

Touring/Traversing Locks

Preparation:

Before boating off, ensure that the boat is shipshape. In Particular, check Riggers, Gates, Slides, Footplates, Bow Ball and Rudders. Equip the boat with a Paddle, Bailer and, if likely to moor up, Bow and Stern mooring ropes and mooring pins. Ensure that your choice of Bow has previous experience in locks and, preferably, in the Bow seat.

General Etiquette:

Always follow the instructions of the Lock Keeper and be patient if you feel you are being passed over in favour of other users. If the lock is self service, be prepared for one of your crew/s to operate the lock. On the Thames, when travelling upstream, the ingress of water is held at approximately half the rate as when operated by a lock keeper. **Always take your feet out of the foot straps while in the lock.**

Whether going upstream or downstream make sure that your spoons are clear of any steps or other hazards. Coxes should remain vigilant on this point and also ensure that the rudder does not get caught on any protruding parts of the lock (This has happened and we broke the rudder). If the lock is crowded and we have more than one boat it can help to raft up – extending blades over the other boat.

Travelling Upstream:

When approaching the lock, be sure to moor up/hold up at least 3 boat lengths from the gates. This will avoid the rush of water emanating from the lock (and departing boats) and allow a straighter entry to the lock. Ideally Bow, alone, should take the boat in to the lock. Once in the lock, the cox should use the paddle to maintain position in the centre of the lock or use the hook to hold up on the chains (if fitted) or steps. If powered boats are in the lock, they will certainly be placed ahead of your boat. If, however, you are at the front of the lock, make sure that you keep as far away from the gates as allowable. It is often unappreciated that there is a substantial undertow which pushes the boat forward **against** the incoming water. Coxes should be aware that often the water does not enter the lock evenly and the bow of the boat will be forced sideways. The cox should use the paddle to keep the boat straight by **backing down** on the other side. Ensure that the spoons are flat on the water at all times and the oars are extended as wide possible. Once you are cleared to leave the lock, ask Bow to row you out.

Travelling Downstream

This causes fewer problems but one should still moor up at least a couple of boat lengths from the gates to give a straighter entry to the lock. Again, Bow should take the boat in to the lock. Maintaining position in the lock is less problematical as the water flows straight out with virtually no turbulence. Cox should maintain position by backing down alternately with the paddle on each side but ensuring that the boat stays clear of the cill at the upstream gate (There are markers on the side wall and the stern of your boat should be downstream of them). Once you are cleared to leave the lock, ask Bow to row you out.