



British
Waterways
London

LONDON

TIDEWAY HANDBOOK 2

DOWNSTREAM EDITION



MAINLY FOR NARROWBOATS & CRUISERS TRAVELLING

- TEDDINGTON TO BRENTFORD
- TEDDINGTON TO LIMEHOUSE
- BRENTFORD TO LIMEHOUSE

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DOWNSTREAM

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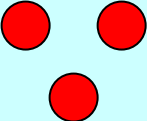


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TELEPHONE NUMBERS and VHF CHANNELS

London VTS (Vessel Traffic Service)	☎ 020 8855 0315	VHF Channel 14 "London VTS"
Teddington Locks	☎ 020 8940 8723	--
Richmond Lock & Weir	☎ 020 8940 0634	--
Thames Locks, Brentford	☎ 020 8568 2779	--
Limehouse Lock & Marina	☎ 020 7308 9930	VHF Channel 80* "Limehouse Marina"












* When calling Limehouse (or any other marina) on Channel 80, please ensure that your radio is switched to International Channel 80, *not* American (US) Channel 80A. Otherwise, the marina will be able to hear you but you will not be able to hear the marina. Also please note that marinas do not use channel 14 or channel 16.

SIGNS DISPLAYED at BRIDGES

By day or night: 2 orange lights side-by-side		Navigation arch; i.e. you can go through this arch
By day: 3 red discs arranged in an upside-down triangle By night: 3 red lights arranged in an upside-down triangle		Arch CLOSED to navigation
By day: A bundle of straw By night: 1 white light		Headroom of arch reduced (but arch still open to traffic)
By day or night: A flashing white light: isophase* * equal periods of ON and OFF A very-quick-flashing white light		A large vessel is in the vicinity <i>Two or more large vessels are in the vicinity</i> In both cases, KEEP CLEAR of the arch with the flashing light



SOUND SIGNALS on the THAMES

	I am altering my course to STARBOARD
	I am altering my course to PORT
	I am operating ASTERN propulsion
	I am turning fully round to STARBOARD
	I am turning fully round to PORT
	I do not understand your intentions; keep clear (I doubt whether you are taking sufficient action to avoid a collision)
	I am about to get underway / enter the fairway or: I am approaching a blind bend
	I am unable to manoeuvre (not under command)
	I intend to overtake you on your STARBOARD side
	I intend to overtake you on your PORT side
	I agree to be overtaken

This book should be used in conjunction with the current edition of the British Waterways London **Tidal Locks Availability** leaflet, which gives the opening times of Limehouse Lock and Thames Locks (Brentford) together with the times of High Water London Bridge for the current year. The leaflet is available from the keepers at Teddington, Brentford or Limehouse, or from the British Waterways London office at Paddington (see back page) or on waterscape.com

GENERAL INFORMATION

Teddington Locks, and all the other locks on the non-tidal Thames up-river from Teddington, are operated by Environment Agency (EA) lock keepers.

Thames Locks (at Brentford) and Limehouse Lock are operated by British Waterways (BW) lock keepers.

As soon as you leave Teddington or Brentford you will be on the tidal Thames, all of which – from just downstream of Teddington Locks to the “seaward limit” out in the Estuary – is under the jurisdiction of the Port of London Authority (PLA). This includes Richmond Lock (properly known as Richmond Half-Tide Lock and Weir) which is operated by the PLA.

The conduct of all vessels on the tidal Thames is governed by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (IRPCS or Coll.Reg) and also by the Port of London River Byelaws and by PLA Notices to Mariners: sometimes referred to as NOTAMs or NTMs.

NAME of VESSEL

On the tidal Thames (just as on the non-tidal Thames) it is a regulation that **the name of the vessel must be clearly displayed** (PLA Byelaw 46). If your boat does not comply, you may be challenged.

RULES of the RIVER

The first “rule of the river” is: **KEEP TO THE RIGHT** (Rule 9a).

At bridges, unless instructed otherwise, always take one of the navigational arches marked by 2 orange lights side-by-side; **see “SIGNS DISPLAYED at BRIDGES”** (inside front cover). If two or more arches are so marked, you should generally take the right-hand marked arch.

KEEP A GOOD LOOK-OUT at all times, BEHIND YOU as well as in front (Rule 5).

If you find yourself approaching another vessel head-on, you should sound one short blast and **TURN TO STARBOARD** and the other vessel should do the same (Rule 14).

If you find yourself crossing the path of another vessel (as may happen, for example, in the vicinity of a pier) *“the vessel which has the other on her own starboard side shall keep out of the way”* (Rule 15).

SOUND SIGNALS (see inside back page)

The sound signals used on the tidal Thames include those specified in the Collision Regulations, plus some additions. The main signals are shown in the table at the back of this booklet. The table has been designed so that you can detach it and mount it in your cockpit. Even if you do not have occasion to use the signals yourself, it is important to be able to interpret them immediately. If another boat starts hooting at you, it does not *necessarily* mean that you are doing anything wrong; they may simply be letting you know what they intend to do next!

NOTICES to MARINERS

PLA Bylaws state: *“It is important that the owner / master of any vessel navigating the tidal Thames be aware of any Notices to Mariners in force at the time”*. Please check with the PLA (020 7743 7900) or London VTS (020 8855 0315) whether there are any current NTMs which will affect your passage. For example, an arch at one of the bridges may be closed to navigation or have restricted headroom.

VHF RADIO

For *all* vessels on the tidal Thames, the carrying of a VHF radio (with appropriate licences) is strongly recommended.

However, for vessels of more than 45 ft (13.7 metres) overall length, **INCLUDING NARROWBOATS OVER 45 ft**, carrying a VHF radio (and maintaining a listening watch on Channel 14) is generally **MANDATORY** below Brentford.

A special exemption allows narrowboats of more than 45 ft in transit between Teddington and Brentford (in either direction) to report to London VTS by telephone on departure and again on arrival.

This exemption does *not* cover boats going from Teddington to Limehouse, or from Brentford to Limehouse.

ALL BOATS OVER 45 ft (13.7 m) leaving Teddington or Brentford bound for Limehouse must carry a VHF radio; see CHECK LIST on page 2.12.

SPEED

The Collision Regulations state (Rule 6):

Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

Up-river of Wandsworth Bridge, there is a speed limit of 8 knots (9 mph approx).

The PLA *Guide for Users of Recreational Craft* also states:

Whilst there is no specific speed limit downstream of Wandsworth Bridge, your speed must be appropriate for the prevailing conditions, the size and type of your vessel, the tidal conditions, your location in the river and, importantly, the safety of others navigating in the area or working or lying alongside. You should err on the side of safety when determining your speed so that there is no risk of injury to persons or damage to property.

SECURITY CHECKS

Marine Police launches regularly carry-out routine security checks. Do not be surprised or concerned if you are challenged – and possibly boarded. Unless instructed otherwise you should maintain a steady course and speed and let the police boat do the manoeuvring!

**PASSAGES
on the TIDAL THAMES:
DOWNSTREAM**

DATE:

HW ^{London Br.}

GMT / BST
delete as appropriate

BRENTFORD to LIMEHOUSE

Distance: 16 miles

HW ^{Brentford} = HW ^{London Br.} +1 hr approx.

HW ^{Limehouse} = HW ^{London Br.}

Leave Brentford at: HW ^{Brentford} - 1 hr
(= HW ^{London Br.})

Approx. passage time: 2½ hrs

Arrive Limehouse at: HW ^{London Br.} + 2 ½ hrs
(= LOW WATER ^{London Br.} - 3 ½ hrs approx.)

Leave Brentford	Passage	Arrive Limehouse
<input type="text"/>	2 ½ hrs	<input type="text"/>

TEDDINGTON to LIMEHOUSE

Distance: 20 miles

HW ^{Teddington} = HW ^{London Br.} +1 hr approx.

HW ^{Limehouse} = HW ^{London Br.}

Leave Teddington at: HW ^{Teddington} - ½ hr ¹
(= HW ^{London Br.} + ½ hr)

Approx. passage time: 3½ hrs ²

Arrive Limehouse at: HW ^{London Br.} + 4 hrs
(= LOW WATER ^{London Br.} - 2 hrs approx.)

Leave Teddington	Passage	Arrive Limehouse
<input type="text"/>	3 ½ hrs	<input type="text"/>

1. Vessels keeping to this timetable should be able to pass straight through Richmond Half-tide Barrier, which is open:

HW ^{Teddington} ± 2 hrs, = HW ^{London Br.} -1 hr to HW ^{London Br.} +3 hrs.

2. Estimated passage times are for narrowboats; a motor cruiser may reach Limehouse from Teddington in under 3 hrs: say 2¾ hrs

STARTING from TEDDINGTON

The following section includes information kindly provided by the Environment Agency (EA) lock keepers at Teddington:

The river below Teddington is tidal, and is quite different from the canals and non-tidal rivers. There are very few places to moor, and it is not possible simply to pull into the bank and tie-up, as you may have been used to doing. Every year many narrowboats and small cruisers navigate the tidal Thames without incident and there is no reason why you should not have an enjoyable and interesting passage provided that you plan ahead.

