

11. EFFECT OF TIDAL HEIGHT AND STREAM

- 11.1 Generally the height of tide defines the width of the channel that can be utilised both by rowers and other vessels. At high tide the maximum width of river is available for navigation, which reduces the density of traffic. This in turn reduces the risks of collision, whether rowers are proceeding with or against the tide. However, at low tide, particularly during the Springs, the river channel is at its narrowest. In some areas this produces pinch points due to extending banks and outer bridge arches that cease to be navigable even by rowers. These pinch points tend to force rowers towards the central stream of the river and main channel which is where deeper draft power driven vessels would be navigating. This will occur whether Rowing Rules or the Right Hand rules are applied.
- 11.2 At Hammersmith Bridge during low water the bank extends from the north or Middlesex bank to approximately the middle of the centre arch of the bridge. Also the Surrey side arch ceases to be navigable, so that all traffic is concentrated into a relatively narrow stretch of water. An additional problem for this area is the crossing of rowers above the bridge when leaving and returning to their boathouses on the north bank, and also the additional lane of boats heading into the stream and parallel to the north bank that are boating or landing.
- 11.3 Similar situations occur at many of the other bridges when at low tide the outer arches cease to be navigable and all traffic becomes concentrated through the centre arch.
- 11.4 The tidal stream affects the flow of traffic at pinch points. For instance between Putney and the Syon crossing point the following is the situation.
- 11.5 On the flood tide rowers and all other traffic travelling downriver will remain on the starboard or Surrey side with traffic travelling upstream keeping to the their starboard side e.g. on the Middlesex side for much of the river between Teddington and Putney. Thus both traffic streams should effectively be adhering to Rule 9. The only area where this changes is between the cross over points at Chiswick Bridge and Chiswick Steps when the Rowing Rules allows rowers travelling against the steam onto the Middlesex bank around the bend past Barnes Bridge.

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- 11.6 On the ebb tidal stream rowers and other vessels heading downstream with the flow will keep to the starboard side (nearest the Surrey bank) of the main channel. Power driven vessels travelling upstream remain on the starboard or Middlesex side of the main channel, whilst rowers will be close in to the port or Surrey side keeping outside of the main channel. Providing the southern or Surrey arch is available there is a dividing line between those vessels proceeding in the main channel and rowers proceeding in the opposite direction outside of that channel. Again the only area where this changes is between the cross over points at Chiswick Steps and Chiswick Bridge (The Ship) when the Rowing Rules allow rowers travelling against the steam onto the Middlesex bank around the bend past Barnes Bridge. This allows both traffic streams to be on the starboard side according to Rule 9.
- 11.7 The main area of potential conflict between vessels moving in opposite directions occurs at low tide when outer bridge arches are unavailable to rower traffic and all vessels are forced to converge into the main channel through the central arch. Generally in practical terms rowers mitigate this hazard by one traffic flow rowing against the current keeps close to the bridge pier, whilst the other rowing with the stream moves towards the centre of the channel. However, other river users may not be aware
- 11.8 Generally the tidal stream will be strongest and the channel deepest towards the outsides of the various bends and flow round those bends roughly parallel to the banks. However, where there are islands or other major obstructions then the water flow may be at an angle to the main channel, either forcing vessels outwards towards the bank or in towards the centre of the stream.
- 11.9 We note that the busiest time when the maximum number of rowers are on the river is on a Saturday or Sunday morning between 0700 and 1100hrs. Currently the Tide Tables show that generally there is a spring low tide every other weekend which approximately coincides with this busy period.
- 11.10 One mitigating factor relating to conflicts between rowers and power driven vessels is that at low water when the channel is narrowest there are likely to be fewer deeper draft vessels proceeding up or down the river.