

# Circulation and Spinning patterns for rowing clubs along the Isis Stretch of the Thames: Information for Falcon Boat Club members

Reference map of the standard rowing section of the Thames.



## **Knowing the rules and keeping the river safe.**

Travel on all rivers and waterways are governed by international laws. Within these rules there are local rules which allow for safe use of particular sections. In order to keep the waterways safe the rules in place are designed much like rules of the road with specific rules for direction and side of travel. Some of these rules are specific to rowers, some are specific to motorised boats, while others are meant to be followed by all river users. However, not everyone necessarily knows these rules, or if they do, they may not follow these rules. It is important to recognise that we all have a duty of care not just to ourselves but other river users whether or not they know the rules or understand what they are doing.

Given the numbers of rowers on this small stretch of water, it important that all rowers follow these rules. Where it has been necessary to do so, we have made aware other rowers and river users' of how we operate. We advise all our rowers to follow this advice if they sense a situation may become dangerous.

When in doubt:

- Do not take risks—stop your boat if it is safe to do so, or direct your boat to a safe area in which to stop.
- Be vocal and loud about your location so that other river users are aware of you, even if you think they have seen you.
- Watch and wait if necessary before proceeding.

Don't be right just because you are in the right; instead, be safe first as this will make you both right and safe.

## **General Circulation Pattern.**

When traveling along a river you should keep to the right, much like you would if driving on the continent (France or Germany for example).

## **Turning the boat round (spinning)**

Technically speaking, you are allowed to turn your boat around at any time. Doing so still requires you to be certain that it is safe to do so. If the river is not very busy, absolute rules of turning do not apply with the same strictness as they would when the river is busy. However, unless there is an emergency situation, when the river is busy, and to avoid additional congestion, spinning should take place only at certain places. These are listed in more detail below. Knowing what other river users are likely to do and what their rules are will help you make better decisions when you are looking to spin.

The two principle points for spinning are:

- 1) The Head of the River—no. 5 on the map above.
- 2) The Lock, also referred to as the Isis Boat House—no. 6 on the map above.

When spinning at these points, if the river is busy, no coaching should take place, particularly at the Head of the River. A short explanation of what is wanted can be imparted, but if you need to discuss technical matters, move the boat away from the spinning point and find a suitable place to discuss what is needed.

Spinning takes place as high up as possible, particularly at the Head and if you wish to spin with another crew, ask them and make sure they are aware of your desire to spin with them.

At the Lock, town crews spin below the areas where college crews spin. This means that there can be a hold up in passing through the area beside the Isis Boat House, and again when returning. Many college crew do not check if anything is coming upstream before they begin to spin meaning that town crews can be impeded as they come round the corner to the area in from of the Isis Boat House. When the junior crews are out, their marshals should help with making sure this doesn't cause issues—see below for more details.

### **Additional points for spinning are:**

- 1) Longbridges or Tim's (7&8 on the map above).
- 2) Just beside Falcon Boat Club (7&8 on the map above).
- 3) Between Donnington Bridge and opposite Salter's Boat Yard (16 on the map above).

As of October 2024, the college crews spin at 4 places along the river, dependant upon the flag that is in place.

Under Green flag, college crews are able to spin at:

- 1) The head of the river
- 2) Longbridges
- 3) Falcon Boat Club
- 4) The Lock

If the flag moves to Light Blue or above, Longbridges is removed from the options to spin, meaning that only experienced coxes area able to go out with crews containing a majority of experienced rowers. When this happens, the spinning area for the downstream end of the stretch moves above the Isis Boat House (4 on the map) to between two orange and white marker posts, the upstream one being marked at 17 on the map, and the downstream one being located on the town side of the river at Haystacks Corner (13 on the map).

As the colour of the flag changes from Green to Light Blue, Dark Blue to Amber, and finally to Red, additional restrictions come into play for the college crews, much as they do for our own club. Only experienced crews with experienced coxes are allowed out on Dark Blue, and only Senior Crews and Senior Coxes are allowed out on Amber flag. No college Crew is allowed out on Red Flag.