Please be sure to go through the CHECK LIST before leaving Teddington.

TEDDINGTON LOCKS ☎ 020 8940 8723

Teddington Locks are manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Pre-booking is not necessary but a phone call – particularly if you plan to pass through in the small hours – will assist the lock keeper and speed your passage. The duty keeper will be able to advise on tide times, and the best times to leave Teddington.

HIGH WATER and LOW WATER

High Water Teddington is about 1¼ hours after High Water London Bridge.

High Water Richmond occurs about ¼ hr earlier than at Teddington (i.e. about 1 hour after High Water London Bridge) but the difference can usually be ignored when making rough calculations. In any case, it should always be remembered that on a tidal river the actual times of High Water and Low Water, on any given day, can easily differ by half an hour or more from the predicted times, and the actual heights of tide attained at High and Low Water can differ by anything up to a metre from the predictions, due to the effects of wind, atmospheric pressure and other factors.

The Richmond Half-Tide Barrier opens *approximately*:

High Water^{Richmond} ± 2 hrs

i.e. roughly: High Water^{London Bridge} -1 hr to HW^{London Bridge} + 3 hrs.

DEPARTURE TIMES for BRENTFORD or LIMEHOUSE

The usual advice is to lock-into Teddington (from up-river):

at about: half an hour *before* High Water^{Teddington}

i.e. at about: 45 minutes *after* High Water^{London Bridge}.

This should mean that you meet the high water around Richmond (passing straight through Richmond Half-Tide Barrier without having to use the lock) and you will then carry the ebbing tide all the way to your destination.

Motor cruisers with a significant air draught (height above the water-line) will not want to leave much before this, or they will arrive at Hammersmith Bridge too soon (i.e. too close to High Water) and will not be able to pass underneath it until the water level has dropped: see details on page 2.22.

Narrowboats bound for Limehouse will not normally want to leave any later than the time suggested above, if they intend to catch the entry “window” for Limehouse Lock: see “PLANNING A PASSAGE TO LIMEHOUSE” (page 2.10).

However, narrowboats and small cruisers with limited engine power bound for Limehouse *might* wish to delay their departure so that they arrive at Limehouse at or near Low Water (when there is hardly any current) rather than arriving while the tide is still ebbing (running out). Note that this should *not* be attempted at exceptional Spring Tides, as there may not be sufficient depth at Low Water to enter Limehouse Lock cut: see “PLANNING a PASSAGE to LIMEHOUSE” (page 2.10).

STARTING from BRENTFORD

The following section includes information kindly provided by the British Waterways lock keepers at Brentford:

THAMES LOCKS, BRENTFORD

☎ 020 8568 2779

The tidal locks between the Grand Union Canal and the River Thames at Brentford are known as THAMES LOCKS. Brentford (Gauging) Locks are the ones further up the canal, on the other side of Brentford High Street Bridge.

Thames Locks (unlike Teddington Locks) are *not* manned 24 hours, but according to a timetable which is printed in the British Waterways London **Tidal Locks Availability** leaflet. This also gives the opening times of Limehouse Lock and the times of High Water London Bridge for the current year. The leaflet is available from the keepers at Teddington, Brentford or Limehouse, or from the British Waterways London office at Paddington (see back page).

For each day of the year, the timetable indicates two separate time periods: the period when Thames Locks *will* be manned, and the “out of hours” period when the locks *can* be manned *if, and only if*, a vessel books its passage in advance.

As will be seen from the timetable, there are some days of the year when, due to the time of High Water, the locks can be operated for only a very limited period, *or not at all*.

24 (manned) hours notice *must* be given for out-of-hours bookings, but *all* boaters are strongly advised to contact the lock office at least 24 (manned) hours ahead of their passage to confirm their time with the Lock Keeper. Leaving a message does not guarantee your booking.

HIGH WATER and LOW WATER

High Water at Brentford is about 1 hour after High Water London Bridge.

However it should always be remembered that on a tidal river the actual times of High Water and Low Water, on any given day, can easily differ by half an hour or more from the predicted times, and the actual heights of tide attained at High and Low Water can differ by anything up to a metre from the predictions, due to the effects of wind, atmospheric pressure and other factors.

All boaters should be aware that around High Water (particularly at Spring Tides) there is limited headroom under Brentford High Street Bridge.

DEPARTURE TIMES for LIMEHOUSE

For a passage to Limehouse, the usual advice is to leave Brentford within this period:

from: High Water^{Brentford} - 1 hour to: High Water^{Brentford}

i.e. from: High Water^{London Bridge} to: High Water^{London Bridge} + 1 hour

Motor cruisers with a significant air draught (height above the water-line) will not want to leave much before this, or they will arrive at Hammersmith Bridge too soon (i.e. too close to High Water) and will not be able to pass underneath it until the water level has dropped: see details on page 2.22.

Narrowboats bound for Limehouse will not normally want to leave much later than the time suggested above, if they intend to catch the entry “window” for Limehouse Lock: see “PLANNING A PASSAGE TO LIMEHOUSE” (page 2.10).

However, narrowboats and small cruisers with limited engine power bound for Limehouse *might* wish to delay their departure so that they arrive at Limehouse at or near Low Water (when there is hardly any current) rather than arriving while the tide is still ebbing (running out). Note that this should *not* be attempted at exceptional Spring Tides, as there may not be sufficient depth at Low Water to enter Limehouse Lock cut: see “PLANNING a PASSAGE to LIMEHOUSE” (page 2.10).

PLANNING a PASSAGE to LIMEHOUSE

It is very important to appreciate that making the passage *downstream* to Limehouse from Teddington or from Brentford is considerably more challenging than coming the other way (upstream), for several reasons:

- The ebb tide (going out, downstream) is far faster than the flood tide (coming in, upstream);
- High Water up-river around Brentford and Teddington occurs about an hour later than at London Bridge and Limehouse. One consequence of this, for boats making a downstream transit, is that the ebb tide will be running at its fastest just when you reach the particularly narrow section of river between Blackfriars and Tower Bridge;
- Furthermore, the tide will still be running out at around its maximum speed when you arrive at Limehouse about 15 minutes after passing under Tower Bridge;
- There is a blind bend just down-river from the Limehouse entrance.

The times of the tides at Limehouse Lock are virtually the same as at London Bridge. The times of High Water London Bridge will be found in the current edition of the British Waterways London ***Tidal Locks Availability*** leaflet, (available at Teddington and Brentford) or in any Nautical Almanac.

The “official” access window for Limehouse Lock (as published in the Almanacs) is within a period of about 3 hours either side of High Water London Bridge. In practice the window is somewhat wider and there is usually a sufficient depth of water *outside* of a period about 2 hours either side of *Low Water*, although entry must always be at the discretion of the lock keepers to avoid boats becoming grounded or damaged on the cill.

If you are bound for Limehouse and you keep to the usual times recommended for leaving Teddington or Brentford (see previous sections) then you should arrive at Limehouse at around 2½ to 4 hours after High Water London Bridge (i.e. about 3½ to 2 hours before Low Water) and there should usually be enough water left for you to go straight into the lock. However, the tide will still be ebbing (running out) briskly, and this can make the approach and entry into Limehouse Lock cut quite tricky: see “APPROACHING LIMEHOUSE ENTRANCE” (page 2.32) and “ENTERING LIMEHOUSE LOCK CUT” (page 2.33).

For this reason, *provided that the tide is not at Springs*, you might choose to *delay* your departure from Teddington or Brentford so that you arrive at

Limehouse at around Low Water. This will usually make your approach and entry into Limehouse Lock cut much easier, although you may then have to tie-up to one of the waiting pontoons and wait for up to 2 hours until the water level has risen enough for you to get into the lock. This is not a problem in itself (you can have a cup of tea or a meal while you wait) but you should be aware that there are only two waiting pontoons, each about 35 feet (10.5 m) long, so you may have to share; and your boat is likely to be tossed around by the wash from passing vessels on the river while you are on the pontoon, so good fendering is necessary.

If the tide is at Springs, it is *not* always feasible to delay your departure from Teddington or Brentford because then when you arrive at Limehouse at Low Water there may not even be enough water for you to get as far as the waiting pontoons and you will go aground in the entrance to the lock cut.

The keepers at Teddington, Brentford or Limehouse will always be pleased to discuss your planned departure and arrival times with you, but the safety of your vessel is ultimately your responsibility.

You may find it helpful to fill-in the Passage Planning Sheet (page 2.5).

