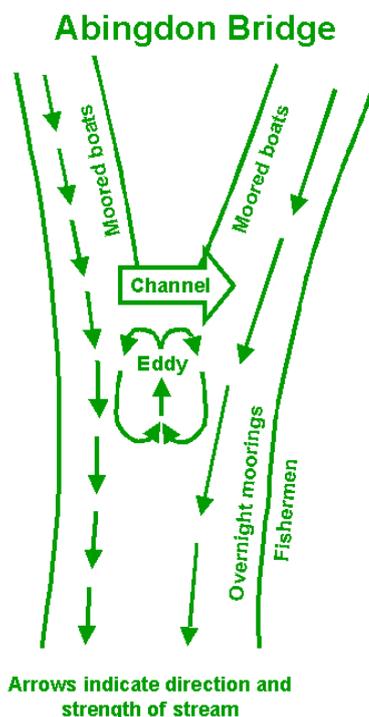
### Special considerations for the reach from Abingdon Lock (upstream) to Sutton

#### Courtenay Weir (Downstream)

The majority of outings at Abingdon are restricted to the part of the reach downstream of Abingdon Bridge. However occasionally, particularly when undertaking steady state training the full reach may be used. However it is not practical to try and navigate Abingdon Bridge when there is a lot of river traffic. The area beyond the Bridge is also used to launch crews for the Head Race.

#### Wilsham Road Reach.

As mentioned earlier we boat upstream and so when we leave the raft the first imperative is to cross over to the correct side of the river and keep to the cox's right. Check that it is safe to begin this manoeuvre before pushing off. Check fore and aft for river traffic. At the upstream end of the Wilsham Road reach there is a green buoy which marks some shallows. Our boats have a very shallow draught and so it is safe to pass to the right of this buoy. However, be aware that cruisers and large craft may well pass to the left of this buoy when travelling upstream. Remember this when you are coming back down! Once round the bend at the top of the reach you can see the point of the Island at Abingdon Bridge. There is a blue sign on the point of the island indicating the navigation channel which is to the right. The normal turning point is just downstream of this sign. So head for it and easy in the middle with your bows pointing at the sign. Do not get too close as there is a back eddy here which will draw you on to the point of the island. See diagram.



The stream here comes from both sides of the island. The faster stream is from the right hand side. River traffic also comes from this side. Get the crew to adjust, remove clothing or discuss outing here now, before spinning the boat. When spinning the boat, first check for other river traffic and if clear spin the boat by turning the bows into the stream. This will help in making a quick turn (trying to back the stern against the stream is much harder and will take a lot longer to complete the turn). During the fishing season there are often fishermen in this area. If there are fishermen then avoid loitering where they are trying to fish. Turn, move away at once and find a place that is both safe and away from fishermen. They have as much right to use the river as you do. When travelling back down the reach and you approach the bend remember that you may find a cruiser apparently on the wrong side of the river as a result of the green buoy. Also, keep an eye out for traffic moving to or from the fuel station at Red Line Outboard Services at the old ferry crossing point at the top of the reach.

Another hazard on this reach is the Abbey Sailing Club. The Sailing Club hold sessions on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. On Sunday Morning at 11:00 they have a start of a sailing regatta. The area opposite the Sailing Club is well worth avoiding at this time. If going afloat around this time it is advisable to turn immediately and proceed downstream. Downstream of Abbey Sailing Club keep an eye out for boats leaving or landing at Abingdon Rowing Club and Abingdon School Boat Club. The Canoe Clubs also boat from this area and at times there are a number of 'learner drivers' mustering off the Rowing Club stage.

