



## **Safety at Mudeford**

Because club members' attendance at the Mudeford Quay meet-ups on Tuesday evenings is variable, there may be occasions when you are the most experienced paddler within the group. If you are a new member to the club, do not launch without first introducing yourself to other members of the group – and do not paddle alone.

When deciding where to paddle you should always take account of the following factors.

### **Group 'management'**

For the general safety of all members, we need increased awareness amongst those paddling on any given evening. Not just awareness of the hazards but also of other paddlers, their abilities and experience.

All members paddling on a Tuesday must ensure that they are part of a group, that they know where they are going to be paddling and who with, and that all members of that group stay together and return safely. As you paddle, turn around and check your buddies, count heads, and ensure that everyone is safe and happy.

We steer away from appointing individuals to manage each Tuesday evening's paddle and strive to keep it informal – but this relies on all members watching out for each other.

### **Opportunities for skill development**

The club needs to cater for members who want to develop their paddling skills. Some members volunteer to run a few 'skills' and 'safety' evenings over the course of the summer, but we have a large number of experienced boaters within our membership who are more than happy to help, so please ask for their advice whenever you need it.

### **Weather conditions**

Wind strength and direction. Will it blow a group out to sea after an incident?

Will it tire novices, particularly on the return journey with a following wind?

Air temperature. Are all the paddlers dressed to endure the trip?

Will the weather deteriorate? Watch it constantly.

### **Sea conditions**

Will everyone be able to cope with the waves?

What will the waves be like where you are going? For example, on the other side of Hengistbury Head, or out of the lee of the head towards Highcliffe.

Will the sea state change, perhaps with a change of tide or because the wind is increasing?

## **Tidal conditions**

What time is high/low tide? Check the tide tables posted on the parking attendants' hut. They are also given on our website.

Will novices be able to paddle back against it?

Will there be any water in the run when you get back?

## **Daylight**

Will it last long enough for the slowest paddler to get back?

Is there any leeway for delays or will an accident have to be coped with in darkness?

## **Equipment**

We are normally close to civilisation here so the equipment required is minimal, but nevertheless important;

Are you adequately equipped to cope with any foreseen problems? Do you have your towlines and are they readily available to be deployed and are quick release? -

Essential for a capsize near the rocks or groins.

Is everyone else adequately kitted out?

## **Size and strength of group**

How many are there? Keep checking!

What other experience is there in the group? Will you have to cope with an accident on your own?

Has everyone got sufficient stamina for the trip? Keep an eye on the group and watch for signs of tiredness.

This might seem to be a long and tedious list of things to check through mentally before you go out for a casual evening paddle, but when you are fully aware of these factors it takes only a minute or two to assess the conditions. Some members may be unaware that these things are given consideration, but you can be assured that they are – at least by some of the more experienced members, who constantly think about the safety of the group.

## **Additional considerations at Mudeford**

Paddlers should always be wary of the following hazards at what is otherwise a very safe canoeing playground.

Due to the narrow harbour mouth at certain times of the tide the *tidal run* out of or into the harbour can be very strong.

### ***Boats moored alongside the quay***

The boats moored alongside the quay are within the very narrow confines of the harbour mouth and are potentially lethal in a strong current. A kayak swept against one will probably capsize and the paddler might then become pinned or entangled in the propeller, out of reach of rescuers. Keep well away from them!

### ***Boats passing through the run or harbour***

Keep LOOKING RIGHT AND LEFT like crossing the road.

Boats 'drive on the right' in navigation channels.

It is all too easy, while focusing on other craft leaving/entering the harbour, to become unaware of the speed at which you are being pushed towards a moored boat, such as the ferry at the quay. If this is happening, turn back towards your launch site leaving the current. Make a circle back to a position where you can try again to cross the channel safely.

### ***Surf, particularly when dumping (normally the case around high tide)***

Wear a helmet and know your limitations

Keep away from rocks and groynes

Keep away from surfing boats when you are paddling out

Buddy up with someone and keep an eye on each other

### ***Strong offshore winds***

It might look calm outside the harbour but it won't be calm further out in the bay.

Stay close inshore with novices and make sure you have your towline.

### ***Clarendon Rocks***

A line of rocks placed by Lord Clarendon who was planning a new harbour entrance.

They extend more than 200 metres out from Mudeford Spit towards the Isle of Wight.

They are unmarked but exposed at low tide, and usually shallow enough to bang your head on if you surf and capsize over them. Turbulence in the water usually indicates their location.

### ***Beerpan Rocks***

A shallow ledge just beyond the end of Hengistbury Head Groyne. Steep breaking waves occur here when the wind is against the tide.

### ***Fishing lines***

Difficult to see, particularly at dusk. Using tall rods and heavy bottom tackle, the anglers often keep their lines taut and therefore above water for an amazing distance off the beach. A line across the throat may panic and upset an unwary paddler.

This is by no means an exhaustive list but includes the most common dangers.

Remember that canoeing is a very safe pastime compared with the combination of the pub and the drive home...

## **Kayaking rights of way**

Are clearly given here

<https://www.itiwit.co.uk/kayaking-rules-and-regulations>

But please don't assume (even on a river with a powered boat less than 15m ) that any boat has the ability to manoeuvre due to river depth or the knowledge that they should.

There is no compulsory 'driving test' for powered crafts in UK.

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