LIMEHOUSE LOCK

☎ 020 7308 9930

VHF channel 80

Limehouse Lock is *not* manned 24 hours, but according to a timetable which is printed in the British Waterways London ***Tidal Locks Availability*** leaflet. This also gives the times of High Water London Bridge for the current year. The leaflet is available from the keepers at Teddington, Brentford or Limehouse, or from the British Waterways London office at Paddington (see back page).

For the “Summer” and Winter” seasons, the timetable indicates two separate time periods: the period when Limehouse Lock *will* be manned, and the “out of hours” period when the lock *can* be manned *if, and only if*, a vessel books its passage in advance:

24 (manned) hours notice *must* be given for out-of-hours bookings, but *all* boaters are strongly advised to contact the **Limehouse** lock office at least 24 (manned) hours ahead of their passage to confirm their arrival time with one of the Lock Keepers. Leaving a message does not guarantee your booking.

Boaters should also telephone Limehouse Lock when they are departing from Teddington or Brentford, to confirm their approximate arrival time. Finally, they should contact Limehouse by telephone or VHF (channel 80) when passing under Tower Bridge.

CHECK LIST

- ? Is the **BOAT NAME** clearly displayed
- ? Is the **REGISTRATION / LICENCE NUMBER** clearly displayed
- ? Is the **ENGINE** in good order, with sufficient **FUEL**
- ? Do you have an **ANCHOR**
- readily to hand
 - attached to a sufficiently long WARP (chain and/or rope)
 - with the warp ATTACHED to the boat
- ? Do you have a **LIFE RING** (or “horse-shoe buoy”) – preferably TWO
- readily to hand (i.e. within easy reach)
- ? Does every crew member have a **LIFEJACKET**
- in working order
 - readily to hand; preferably ON and BUCKLED-UP
 - CHILDREN especially are advised to wear their lifejackets
 - Skipper: set a good example by wearing your own!
- ? Do you have a copy of the British Waterways London **Tidal Locks Availability** leaflet (available at Teddington or Brentford)
- ? If you are bound for Limehouse:
HAVE YOU TELEPHONED LIMEHOUSE: 020 7308 9930
- ? Do you have a **HORN** (fixed or hand-held)

- ? Is the vessel over 45ft (13.7m) in length
- if YES: *the vessel is over 45ft (13.7m):*
 - **You must carry a VHF RADIO**
 - Call LONDON VTS¹ on channel 14 when you are about to exit from Teddington Locks or Thames Locks (Brentford)
 - Continue to MONITOR CHANNEL 14 throughout your passage
 - Call LONDON VTS *again* when you leave the tideway at Brentford or Limehouse
 - if NO: *the vessel is under 45ft (13.7m):*
 - If you do not have a VHF radio it is recommended that, in case of emergencies, you carry a **MOBILE PHONE**
 - You *may* wish to telephone LONDON VTS: 020 8855 0315 when you are about to exit from the lock, but there is NO REQUIREMENT FOR YOU TO DO SO
 - If you *do* telephone LONDON VTS on departure, HAVE YOUR MOBILE NUMBER READY to give to the Duty Officer, and remember to telephone LONDON VTS *again* when you leave the tideway at Brentford or Limehouse

IMPORTANT: For *all* vessels on the tidal Thames, the carrying of a VHF radio is strongly recommended. However, for vessels of more than 45 ft (13.7 metres) overall length, INCLUDING NARROWBOATS OVER 45 ft, carrying a VHF radio (and maintaining a listening watch) is generally MANDATORY.² A special exemption allows narrowboats of more than 45ft in transit between Teddington and Brentford Locks (in either direction) to report to London VTS by telephone on departure and again on arrival. This exemption does *not* cover boats going from Teddington to Limehouse, or from Brentford to Limehouse. **ALL BOATS OVER 45 ft (13.7 m) leaving Teddington or Brentford bound for Limehouse must carry a VHF radio.**³

The following are also recommended: a **TOW ROPE** of sufficient length and thickness and in good condition; a **HEAVING LINE** (i.e. a light throwing line); a **SHARP, SERRATED KNIFE** capable of cutting through rope; a **TOOL KIT** and a **FIRST AID KIT**. However, see “EMERGENCIES” overleaf.

1. LONDON VTS = London Vessel Traffic Service, based at the Thames Barrier Navigation Centre. (Formerly “Woolwich Radio”.)
2. PLA General Directions for Navigation in the Port of London, Sept 2006. (Previously 65ft / 20m).
3. The radio set itself must be licensed for the boat, and it must only be used by, or under the direct supervision of, a person with a valid operator’s licence (a one-day course is run by the RYA).

EMERGENCIES

▪ ENGINE FAILURE and/or JAMMED PROPELLER

- If a bridge is imminent:
 - ANCHOR AT ONCE
 - inform LONDON VTS; see opposite →
- If a bridge is *not* imminent:
 - If you are travelling in company with another boat, ask them to TAKE YOUR LINES; otherwise ANCHOR if you have not already done so. Do not waste time looking for the cause of the failure until you are ANCHORED SAFELY.
 - inform LONDON VTS; see opposite →

▪ MAN OVERBOARD

- Swing the stern AWAY FROM the person
- Throw the life-ring close to them, but not directly at their head;
- CALL FOR HELP: see opposite →
- A lifeboat should be with you within minutes. Meanwhile, if you attempt to recover the person from the water using your own boat:
 - keep the boat facing into the current
 - keep the propeller well clear of the person
 - keep to leeward (down-wind) of the person so you do not run them down.

CALLING FOR HELP

In the event of any emergency (engine failure, jammed propeller, man overboard, serious injury, etc.) CALL FOR HELP as soon as possible:

	If you are <i>not</i> in imminent danger:	If you are in imminent danger:
If you have a VHF radio:	Call London VTS on channel 14	Put out a MAYDAY call on channel 16
If you do <i>not</i> have a VHF radio:	Call London VTS: 020 8855 0315	Call LONDON COASTGUARD: 999 (or 112)

Note: London VTS and London Coastguard officers sit at neighbouring desks, so if you are in doubt, it does not matter whom you ask to speak to.

There are RNLI Lifeboat Stations at Waterloo Bridge, Chiswick and Teddington, so a lifeboat can be with you within minutes.

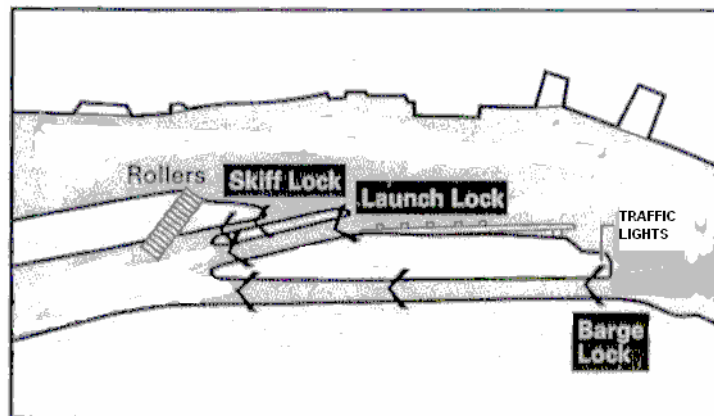
Do not be embarrassed to call for help; while you are in difficulties you are endangering not only yourself but also other vessels. London VTS, London Coastguard and the RNLI would far rather you let them know the problem STRAIGHT AWAY.

TEDDINGTON

Vessels over 45 ft (13.7 m) joining the tideway at Teddington:

CALL LONDON VTS VHF Channel 14 ☎ 020 8855 0315

TEDDINGTON LOCKS



TEDDINGTON ☎ 020 8940 8723

At the appropriate time, approach the lock that is indicated by the lock keeper using hand signals: this will usually be either the large “Barge” lock on the right, or the older, smaller “Launch” lock in the middle. (The “Skiff” or “Coffin” lock on the left, next to the boat rollers, is rarely used.) You will be expected to secure your boat with TWO lines – head and stern – and to switch your ENGINE OFF. (If you have a problem with re-starting, or a ‘Bolinder’ engine, please see the lock keeper BEFORE entering the lock.)

IMPORTANT: When travelling downstream, bridge arches are numbered from LEFT to RIGHT, thus:

1 2 3 4 5

LONDON VTS will always use these numbers when announcing that an arch is closed; e.g. “At XYZ Bridge, number 4 arch is closed to navigation”.

Take the CENTRAL arches of the first three bridges: Richmond Bridge, Richmond Railway Bridge and Twickenham Bridge. If you meet a vessel coming the other way, you should both turn to starboard so that you pass port-to-port.

1. RICHMOND BRIDGE



CAUTION: Richmond Bridge has a very tight navigation arch, with sloping sides.

2. RICHMOND RAILWAY BRIDGE



3. TWICKENHAM BRIDGE



4. RICHMOND FOOTBRIDGE, LOCK and WEIR



RICHMOND ☎ 020 8940 0634

Take the right-hand, open navigation span of the Richmond Half-tide Barrier. (If you arrive at the wrong state of the tide, you will have to use the lock.)

