



Water safety, general awareness and some pointers to get you started.

Revised 30 Apr 2018

Essential information

As a crew you are responsible for your own & each other's safety any time you take out the canoe. You should all feel comfortable in the conditions you are going out in and need to decide this as a crew. There is always an option to stay in the harbour.

Before you go out on the water you need to know:

- Tide time & state at Christchurch (Entrance)
 - Do NOT use tides for other locations, accurate tide times are based ONLY for ports/harbours so Bournemouth tide is completely estimated.
 - Know if it is Spring (large tidal movement) or Neap (smaller tidal movement).
 - For iPhone users there is a great app called Tides Planner which is about £2.50 a year & very, very useful for paddling anywhere in the UK.
- Wind direction & state for the duration of your session +/- at least 1hr
 - Check multiple sources as they are not always accurate.
 - MetOffice have an iPhone app, try Wind Guru & also there is a live wind app for Poole Harbour which can be very useful for true wind speed & direction.

Know the rules of the water

The key rule of water / rivers: ALWAYS keep to the right

Channel markers are often used & are to indicate the channel to ships coming INTO port / harbour.

- Red (Port) always to your left when coming INTO harbour
- Green (Starboard) always to your right when coming INTO harbour.

Give way to EVERYTHING, it is your responsibility to get out of the way of all other craft. Make a clear movement to show you have seen them & are taking a course to avoid them (always keeping right).

Watch for rowers – going backwards and moving fast means they may not have seen you. If a collision looks likely shout loudly to get their attention early.



Safety Drills / Process

ALWAYS carry at least 1 spare paddle strapped to the lako using a piece of inner tube

Before launching check:

- Condition of rubber for all lashings
- Check bailers are present
- Check covers are securely fitted (if used)
- Check the tow line is tied to seat 1

Record on the exterior clubhouse blackboard the number of canoes out, number of people and expected return time:

“Canoes x 2, People x 12, ETA 09.15”.

If relevant include details of planned route - such as a “trip to Old Harry”.

When all canoes have returned, remove the outing info from the blackboard.

On-Water Safety

Take a VHF radio per club canoe (stored in cupboard near paddle store) - responsibility of steerer.

Note - HH site uses channel 37A (also sometimes referred to as “M” or “M1” which is usually the default channel on their VHF radios when you turn it on - check this is the case before heading out and also check battery level. Note that VHF only needs to be on when you plan to use it unless you agree to use for comms between canoes. At end of session, turn off VHF and return to charging station.

VHF Channels:

- HH Club use 37A
- Local coast guard is on VHF channel 67
- Emergency coast guard is on channel 16

Depending on situation seek help from most appropriate source

If for some reason a VHF is not available always take a means of calling for help in the canoe – at a minimum, a mobile phone in a waterproof pouch.

The RNLI provides some safety info [here](#)



In the event you require rescue of the canoe by towing from another vessel ALWAYS use the tow line kept in the canoe. Rights of salvage mean if someone were to tow you using their own rope they take ownership of the canoe (THIS IS NOT A JOKE!)

Huli (capsize) Recovery

In the event of a huli (capsize) each seat has a role as follows:

- All check everyone is out from the canoe (if needed, call your numbers if you're on opposite sides of the canoe)
- Seat 1 collects the paddles from 1, 2 and 3
- Seat 6 collects the paddles from 4, 5 and 6
- Seat 1 & 6 Swim to your end of the canoe & get it pointing up or downwind whichever is closest (so you can control the canoe)
- Seats 2 & 5 swim to the ama and hold
- Seats 3 & 4 throw yourself over the hull (from opposite the ama side) & on your count 1,2,3 GO you pull back on the gunnels while seats 2 & 5 throw the ama into the air to right the canoe.
- The lightest or most appropriate member enters the canoe (from the ama side) & bails until empty enough for others to enter the canoe. This is tiring any it may be more efficient to swap paddlers. Others should not enter while there remains a risk of their weight lowering the canoe and causing more water to re-enter.
- Each seat to enter one by one (FROM THE AMA SIDE) before moving off ensure covers are zipped up & the canoe is bailed.

There are many videos out there but this one covers it point by point so worth a watch if you've never been through a huli drill: <https://youtu.be/YixyCwuARGY>

Individual paddler water safety requirements

You need to be capable of swimming at least 100m in open seas while carrying your paddle. This means you need to be able to swim at least 200-300 meters in a normal pool environment.

You need to be able to pull yourself out of the water & into the canoe (similar to getting out of a swimming pool without using the steps)

If you are not able to do both of the above then you should not be out in the canoe.

Swim Bournemouth offer an excellent swim coaching programme from the local pools to learn & progress with your swimming fitness. You may also consider wearing an inflatable personal flotation device (PFD) such as those made by Palm/others. Provision of this is your responsibility, regular PFDs are available to borrow from the centre if required.



Know your local area

We paddle out of Christchurch harbour which is a natural harbour and the meeting point of the River Stour & the River Avon.

