



**Launch Handbook**

**December 2022**

**Version 1.3**

## **1. Background and Purpose.**

Maidenhead Rowing Club operate with five launches and have access to a further four owned and operated by Claires Court School Boat Club.

MHD have three RS Catamarans (RSCat 1, 2 and 3) powered by 15hp Mercury outboard motors. There is a further ERB “Blue” launch (“Tom Jost”) powered by a 15hp Honda outboard that is kept in regular use. There is also a yellow Pioner “ ex-safety launch” (Carpathian) powered by a 5hp Honda outboard. The Pioner boat is now kept for carrying out branch cutting on the main reach and ferrying equipment for various events.

Normal coaching usage is by one of the three Cat launches followed by the “Tom Jost” ERB launch. If further launches are required then providing the time is outside CCSBC normal operating times, one of the four School launches can be used.

CCSBC also have reciprocal use of the MHD launches, outside of the normal MHD operating times.

MHD operate with two groups of drivers, those who have a formal RYA Power Boat Handling qualification and those who have been approved to use the launches by the nominated representative of the club. The nominated representative will have both an RYA Level 2 Power Boat Handling qualification and a British Rowing Level 2 Coaching certificate (or equivalent). A register of RYA and Club approved drivers is held on the Maidenhead RC web site.

The purpose of this document is to set out the requirements on how the launches are to be operated such that any authorised driver is trained and competent to use these boats.

Further details on safe usage of launches can be found on the British Rowing Rowsafe section of their web site. All launch drivers are encouraged to read this.

## **Launch Equipment**

Each launch must only be used with a complete set of equipment:

- a. Keys for security lock and ignition keys
- b. Life jacket for all on the boat
- c. Fuel tank with sufficient fuel
- d. Kill cord – please attach kill cord around thigh and back to itself – do not attach to keys – as per RYA recommendation.
- e. Anchor and chain
- f. Paddle
- g. Radio
- h. Mobile phone (in water proof case) with relevant phone numbers
  - i. MHD – 01628 622624
  - ii. Environment Agency – 0800 807060
  - iii. Bray Lock – 01628 621650
  - iv. Boulter's Lock – 01628 624205
- i. What3words app installed on mobile phone.
- j. Water proof Safety Bag containing



- i. Spare PFD
- ii. Spare Kill Cord
- iii. Length of rope
- iv. Safety/rescue knife
- v. Space blankets
- vi. First Aid kit
- vii. Two throw lines
- viii. Navigation lights if launch used after sunset or before sunrise.

The value of the launches and engines is approximately £7,500 each with a further £600 in safety equipment – the radio handsets alone cost £200!

## **2. Pre Checks**

All safety equipment must be checked before taking out a launch:

- a. Visual check of cover and harness of life jackets to make sure they are in operating condition – no tears or frayed strapping.
- b. Ensure junior coxes are wearing a blue manual PFD if in a bow coxed boat. Check coxes know how to correctly adjust the PFD so fit correctly including the crotch strap.
- c. Check contents of the safety bag – see section 2
- d. Check radio has been on charge (showing green light on charging unit) and can communicate with other handsets.
- e. Check the fuel tank is adequately filled.

## **3. Launch Checks**

Launches will be prepared and checked prior to going afloat with a crew.

- a. On Mercury engines (the 3 Cats), the oil warning buzzer goes out after about ten seconds.
- b. Cooling water is seen coming from the engine once started.
- c. No oil/fuel leaks appearing on the water surface.
- d. Steering checked for full turn to port and starboard.
- e. Kill cord is activated to ensure operational.
- f. Take throw lines and safety knife from safety bag and put near to hand so ready to deploy if required without searching for them.
- g. Ensure safety bag can be reached with minimal movement around the launch.
- h. Lights are functional (Tom Jost and RS Cat1) if the launch is being used before sunrise or after sunset.

## **4. Navigation**

- a. Normal navigation rules will be followed at all times – boats keep to the right.
- b. Do not stop in the main navigation fairway (central third of the river), especially downstream of the road bridge. Large vessels cannot stop quickly and see the deeper water through the designated arch.