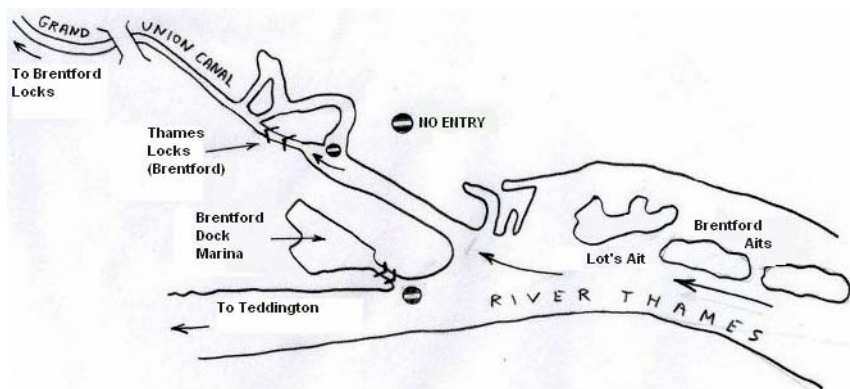
CAUTION: The river immediately below Richmond Lock can be very shallow at low spring tides.

BRENTFORD

Vessels over 45 ft (13.7 m) joining OR leaving the tideway at Brentford:

CALL LONDON VTS VHF Channel 14 ☎ 020 8855 0315

THAMES LOCKS, BRENTFORD



BRENTFORD

☎ 020 8940 8723

If you are **leaving** the tideway at Brentford:

Look out for the diagonal creek on the LEFT. The first pair of side-by-side locks at Brentford are called THAMES LOCKS; Brentford (Gauging) Locks are the *next* pair up the canal. If you are within normal opening hours, the keeper at Thames Locks is likely to be on watch; go into the lock he indicates. Note that Brentford High Street Bridge has limited headroom around High Water.

If you are **joining** the tideway at Brentford:

After leaving the lock, exit down the middle of Brentford Creek. On reaching the end of the creek, SOUND ONE LONG BLAST, indicating: "*I am about to enter the fairway*" and exit the creek with caution, looking left and right for traffic. Take a normal LEFT TURN, crossing the river to the RIGHT-HAND SIDE.

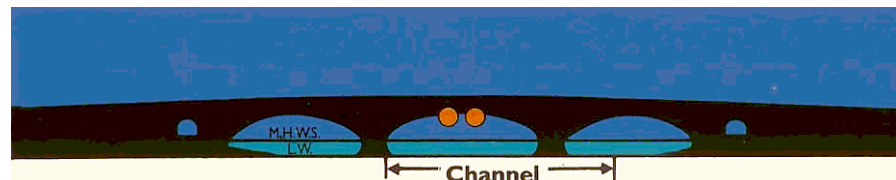
IMPORTANT: When travelling downstream, bridge arches are numbered from LEFT to RIGHT, thus:

1 2 3 4 5

LONDON VTS will always use these numbers when announcing that an arch is closed; e.g. "*At XYZ Bridge, number 4 arch is closed to navigation*".

Just downstream from Brentford Creek, you will encounter the first in a series of 9 small red "can" buoys which have been laid over a 5-mile stretch of the river between here and Putney Bridge, for the benefit of rowers. Ordinary river craft should treat the red can buoys as normal port-hand lateral marks. This means that craft coming *upstream* (towards you) have to leave the buoys to *port* whereas you, proceeding *downstream*, must leave them to *starboard*; i.e. keep the buoys to your *right* whilst still staying over to the *right-hand* side of the river as usual.

5. KEW BRIDGE



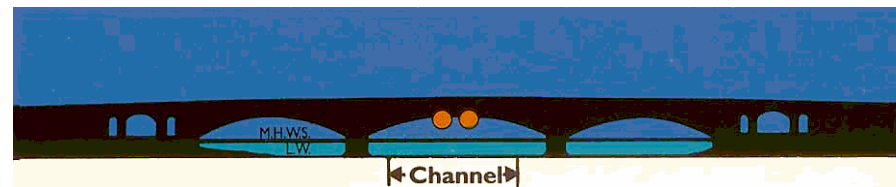
At Kew Bridge: The bridge is on the skew. Sound ONE LONG BLAST, indicating "I AM APPROACHING A BLIND BEND". Go through the centre arch, but take extra care as the arch is narrow and the trip boats need to keep in the middle of the span.

6. KEW RAILWAY BRIDGE



When approaching Kew Railway Bridge: note that the channel is on the right-hand (south) side of the island (Oliver's Ait); i.e. leave the island to port.

7. CHISWICK BRIDGE

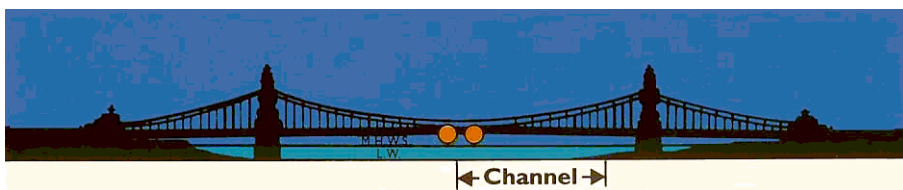


8. BARNES RAILWAY BRIDGE



There is a **HEIGHT GAUGE** for **Hammersmith Bridge** at Chiswick Ait, near the downstream end of the island.

9. HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE



WARNING: Motor cruisers with a significant air draught (height above the water-line) arriving at Hammersmith Bridge too soon (i.e. too close to High Water) may be **UNABLE TO PASS UNDER** until the water level has dropped:

HEADWAY of CENTRE SPAN above:

CHART DATUM	MHWS	MLWS	MHWN	MLWN
9.4 m	3.7 m	9.4 m	4.8 m	9.1 m

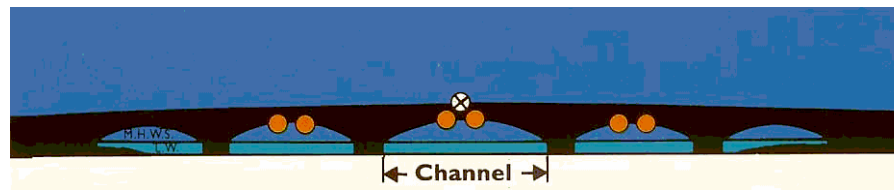
High Water at Hammersmith Bridge occurs approx. 45 minutes after High Water London Bridge.

Tidal levels above Chart Datum:

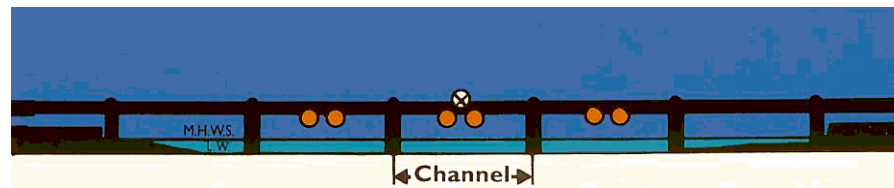
Mean Springs		Mean Neaps	
HW	LW	HW	LW
5.7 m	0	4.6 m	0.3 m

Between Hammersmith Bridge and Putney Bridge: Watch out for rowers and dinghy sailors, and for fast-moving support craft. The river is **VERY SHALLOW** along the left (north) bank. There should be no reason for you to stray to that side, but craft coming up-river towards you may need to move out towards the middle of the river, not only to avoid the shallows themselves but also to allow rowers and dinghy sailors to pass inside them. Note that there are several buoys on the right-hand (south) side of the channel.

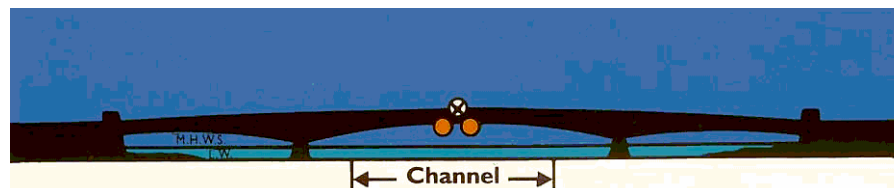
10. PUTNEY BRIDGE



11. FULHAM RAILWAY BRIDGE

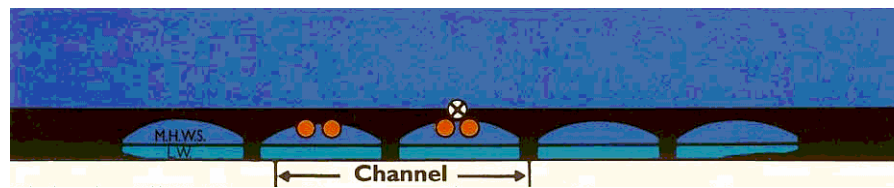


12. WANDSWORTH BRIDGE



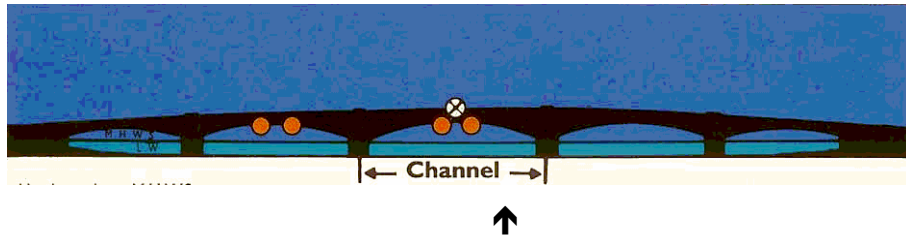
The speed limit of 8 knots (9 mph approx) ends after Wandsworth Bridge. However, see **SPEED** on page 2.4.