During the summer months the channel (deep water) is marked by green & red buoys. The channel is NOT a straight line. Be aware of the twists & turns (see map later). In anything other than high tide conditions always take the channel, DO NOT cut across as you risk getting stuck on the sand/mud banks damaging the canoe or paddles (as well as a long walk pushing the canoes).

In low tide conditions, to avoid the sandbar in front of the slipway, leave the club and follow the right side of the river to the point at which the right bank turns sharply right – from here head left across to the main channel passing to right of the yellow buoy which marks the end of a sandbar.

Be aware we share the water with other craft such as boats, rowers etc. Pay particular attention to the rowers who may not see you as they face the wrong way! ALWAYS give way.

The channel goes right down to the beach huts where there is a small jetty for the ferry. In all conditions apart from high tide follow the channel right down to the jetty before turning left & hugging the spit towards the harbour exit. There are no red markers here, the right hand mark is the beach. Watch for the ferry and always leave it plenty of space.

The exit of the Harbour (at Mudeford) is called The Run. **This is an extremely dangerous section of water** due to the narrow funnelling effect during tidal movement.

DO NOT paddle out of the harbour on an outgoing spring tide, you may not make it back in against the current.

Be cautious leaving the harbour 0-2 hours after low tide as the incoming sea may be pushing against the outgoing river in the “run” significantly increasing turbulence. If unsure of conditions, moor before the “run” and walk along to check conditions before proceeding.

There is a very large sandbar immediately outside the harbour. This can be dry or very shallow at low tide so DO NOT paddle over it & risk damage to the canoe or paddles. There are also often breaking waves & currents here.

The channel (Deep water) is marked clearly during summer season by Green & Red markers. Follow these out to deep, calm water before turning out to sea. It is a long way before it is deep enough. Keep following the markers to learn the route.

Heading towards Hengistbury headland you will see a tall red pole about 200 m out from the beach. From this pole to the beach there's a VERY shallow stone wall covering a pipe. In all conditions apart from high tide DO NOT go inside the red pole.

The water depth changes quickly as you approach the headland – you will often notice the surface texture is rougher. To minimise time in this water, remain closer to the beach and head along the headland, always keeping a safe distance from the rocky spit and passing the end of the headland with caution – leave plenty of space.