- c. Keep a good look out for all other river users (not just the crew you are accompanying). It is the responsibility of all river users to take preventative action to avoid collisions, even if you have right of way.
- d. Open water swimming has increased in popularity so keep a good lookout for swimmers. If they are not wearing a tow float or hi-vis cap they can be hard to spot.
- e. If crew on board check they are seated before moving the launch – advise when moving ahead/astern.
- f. Keep checking for boats or other river users both in front of and behind your launch, especially when you change direction. Large vessels cannot stop quickly. Ensure you have adequate space before making a manoeuvre.
- g. Launches are operated under power and will give way/move away from all people and wind powered vessels.
- h. Launch driver is required to comply with the speed limit on the Thames – 4 knots, 5mph or 8 km/hr) when not attending a racing crew. This speed is equivalent to a brisk walk. You cannot go along the river at speed to catch up with a crew a distance away.
- i. The launch driver is responsible at all times for the impact of their wash on other river users and wildlife – keep an eye on what your wash is doing.
- j. Slow down or stop to reduce wash impact on other crews moving in either direction.
- k. Reduce speed going into the cut at Bray and moving past the club pontoons.
- l. Any filming of crews to be carried out by crew on the launch – not the driver.
- m. Be aware of horn blasts from other river traffic, particularly commercial vessels:
  - i. One blast on horn/siren means craft is turning to their starboard side
  - ii. Two blasts means they are turning to their port side.
  - iii. Three blasts means they are putting engines in reverse.
  - iv. Four blasts means they are turning all the way round, this should be followed by a direction signal (one or two blasts). Passenger boats will make this sound signal when turning under the Sounding Arch.
  - v. Five blasts means they do not know what you are doing!
- n. Do not engage in arguments with other river users. If a boat creates an issue take photograph or preferably video and report to club and the EA. We do not know how someone may respond and particularly with Juniors our first responsibility is for their safety and well being.

## 5. Use of Radios

- a. A radio must be carried at all times on the launch. If the only coaching launch on the river give a radio to either one of the crews being coached or responsible person at the club.
- b. Operate on Channel 2.
- c. Check radio contact with other coaches on the water at start of session. Perform radio check at intervals if on the water for any length of time.
- d. Think before speaking. Speak slowly and clearly. Use conventional 2 way radio etiquette and do not interrupt message unless an emergency:

General Terms	Meaning
Radio Check	What is my signal strength? Can you hear me?
Go Ahead	You are ready to receive the transmission.
Stand-by	You acknowledge the other party, but I am unable to respond immediately.
Roger or Ten Four	Message received and understood.
Negative	Same as "No".
Affirmative	Same as "Yes". Avoid "yup" or "nope" as they are difficult to hear.
Say Again	Re-transmit your message
Over	Your message is finished.
Out	All conversation is finished, the channel is clear for others to use.
Break, Break, Break	You are interrupting in the middle of communication because you have an emergency.
Read you loud & clear	Response to "Radio Check". Means your transmission signal is good. Also, use "Read you 5-by-5".
Come in	You are asking the other party to acknowledge they hear you.
Copy	You understand what was said.
Wilco	Means "I will comply".
Repeat	Used before you repeat something. ex: "I require 9-5, <b>repeat</b> 9-5, gallons of diesel fuel. Over"

- e. Listen to ensure channel is clear to talk.
- f. Press push to talk (PTT) button and wait 2 seconds or take a breath.
- g. Call person you wish to speak to twice (name/call sign) followed by "THIS IS" and your name/call sign, e.g:
  - i. "Fred", Fred" – this is "Jim"
  - ii. Once person replies convey message.
- h. If you have an emergency message wait until you hear "over" then press PTT and say "BREAK,BREAK,BREAK" and say Emergency message for "Fred" – Over
- i. Example conversation:
  - i. You: "Fred", Fred", this is "Jim", Over
  - ii. Recipient: "Jim", This is "Fred", Go Ahead, Over
  - iii. You: Transmit message – Over
  - iv. Recipient Roger, Wilco, Over
  - v. You: This is "Jim" Out.
- j. Report any damages/problems on return to the club ([repairs@maidenheadrc.org.uk](mailto:repairs@maidenheadrc.org.uk))