### **Notes for Falcon Junior Rowing Squad Spinning:**

The juniors follow the same rules as the adults for spinning, but where they spin will be dependant on how many marshals are available to provide cover along the river.

#### **Full Compliment of 4 Marshals:**

This means the full reach of the river is open to the juniors and spinning will take place usually at the Head of the river and The Lock. The Head of the river is visible from the top Marshal, located opposite St Anne's Boat house, although it is likely that a coach will be present when crews are spinning.

The spinning at the Lock is watched by a marshal who's job includes informing college crews of boats coming upstream from our spinning point and asking them to hold from spinning until the crew traveling upstream from around the corner have passed; college crews should not spin if there is river traffic coming upstream, instead waiting until the crews have passed as those coming upstream from the lock have right of way.

If there are junior members with less experience, they will likely spin at Falcon and use the lower reach between the club and the lock. Vigilance for crews coming through The Gut must be maintained at all times, and athletes should row in a shorter line to cross the river rather than a more diagonal line in order not to row into traffic coming upstream. Their bank rider, should take care to check what is coming through the Gut before they cross, and the Marshal at Falcon Boat Club should be in communication with The Gut Marshal and in a position to see as far up The Gut as possible in order to inform the athletes when it is safe to cross. The athletes should also be aware of traffic traveling upstream by looking themselves, and checking as they cross for traffic coming downstream, whatever the marshal may tell them.

#### **If only 3 Marshals present:**

When only 3 marshals are available, the juniors' are restricted to spinning between Donnington Bridge and Salter's Boat Yard, under the watchful eye of the marshal based at Falcon Boat House. This means that college

crews should be made aware that there will be boats spinning at a place they are not used to seeing boats spin. It is good practice for the coaches and marshals to inform college crews to expect spinning at these areas if there are only 3 marshals on duty during a junior outing.

**If only 2 Marshals present:**

In this scenario, rowing for the juniors will take place either above The Gut or on the lower reach, from Falcon to the Lock depending on the number and ability of the rowers involved in the outing. The more experienced the rowers, the more likely to go above the gut. Again, care must be taken when spinning at Falcon and crossing, with the coach or bank rider and the Falcon Boat Club marshal taking an important role in making sure that crossing is done in a safe and careful manner so as not to crash into traffic travelling either up or downstream.

**If fewer than 2 marshals present:**

Outings will depend on the number of coaches and the number of boats which go out, their ability and how safe. Spinning will usually be directed by the coach but will usually be at the standard places.

All junior crews returning from above the Gut to the boat house have the option to spin at Donnington Bridge before going in.

**Some important background information regarding College coxes and spinning points.**

Coxes are regulated and trained through the Oxford University Rowing Committee's (OURCs) training pathway. All have to register and pass a swim test, which has to be repeated every three years. They are not allowed through The Gut until they have coxed regularly for at least three weeks. They must have a coach or bank rider on the towpath with them at all times. Novice coxes remain novices until they have been coxing for one year or they can demonstrate the knowledge and skill required to progress to the next level by passing the assessment.

To progress to Experienced or Senior status, they are assessed by the Captain of Coxes or a delegated member of the OURCs committee and must demonstrate certain skill levels before they can be moved up. To progress to Experienced Status, the cox must have knowledge of coxing other waterways, and coxed in a race, be it a head race or a bumps race. Their knowledge of coxing calls, how to steer and be safe, taking the care and regard for other river users into account. For Senior Status, they should have raced in bumps and outside races, and ideally have coxed on a tidal stretch of water. Their control of the boat and positioning on the river should be exceptional.

Spinning areas for the colleges is based on a base level of security and allows for town clubs to spin without being impeded by the college boats. Until 2024, there were three spinning areas which meant that only experienced crews and coxes could go out for the first three weeks of term if the river's flow increased above green flag conditions. The addition of the spinning area at Falcon Boat Club is due to Reuben College and possibly another college club boating from the Isis Boat House. Without a further spinning point below the gut, this would have left the crews from the Isis Boat House unable to go out without an experienced cox. As Reuben is a new boat club, this could prove almost impossible and would not allow them to develop novice coxes as they would not be allowed to go through the gut to a place where they could spin.