13. BATTERSEA RAILWAY BRIDGE

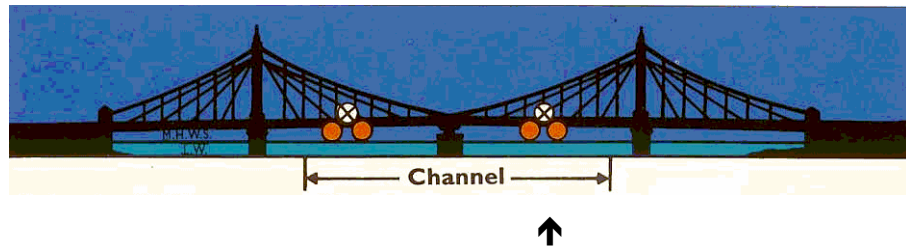


CAUTION: there are shoals (shallows) just before Battersea Railway Bridge.

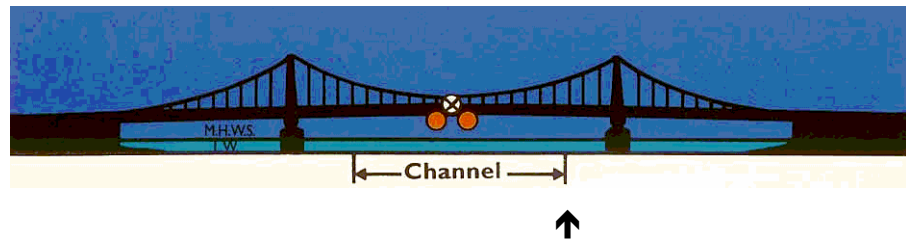
14. BATTERSEA BRIDGE



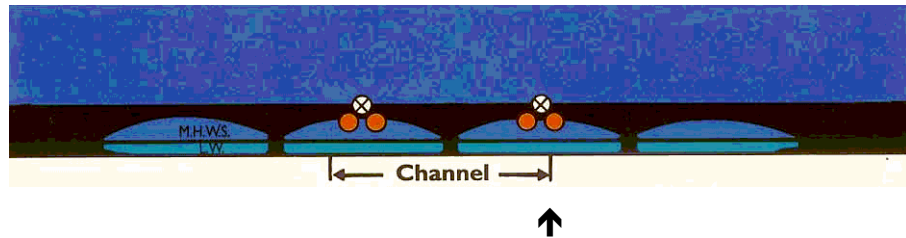
15. ALBERT BRIDGE



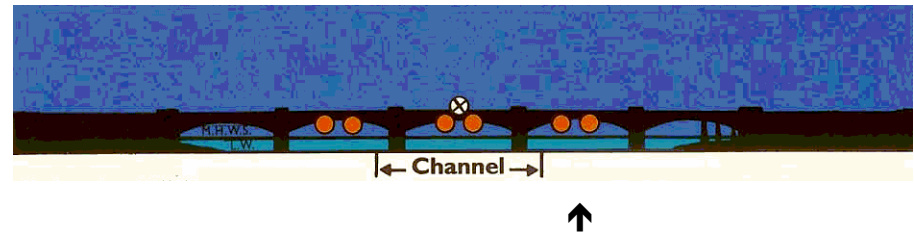
16. CHELSEA BRIDGE



17. VICTORIA (GROSVENOR) RAILWAY BRIDGE



18. VAUXHALL BRIDGE

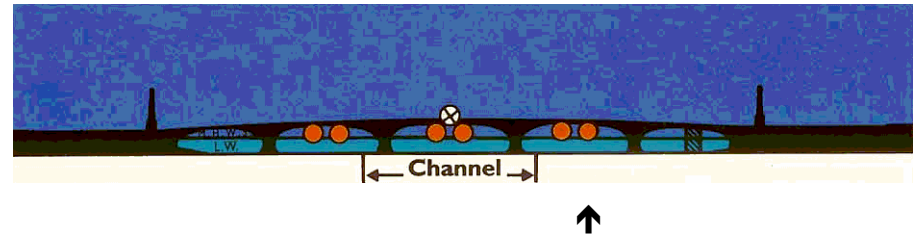


At Vauxhall Bridge:

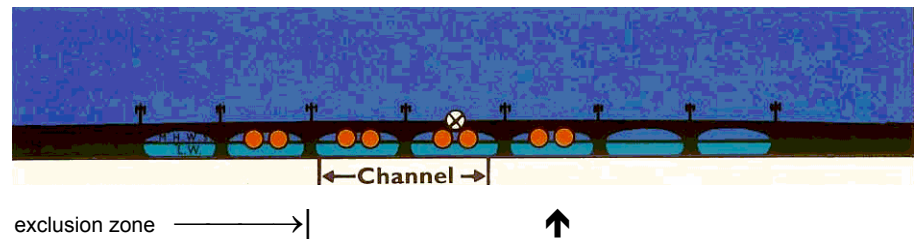
The MI6 Headquarters Building is on the right *immediately after* the bridge, and all craft are required to keep clear except in an emergency. The Exclusion Zone extends for a distance of 15 metres (50 feet) out from the Albert Embankment.

Also watch out for the yellow "Duck" tour boats entering and leaving the water at their slipway, which is near the downstream (far) end of the MI6 building.

19. LAMBETH BRIDGE



20. WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

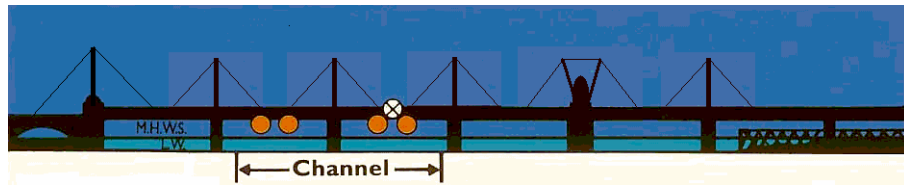


exclusion zone —————>|

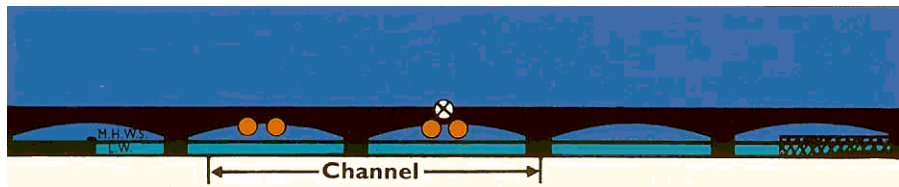
The Houses of Parliament are on the left bank *just before* Westminster Bridge, and all craft are required to keep clear except in an emergency. The Exclusion Zone extends 70 metres (230 feet) out from the left bank, which is about one-third the width of the river, so craft coming up-river (towards you) have to keep only *just* to their side of the centre of the river. When passing Westminster Pier, which is on the left bank *just after* Westminster Bridge, watch out for trip boats, and for ferry boats crossing to the London Eye.