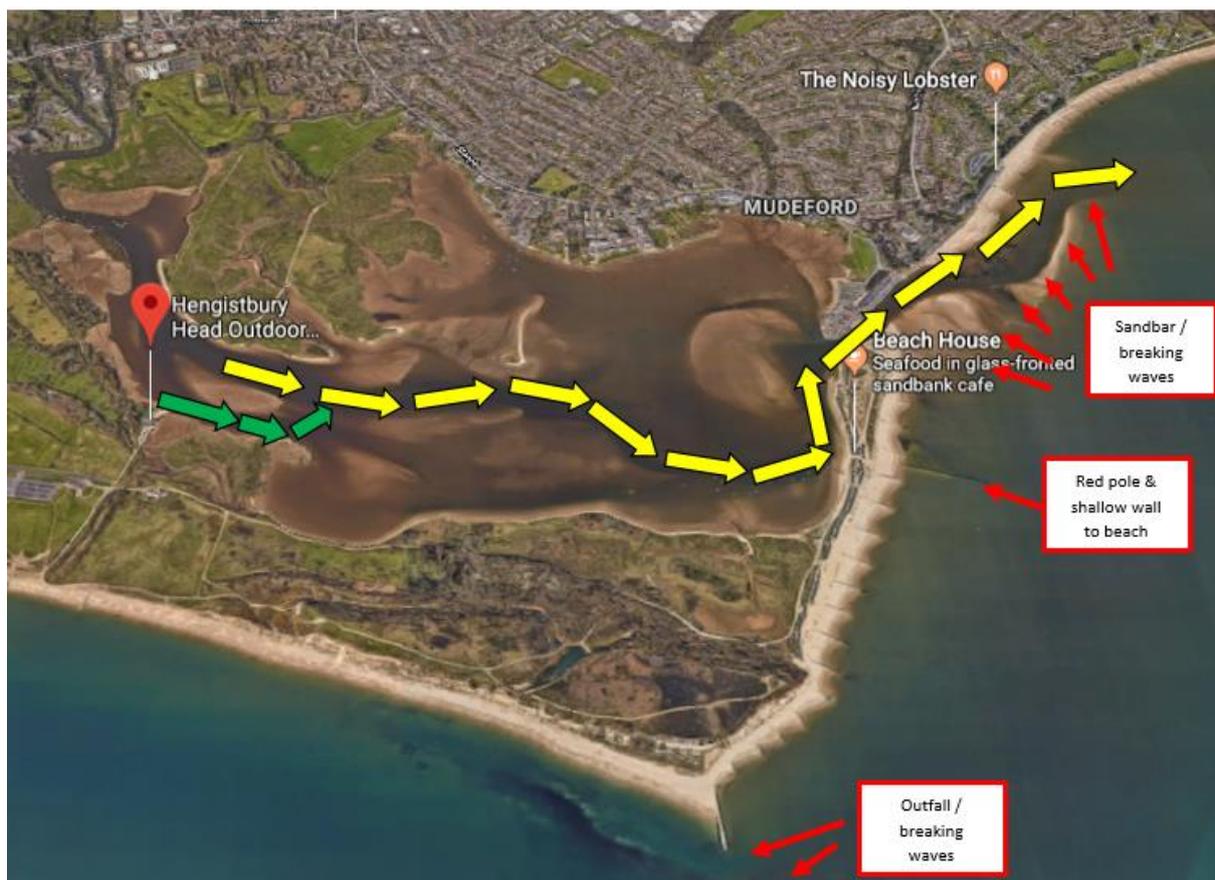


Right out at the headland there is a rocky outfall where tides & currents are very strong. **This is an extremely dangerous section of water** & the conditions can cause large breaking waves. Be aware of the conditions here & be aware currents may pull you into the waves. Avoid paddling through here if there are any breaking waves.

The river & harbour exit face more or less East, so be aware of wind direction that could cause breaking waves in the harbour. If there is an outgoing tide & easterly wind the conditions could be very choppy.

If conditions change while out and return via the "run" is not safe, consider landing by cafe and carrying the canoe through the beach huts to the harbour.

Southerly or South West winds will likely cause breaking waves on the sandbar outside the harbour & also at the point of the headland on the outfall.



The yellow arrows indicate the main channel coming down from Christchurch.

Green arrows indicate the best option for leaving the centre.



PADDLE TECHNIQUE

There are a lot of videos and articles on the subject and lots of different opinions but the following videos are a good place to start to help you visual the body and paddle position as well as the stages of the stroke.

- [Danny Ching technique video](#)
- [Will Reichenstein technique video](#)

RESPECTING YOUR OUTRIGGER – DOs and DON'Ts (and some history/ culture)

The following article is part of THE HANA HOU SERIES found

at <http://www.holoholo.org> Respecting Your Outrigger © 1999 Kawika Sands

1. Respect every canoe as a family member. From the time a canoe is made and blessed, the canoe becomes an entity unto itself. Care for it as a loved one by maintaining it before setting out to sea and cleaning it after you return. Never sit on, or step over, a canoe (exceptions are sometimes made for dry-land training or demonstration purposes). If you must, support the hull along the kua`e/keel (the center line along the outside/bottom of the hull) in a way that will distribute the weight evenly to avoid placing too much stress at any one point. In Hawai`i, it is believed that to step over another is to cut their life shorter; therefore, the same applies to your canoe.
2. On land, the canoe always faces the ocean. This relates back to ancient Hawai`i when canoes were frequently used to repel attacks from other islands. "Stacking" is sometimes necessary to accommodate available space (placing the ama of a subsequent canoe on the `iako of a previous canoe).
3. Care should also be taken for the area surrounding the canoe. Pick up opala (rubbish) on and around your paena wa`a (canoe landing), halau wa`a (canoe house), or auha (canoe shed). Put things away that need to be stored without being asked. – Hoe aku i ka wa`a (literal meaning: move ahead the canoe; figurative meaning: do your share).



4. Everyone helps when the canoe is being carried, covered, cleaned or cared for. This includes loading and unloading the canoes, covering or storing them, cleaning them and washing them down with fresh water (especially the lashings) when they are dirty or after practice, and checking all parts of the canoe before and after practice. This applies to every member of the club from the first time novice to the president. From ancient times, whenever there was a large undertaking, everyone would help by doing whatever he or she could. The strong would do the work, the old would offer encouragement and advice, and the young would bring the water and food, but everyone would participate.
– A`ohe hana nui ka alu`ia. (No task is too big when done together).
5. Customarily, a prayer or pule is always said before every launching no matter how long or short the voyage. The prayer needn't be long and perhaps not in Hawaiian, nor does it have to be religious in nature. Doing so helps center the crew mentally and spiritually (no religious reference).
6. On water, avoid standing, arguing and swearing in the canoe. Standing is rarely a good idea for stability and safety reasons anyway. Arguing and swearing only serves to upset the entire crew's efforts and create animosity instead of aloha. Avoid tracking dirt and sand into the outrigger when you climb aboard.
-`Ike aku, `ike mai, kokua aku, kokua mai. Pela iho la ka nohana `ohana (Recognize others, be recognized, help others, be helped. Such is a family relationship).
7. Learn the particular duties that go along with the seat you sit in. Once you step into a canoe you are part of a team. Therefore every ho`a wa`a (canoe mate) must work together by doing his share. The only way to know what is expected of each member is to have clearly defined assignments beforehand.
-Komo mai kau mapuna hoe (Dip your paddle in. Join in the effort.)
8. See to it that personal issues are put to rest quickly instead of letting them collect and fester in your mind. Remember; what happens on land stays on land, what happens at sea, stays at sea. Show respect, enthusiasm and commitment to your ho`a wa`a by arriving on time to practice (steersmen, coaches and other leaders should ALWAYS arrive early).
-A leader is never on time, he is always early.