## 6. Towing

- a. When towing the launches will take longer to react . Move slowly and allow plenty of time for manoeuvres. Don't expect the boat to handle as normal.
- b. Two principle methods of towing – stern tow or side tow
- c. Stern tow with RSCats:



- i. Attach a line (Line 1) from base of rear support rail on port side to starboard with sufficient length to clear the outboard.
  - ii. Attach second line (Line 2) with shackle to Line 1 and pass line to craft to be towed, if RS Cat attach line to mid point line between hulls at the bows.
  - iii. Advise crew to craft being towed you are about to move and then move slowly forward to take up slack and head slowly back to the pontoons.
- d. Side tow:
- i. Attach boats side by side with boat towing having stern behind craft being towed.
  - ii. Attach line from bow area of craft being towed to stern of towing boat and vice versa – i.e. a line from stern of boat being towed to bows of towing boat.
  - iii. Keep fender s between boats and tighten lines
  - iv. Advise crew to craft being towed you are about to move and move slowly back to pontoons.

## **7. Recovering crew from water**

- a. Approach person from downstream – take note of strength of stream and wind.
- b. Speak calmly to person/people in the water. Follow basic capsized drill and encourage rower to get onto the hull of the boat. Do not carry out any action without talking to casualty first.
- c. Assess the situation. Use radio to call for assistance if necessary, giving clear instruction on location.
- d. If you are the only person on the launch when recovering person onto the launch cut the engine and remove kill cord before instructing person to board the launch. A moving propeller is a major hazard to someone in the water. Drop ladder into the water from the deck of an RS Cat and use the paddle to manoeuvre if necessary.
- e. If recovering several people instruct to come onto launch one at a time using the ladder if possible and maintain balance and trim of the boat by instructing people on where to sit/stand.
- f. Blue ERB launches rated as two person vessels and Cats are rated at four.
- g. If multiple people in the water, call for assistance from other launches or get some of the crew to bank and return for others, letting all know what you are doing.
- h. Re-attach kill cord before restarting outboard.
- i. Return casualty to club. Boat can be recovered afterwards if necessary.

## **8. Use of Anchor**

- a. It is likely that if the anchor needs deploying you are in some form of emergency situation.
- b. The amount of anchor chain and rope used will determine the ability of the anchor to hold the boat. Usually the length of chain is around 3-4 times the depth of water you are in. Shorter lengths will reduce the efficiency of the anchor, whilst longer lengths will increase the efficiency.
- c. Assume depth of our stretch is between 2 and 3 metres.



- d. To deploy the anchor ensure the rope end is fastened to the launch, ideally as close to the bows and as central as possible. Anchoring from a non-central point, especially in fast stream increases the risk of the launch capsizing.
- e. Lower the anchor into the water until you feel it touch bottom.
- f. Slowly reverse and pay out anchor chain and line until approximately 9-10 metres have run out.
- g. Take sitting with objects on the bank to establish the launch is held in position.
- h. To recover anchor, slowly motor forward pulling in anchor line.

#### **9. End of session, returning to the club**

- a. Please ensure all equipment is correctly put back. If this is delegated please check keys, throwlines and radios have not been left in the anchor bucket.
- b. Replace throw lines and knife in the safety bag.
- c. Hang PFD up on the correct hook.
- d. Do not replace any PFD that have been inflated – remove these and advise either Boat repairs or Safety team.
- e. Make sure radios are turned off and seated correctly in the charging unit – will show either a red or green light.
- f. Put safety bag, anchor bucket and paddle back with others.
- g. Hang ignition keys up.
- h. Refill petrol tank on returning it to the fuel store.
- i. Make sure breather valve on fuel tank is screwed into the closed position, but not over tightened. Return tank to fuel storage locker.

#### **10. Incidents**

Please ensure that any incidents, especially any involving launches are reported to the Club CRSA and recorded on the British Rowing Incident reporting system.

#### **11. Maintenance**

All club launches have an full annual inspection and service as well as a monthly inspection. Please report any faults to [repairs@maidenheadrc.org.uk](mailto:repairs@maidenheadrc.org.uk).