21. HUNGERFORD BRIDGE

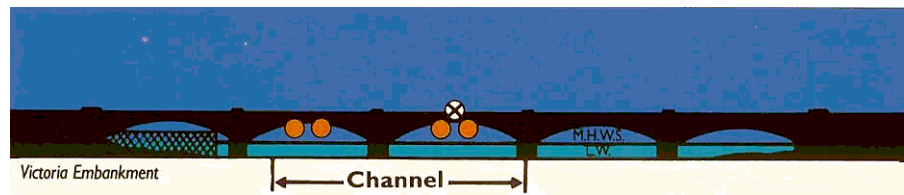
-- comprising the former CHARING CROSS RAILWAY BRIDGE and the two new HUNGERFORD FOOTBRIDGES (the Golden Jubilee Bridges)



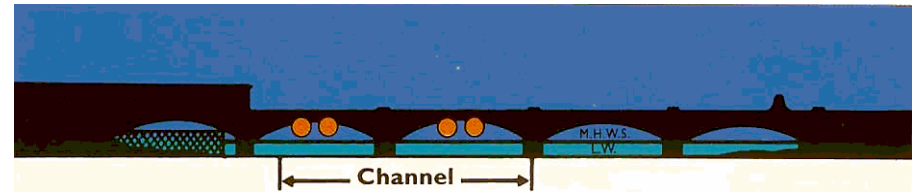
22. WATERLOO BRIDGE



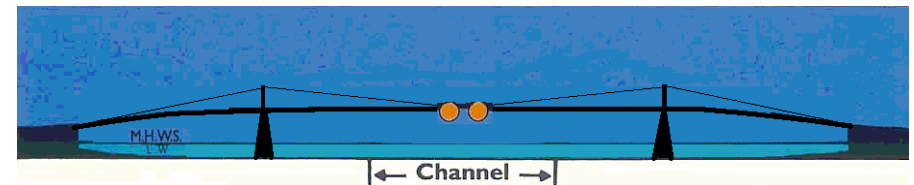
23. BLACKFRIARS BRIDGE



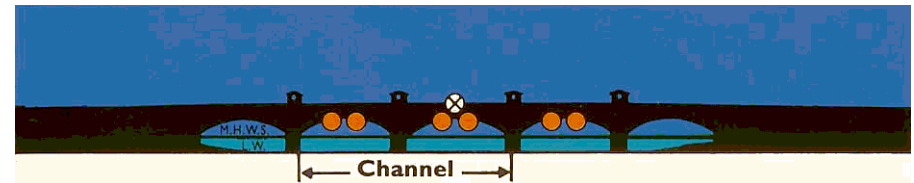
24. BLACKFRIARS RAILWAY BRIDGE



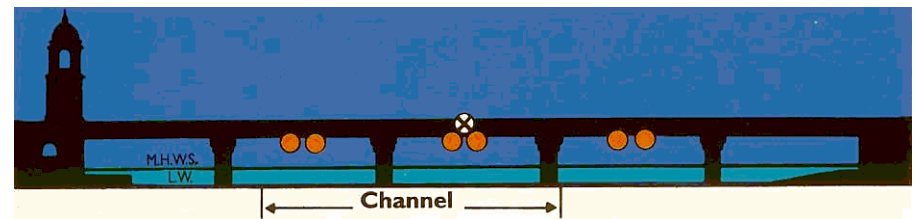
25. MILLENNIUM FOOTBRIDGE



26. SOUTHWARK BRIDGE

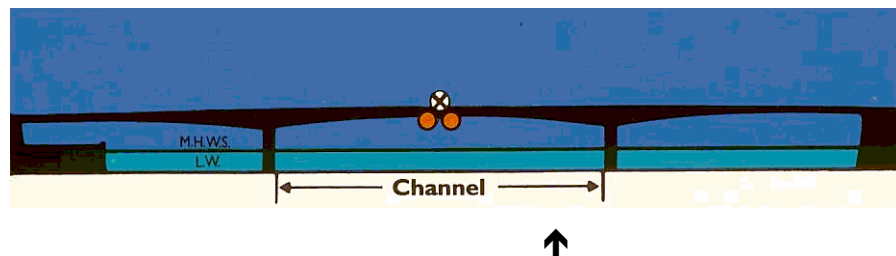


27. CANNON STREET RAILWAY BRIDGE



From Blackfriars Bridge to Tower Bridge: Take extra care: the river is narrow; the ebb tide runs particularly strongly; and there are several large ship-mooring buoys. Watch out for trip boats leaving from the various piers.

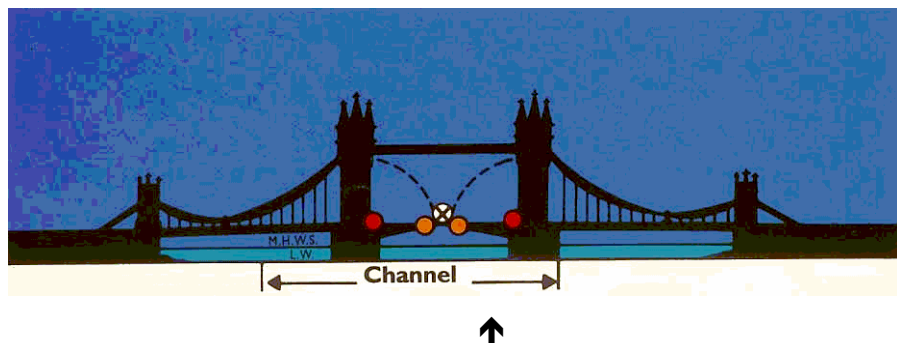
28. LONDON BRIDGE



After London Bridge:

Watch out for craft leaving and approaching London Bridge City Pier, which is on the RIGHT immediately after London Bridge, just before you pass *HMS Belfast*.

29. TOWER BRIDGE



After Tower Bridge:

Watch out for boats approaching and departing from St. Katharine's Pier and St. Katharine Dock, which are both on the LEFT immediately after Tower Bridge.

If you are bound for Limehouse, **CALL LIMEHOUSE MARINA AS SOON AS YOU HAVE PASSED UNDER TOWER BRIDGE:**

☎ 020 7308 9930 VHF Channel 80, call-sign "*Limehouse Marina*"

SPOTTING LIMEHOUSE ENTRANCE

Limehouse Marina and its two adjoining canals – the Regent's Canal and the Lee Navigation – are nowadays (since 1969) all reached via the same entrance from the river. Note that this is *not* the same as at Brentford, where the canal and the marina have quite separate entrances.

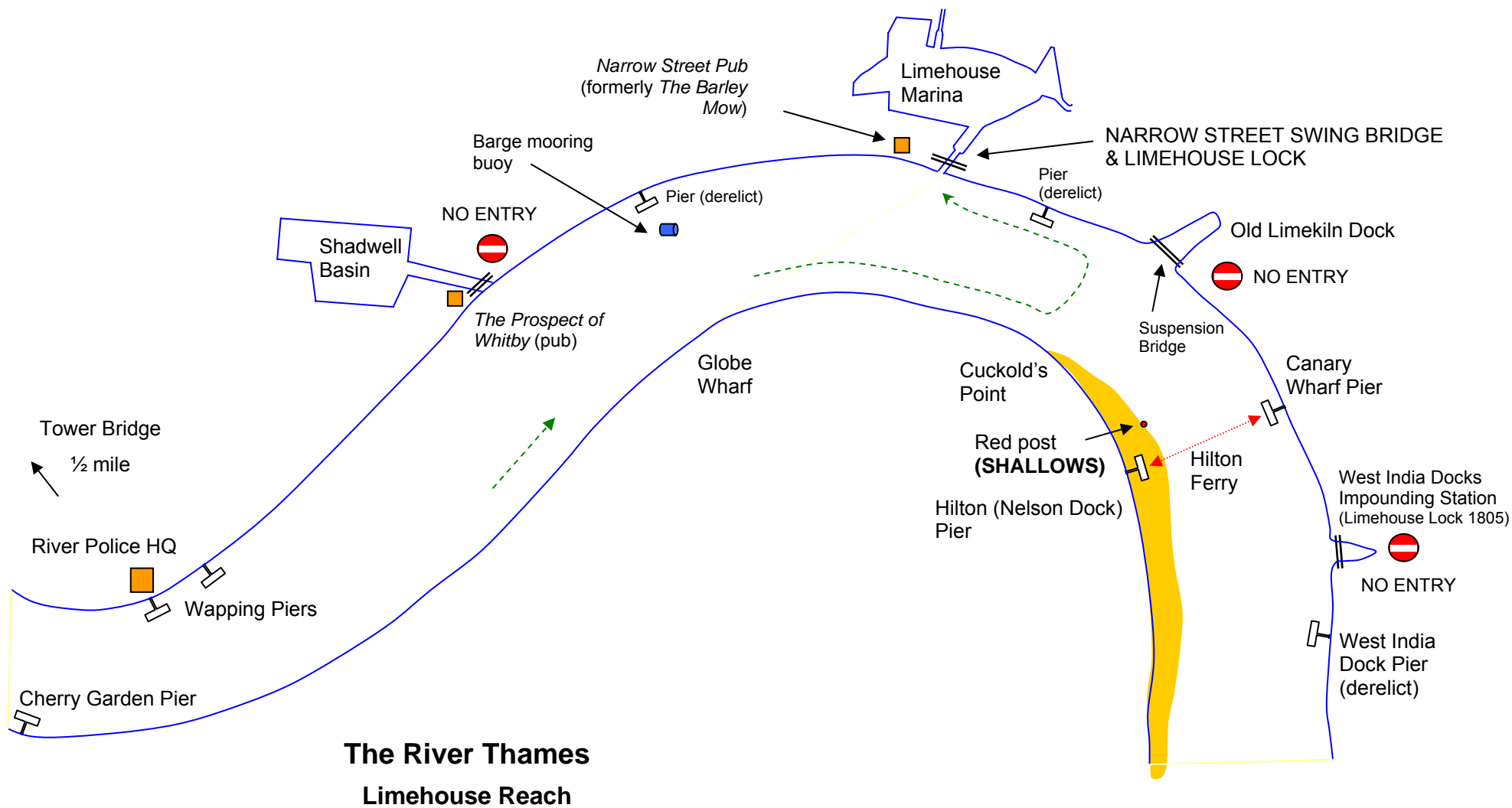
Be careful not to mistake Shadwell for Limehouse. Shadwell Basin is about half a mile before Limehouse on the same side of the river (the left-hand side). Shadwell has an imposing red-painted bridge but this no longer lifts and in fact the basin is not accessible at all from the river; don't try to go in there!