## **The Bends.**

Do not cut the corner at any of the bends. It is essential that all craft leave a navigation channel. If you fail to do so you could come face to face with an eight travelling at full speed. The result of such a head on collision is likely to involve a number of crew members visiting the A&E department at the Radcliffe! At the first bend (to the left) keep an eye out for boats leaving or entering Abingdon Marina. The entrance is on the right hand side at the end of the row of houses. At the second bend (to the right opposite the wooden bridge) keep tucked into the bank but not too tightly as there are shallows and submerged branches. Be aware of the possibility of a boat stopped or worse still coming up on the wrong side of the river just round the bend and out of your immediate view. You may have to practice your emergency stop routine! Many crews spin here if they are working on the Culham Reach. The Sailing Club often has a buoy situated between the bends as part of their sailing course. It is large and orange. It is best to give it a wide berth. If you have to pass close to it then it is best to steer so that the buoy passes under the oars and riggers at the swivel. When travelling back upstream do not cut the corner at the wooden bridge but leave a good navigation channel until you can see that the course is clear. At the Marina bend keep your bows tucked in to the bend, especially when there is a stream running. Failure to start your turn early and keep your bows tucked in will result in a forced landing at Abingdon School. The force of the stream on your bows will cause you to go very wide and end up on the wrong side of the river. Be aware of the possibility of crews turning opposite ASBC or queuing to land at ARC. You can alert yourself to the presence of sailing boats by looking across the meadows for sails.

## **The Culham Reach**

On the Culham Reach there is a marked course of 1000m marked in 250m sections. All the markers are on the right hand side of the river as you point downstream. The markers are trees on the bank with their trunks painted white. The upstream marker is on a big tree just upstream of the reed bed and under the electricity cables. The 250m marker is in a shrub at the water's edge. The 500m mark is on a tree trunk downstream of the outflow pipes from the water treatment works. The 750m mark is on the last big tree before the danger sign and is about 100m upstream of the danger sign. The 1000m mark is on a tree in a recess about 150m downstream from the danger sign.

There are three main dangers on this reach and one other hazard to be wary of in windy conditions. Starting from the upstream end of the reach:

- The first hazard is the reed bed. Avoid getting blown onto this in windy conditions. It is extremely difficult to get off again!
- The second is in the bay past the reed bed where there is a large tree which has fallen into the river. It should not present a danger to a coxed boat but could trap a coxless boat.
- The third hazard is the danger sign which is located in the middle of the river opposite the lock cut.

You should always pass to the right of this sign. Many crews spin here so look out for stationary boats. When spinning here do so downstream of the sign and make sure that you cross to the correct side of the river on completion of your manoeuvre. It is unsafe to spin upstream of this sign on two counts. Firstly, you are right in the navigation channel for traffic entering and leaving the lock cut. Secondly, in windy or fast stream conditions there is a risk of getting swept onto the sign. This may well have catastrophic results. The final danger is encountered when travelling back upstream past the danger sign. Beware river traffic exiting the lock cut. Traffic emerging from here will not have seen you coming. In the first place they cannot see left down into the weir stream before leaving the cut and secondly the junction is so shaped that you will almost be coming up behind them. Always expect traffic and be prepared to both stop your crew quickly and alert others to your presence. In the summer of 2006 the new entry point of the Berks and Wilts Canal was dug. This is located between the 750m mark and the danger sign, almost opposite the lock cut. Whilst this does not link up with anything at the moment there may be the occasional boat that goes up to investigate it. When in full use this will give rise to a major hazard as there will be effectively a crossroads in the river.

## **The weir stream.**

Downstream of the Culham reach there remains about 500m of navigable river. The river bends to the left. Do not cut this corner as you may well encounter other crews coming upstream. Be aware of trees sticking out at the downstream end of the bend. The river now wiggles a bit before you pass into the basin above Sutton Courtenay Weir. Stop here and spin immediately so that you are pointing upstream. It is not recommended to go past the first weir, particularly if there is any stream running. As you make your way back up stream you will pass the start of Abingdon Head course (The first big tree on the right as you leave the basin). Avoid going into the bay on your right as this will lead to difficulty in negotiating the right hand bend into the Culham reach. The heavier the stream the more the difficulty. Keep well tucked into the bend to avoid oncoming traffic but avoid getting into the reed bed.

## **Getting into the bank in difficult circumstances**

A technique for moving a boat sideways which can be useful on occasions is when a member of the crew reaches round and takes the handle behind her/him. By paddling on with this blade you can make the boat go sideways. For instance to make radical adjustments when getting onto a stakeboat use 2 to paddle on with Bow's blade in order to move the bows to the left (conversely 3 to paddle with 2's blade to move the bows to the right).