Half a mile further on, the entrance to Limehouse Lock is via Narrow Street Swing Bridge, which is painted black. The bridge is situated next to the former Dock Master's House, which became "*The Barley Mow*" pub but is now known as the "*Narrow Street Pub*". This was for many years quite recognisable, but it would be fair to say that it is now very difficult to spot from any distance because of all the other buildings around it.

"Limehouse Marina" is painted in large, friendly white letters on the outer, river-facing side of Narrow Street Swing Bridge, but because the bridge is set back from the mouth of the lock cut, the sign can barely be seen until you are almost directly opposite the entrance. If the bridge is swung into the open position (which will *not* normally need to be done for narrowboats) it is impossible to see the sign at all until you have actually gone past. This photograph should help you to identify the entrance in good time:



View from Globe Wharf looking down-river towards Limehouse Marina entrance (500 m approx.)



Limehouse Reach Chartlet.doc Jan 2006 JB

APPROACHING LIMEHOUSE ENTRANCE

As skipper, it is up to you to decide how to make your approach. There are several possible methods. The lock keepers will be pleased to discuss the pros and cons with you when you make your booking but they cannot, and must not, try to tell you how to drive your boat.

The dotted line on the chartlet of Limehouse Reach (previous page) shows a typical approach which most skippers would consider to be sensible and seaman-like on an ebbing tide:

In this case, the boat remains on the correct side of the river (the right-hand side: Coll.Reg's Rule 9a) until she is *well past* the entrance to Limehouse Lock cut. This gives her a reasonably good view around at least the first part of the blind bend before she crosses the river and – just as important – she can be seen in good time by vessels coming the other way.

Before she gets too close to the shallows off Cuckold's Point (marked by a red post) she makes a sound signal comprising FOUR SHORT BLASTS FOLLOWED BY TWO SHORT BLASTS, thus:



-- which means: "I am turning fully round to port" (PLA Byelaw 35).

She then cuts quickly across to the north side, "as near as possible at right angles to the general direction of traffic flow" (Coll.Reg's Rule 10c) ...

.. turns back towards Limehouse entrance so that she is once again on the correct side of the river (the right-hand side) and makes her final approach *into* the current so that she is moving slowly, under control and able to steer.

One potential problem with this method is that if you do not have sufficient engine power (and you should not really be on the tidal Thames if you don't) then you may have difficulty making your way back to the lock entrance against the current. However it must be appreciated that **trying to approach the entrance "with" (i.e. in the same direction as) the current is dangerous**. Although the boat will be moving fast relative to the brick walls, which is hazardous in itself, she may barely be moving *relative to the water* so there will be little or no flow over the rudder, making it very much more difficult to steer her into the entrance and to cope with the back-eddy which sometimes develops there – see the next section: ENTERING LIMEHOUSE LOCK-CUT.

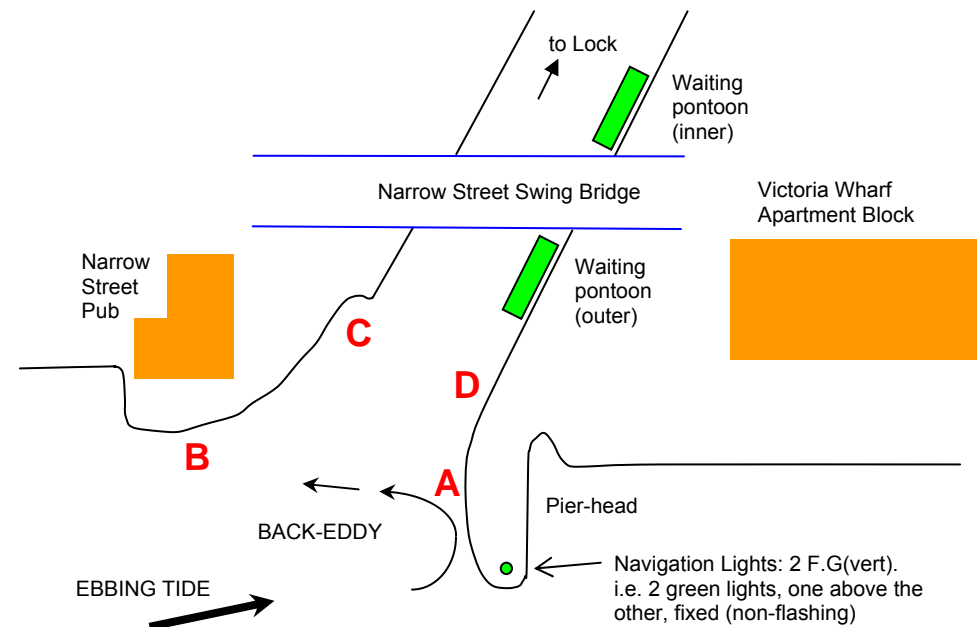
As stated previously, you are the skipper so the final decision as to how best to make your approach must be yours.

ENTERING LIMEHOUSE LOCK-CUT

Whichever method of approach you choose, you should always be very careful when making your final entry into the lock cut. Beware of the pier-head which extends 50 feet (15 m) out into the river on the right-hand (downstream) side of the entrance. At some states of the ebbing tide, there is a tendency for vessels to be swept downstream towards the pier-head (A) by the current. This is understandable, and you may well be expecting it.

At other times, however, a powerful BACK-EDDY is created, so that the water just inside the pier-head is actually flowing back *up*-river, even though the tide further out on the river is going the other way. This may catch you unawares and head you towards the corner of the opposite, *up*-stream wall (B).

Finally, having entered the lock-cut, remember to STRAIGHTEN-UP in good time. This is particularly important if you have a wheel rather than a tiller; you may not realise that you have the helm hard over to counter-act either the tidal stream or the back-eddy and you may find yourself suddenly veering towards one or other of the walls: (C) or (D):



AT LIMEHOUSE LOCK

The dimensions of Limehouse Lock are:

	Length	Width / beam	Depth / draught
Actual dimensions of lock:	30 m 98 ft	8 m 26 ft	Max depth: 8 m 26 ft
Maximum dimensions of vessel:	28 m 91 ft	7.5 m 24 ft	Max draught: 2.4 m 8 ft

At Limehouse, as in any large lock, it is always advisable to rig fenders on *both* sides of your boat; you may end up on the opposite side to that which you intended (!) and other boats may need to share the lock with you.

The lock keeper will normally be carrying a hand-held VHF radio. If you have a VHF radio on board, you should be able to speak directly to the keeper:

VHF Channel 80

Call-sign: "Limehouse Marina"

If you contacted Limehouse when you came under Tower Bridge, you were probably advised whether the lock would be ready for you. Ideally the gates will already be open, with the traffic lights on green. If not, it is probably because:

- other boats are using the lock (either going in ahead of you, or about to come out towards you) or:
- there is not enough depth of water for you to get over the cill into the lock

There are two WAITING PONTOONS: one before the bridge and one after the bridge. If it is not possible for you to go straight into the lock, you may choose (or you may be instructed) to tie-up to one of the pontoons.

Vessels out on the river can create a considerable wash in the lock cut, and the waiting pontoons can pitch quite violently. Please exercise extreme caution when using the pontoons. Around Low Water (when the difference in height can be up to 25 feet) please do not try to climb the ladders unless absolutely necessary.



Limehouse Lock has no "sluices", and water is let out of the lock simply by starting to open the outer gates. Please do not be alarmed by this!

The keeper will almost certainly be standing on the left-hand side of the lock as you enter, because that is the side where the control consoles are situated. The keeper *may* indicate which side of the lock he wishes you to go to, but otherwise you will usually be able to see the keeper more easily (and he, you) if you go to the right-hand side of the lock: i.e. "starboard-side-to".

PLEASE COME IN SLOWLY, so that even if your engine fails to go into reverse, you will not do any damage. Ensure that the boat is STATIONARY before you leave the helm.

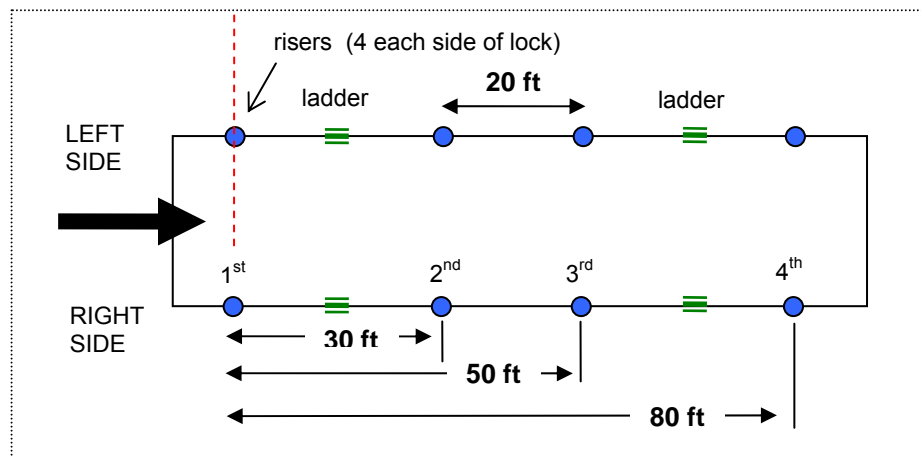
You must use your own lines, so HAVE YOUR LINES READY. If the difference in levels is significant (as it nearly always *will* be for boats arriving from Brentford or Teddington) the keeper will not be able to help you as he will be fifteen to twenty-five feet (5 to 8 m) above you!

DO NOT TRY TO THROW YOUR LINES TO THE KEEPER; instead, pass your lines through the vertical risers (plastic-covered cables) which are set into the lock walls.

The positions of the risers are indicated by arrows ↑ just below the parapet:



There are only 4 risers on each side. **Unless instructed otherwise, craft should aim to stop with their stern only just inside the lock, in line with the first riser; they can then be moved forward if necessary:**



Simply pass the line *once* through the vertical riser, pull it all the way through, lead it back to the boat and **take a turn round something**. **Do not just hold the rope**, as the pull can be significant.

YOU MUST NOT SECURE TO THE LADDERS.

Very small, light craft will find it easiest to use a single line led from a centre cleat. Heavier craft should use one line from the stern, and a second line from the centre or the bow.

Motor cruisers, whatever their size, will find it much easier to lead one line from a centre cleat, with another from the stern if necessary. If you *have* to use a bow line, bring it back amidships and attach it from there; **it is impossible to reach the risers in the wall when standing at the bow of a cruiser (or a yacht).**

Large motor cruisers are recommended to **ATTACH THE STERN LINE FIRST**: this will hold the boat, and the stern will not swing out. If necessary, you can then motor forward gently and the bow will swing in automatically, allowing you to attach the bow line. If you try to attach a bow line first, the bow will inevitably get pulled in and the stern will swing out.

You *may* be asked to turn your engine off in the lock. In any case, do not rely on the engine (or any side thrusters) to keep you in place.

Limehouse Lock has no “sluices”, and water is let into the lock simply by starting to open the inner gates. Please do not be alarmed by this!

After you have “come up” in the lock, **PLEASE DO NOT CAST OFF UNTIL THE GATES ARE FULLY OPEN**. The pull from the surface flow of water is at its *strongest* during the last few seconds while the gates are opening, and you will not be able to keep hold of the rope.

REMINDER:

If you called London VTS at Teddington or Brentford to tell them you were entering the tideway, please remember to call them again now, to let them know you are off the river:

CALL LONDON VTS VHF Channel 14 ☎ 020 8855 0315

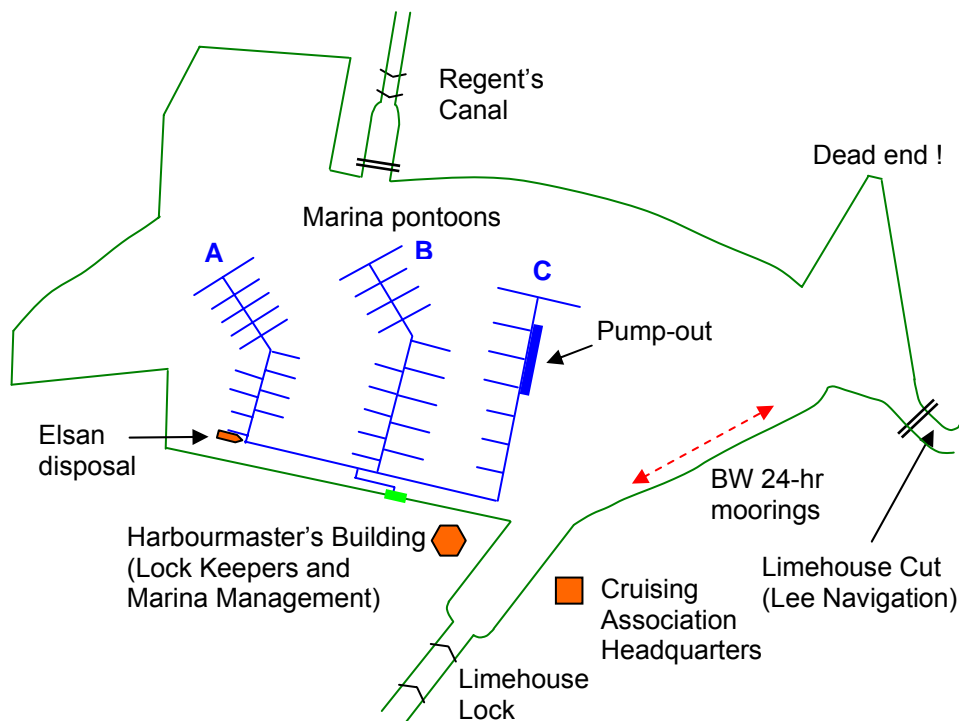
WELCOME to LIMEHOUSE

If you are a British Waterways licensed craft “just passing through” to the canal system, you are welcome to use the BW moorings which are along the wall on the right-hand side as you exit from the lock. You may stay for up to 24 hours free-of-charge, or just to have a cup of tea before you continue your journey.

Boats going into the marina will be given directions to their berth.

ALL crews are welcome to visit the Cruising Association (☎ 020 7537 2828) where drinks and food are usually available.

There are also pubs, restaurants, general stores and a Post Office nearby; please ask for details.



FURTHER READING

BOOKS

- *The River Thames Book*; Chris COVE-SMITH, Imray, 2002, ISBN 0-85288-620-9
- *Nicholson Guides to the Waterways:*
No 1: London, Grand Union, Oxford and the South East 2003; ISBN 0-00-713664-1
 or *No 7: River Thames and the Southern Waterways* 2003; ISBN 0-00-713670-6

IWA (Inland Waterways Association)

PO Box 114, Rickmansworth, Herts. WD3 1ZY

☎ 01923 711 114 www.waterways.org.uk

- *Thames Tideway Guide* 50p including postage

SPCC (St. Pancras Cruising Club)

The Yacht Basin, Camley Street, London, NW1 0PL

☎ 020 7278 280 www.stpancrascc.co.uk

- *Briefing Notes for Navigating the Thames Tideway*
- *London Cruising Guide: a boater's guide to London Waterways*

PLA (Port of London Authority)

Bakers' Hall, 7 Harp Lane, London EC3R 6LB

☎ 020 7743 7900 www.portoflondon.co.uk

- *The Tidal Thames – A Guide for Users of Recreational Craft* (free)

Other PLA publications:

- *Port of London River Byelaws*
- *PLA Permanent Notices to Mariners*
- *PLA Tide Tables and Port Information*
- *General Directions for Navigation in the Port of London*

NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This edition of the BW London Tideway Handbook includes information kindly provided by the Environment Agency (EA) lock keepers at Teddington Locks.

Bridge diagrams reproduced from *Port of London River Byelaws*, © PLA.

Photographs were taken by the lock keepers at Limehouse.

Thanks to: St. Pancras Cruising Club; Inland Waterways Association (London Region) and the Port of London Authority, for their assistance in compiling this book.

Passage notes are adapted from the SPCC's *Briefing Notes for Navigating the Thames Tideway*, with kind permission. Additional passage notes provided by Roger Squires of SPCC.

The information in this Handbook is offered in good faith. Neither British Waterways nor the contributors to the Handbook can accept any liability for the safety of craft on the tidal Thames. Although our staff are always pleased to offer advice, the safety of a vessel is the responsibility of the skipper and it is he or she who must decide whether, and at what time, a vessel should proceed onto the tideway, particularly with regard to the weather and the state of the tide.

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Paddington
London W2 6TT
T: 020 7985 7200

Limehouse Marina

46 Goodhart Place
London E14 8EG
T: 020 7308 9930

E: enquiries.london@britishwaterways.co.uk

W: www.waterscape.com



Every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of all information given in this guide and British Waterways London does not accept responsibility for any changes that may have occurred since going to press.