



MEMBERS HANDBOOK

For New and Existing Members

Revision 7 – November 2025

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Committee Members

Abingdon Rowing Club has an enthusiastic and active Committee which runs the club for the benefit and enjoyment of its members. The key members of the Committee are listed below.

Tony Hughes	President
Andrew Troup	Chairman
Gillian Douglas	Club Captain & Water Safety Officer
Sophie Panzer	Racing Captain
David Kirwin	Recreational Captain
Maddy Elliott	Secretary
Tom Hardy	Treasurer
Rod Pigott	Membership Secretary
Mireya Etxaluze	Welfare & Water Safety Officer

Additional Roles (Non-Committee Positions)

Elly Kilsby	Learn to Row
Vlad Zmijanovic/Sophie Panzer	Race Entries Secretary

Most of the above can be contacted by email via the contacts page on the ARC website, or in person at the club.

<http://www.abingdonrc.org.uk>

Introduction

This handbook is aimed at all Club members, new and existing, and is intended to give an overview of the club, the stretch of river we row on, and other information you may find useful throughout your membership with Abingdon Rowing Club.

If you feel there is anything else that could be added, please let us know by contacting one of the committee members shown on the previous page, and we will do our best to include it in the next revision.

Abingdon Rowing Club

Abingdon Rowing Club was established in 1958 to exploit one of the best stretches of water on the River Thames. The distance from end-to-end is 3,800 m, which remains relatively free of major river traffic, even during the summer months. The club continues to build on its success, investing in our facilities, equipment and coaching support to provide a unique training environment for everyone from recreational rowers to athletes with ambition.

The Club has two squads a racing and recreational squad which, cater for members of all age groups and abilities. Squads train between 1 and 6 days per week depending upon their aims, aspirations and commitments.

Each year the Club competes at regattas all over the country, and has had medal successes at Henley Masters, National Masters Championships and Vet Fours Head.

We also hold our own Head of the River race each year, in April. This event is very well attended by many clubs from all over the UK – some from as far away as Scotland. Unlike other clubs, we don't compete in our own Head Race.



Squads

We offer a less common set-up of Racing and Recreational squads, which are not split by gender or Masters level. We believe that this widens opportunities and forms a stronger club community.

Beginners

The club runs beginner courses in early Summer to provide people with a taster in rowing and the basic skills required to take part in the sport recreationally or competitively. After completing a course, new members may be invited to join the novice/intermediate squads for where they are transitioned into the recreational or racing squad. For details of upcoming beginner courses, check out our website www.abingdonrc.org.uk,

Novice/Intermediate (Men and Women)

The Novice/Intermediate Squads are for those who have progressed from the Beginners squad, and are developing their rowing technique and fitness, or those with previous rowing experience who are coming back into the sport. This group gives the first taste of competition and the feeling of being part of a squad. It is a mixed ability group with some members remaining at this level for competition each year as it meets their competition desires and fits with their ability to train. Those who wish to train further are able to join the racing squad at the beginning of winter season.

Racing (Men and Women)

The racing squad is a mixed sex squad which caters for those who have some experience rowing or sculling, and who are willing and able to commit to a full training program, which is made up of evening sessions during the week (water-based in the summer, and land based in winter), as well as Saturday and Sunday morning water outings.

The Senior Squad takes in experienced new members all the way through the year, and those progressing from the Club's novice/Intermediate squads in September each year.



Recreational squad

Abingdon Rowing Club has a large recreational squad made up of all ages and both sexes. Dedicated to enjoying themselves, the group welcomes rowers with all levels of experience and ability and offers rowing to suit all levels, from recreational / occasional racing.

This squad supports individuals and crews who prefer to stay on our beautiful stretch of water with regular or occasional sessions, not racing but enjoying the activity, the companionship, the (occasional) tranquility and the (lively) wildlife. It keeps us fit, keeps us healthy and keeps the mind working.

So, whatever your ability level and whatever your ambition, you'll be assured of a very warm and enthusiastic welcome at Abingdon Rowing Club. The recreational squad row on Saturday and Sunday mornings through the year and add evening rowing in the summer months.

Our Facilities and Equipment

The Abingdon Rowing Club boathouse consists of male and female changing rooms, a gym, club room, and three boat bays. We have a range of sculling and sweep oar boats to suit all sizes and abilities.

The boathouse and fleet of boats is maintained by club members, with the help of a part-time boatman for one or two hours a week. This means everyone needs to help look after equipment, facilities and the general running of the club. There is always something that needs doing, be it mowing the lawn, washing up cups, fixing or cleaning boats or mending club equipment.

The running of the club is funded entirely by club membership, racking fees, club head income and grants. Our mission is not to make money, but to improve facilities for our members, and any income received is invested straight back into the club to improve equipment and facilities.

Rowing boats are extremely delicate and expensive - It is important they are handled with the proper care they need. Please take care to clean boats after you have used them, and to carry and store them correctly. All boats have been carefully rigged and, other than footplates, shouldn't be changed unless under direction from the club captain or coach. Plastic 'C' clips have been placed on all riggers to allow for heights to be adjusted easily. If you notice any problems with any of the boats, please send an email to arcboatrepairs@gmail.com, with a full description of the issue, so that repairs can be arranged.

The club has a number of indoor rowing machines (known as ergs), in our new gym. If you are using the ergs, please wipe them clean with the spray and wipes provided after each use. There is also some special oil available to lubricate the chains occasionally.

The club gym also has a selection of free weights available for use by members. Please think about your own and other people's safety when using this equipment and ensure that all weights are returned to their racks after use.

The club has three launches; Speckled Hen, Peta and Fun Boat. These boats are power boats which are normally used by coaches to accompany crews when on the water. The boats are booked using the booking sheet and can only be used by people who have been

trained and assessed as competent to do so. If you would like to be trained to use these boats, have a chat with one of the squad captains, who will arrange this for you.

Booking Boats

All of the club boats are listed on a public spreadsheet. This spreadsheet is used to book boats and also contains information on water safety and river conditions. Reserving boats via the booking sheet ensures that club equipment is utilized as efficiently as possible.

There are a couple of rules to remember when using the sheet –

- Please do not book boats more than 7 days in advance, unless booking for a specific event
- if you have booked a boat and you are more than 20 minutes late then your booking becomes null and the boat is then available for others to use
- If you no longer need your boat booking, please cancel it as soon as you know it will no longer be needed, to enable others to use the boat instead
- The spreadsheet clearly shows the suggested average crew weight and the suggested ability level or squad that should use that boat. Please take care to read this before booking boats to make sure you reserve a boat that is best suited to you and your crew.

The link to the boat booking spreadsheet can be found on the links page at the back of this handbook.

Abingdon Club Head Race

One of the biggest events of the year at Abingdon Rowing Club is the annual club head race. Crews from all over the country come to compete at Abingdon. It is one of the biggest sources of income to the club and so it is important that all club members help to make the event run as smoothly as possible. As part of membership of the club, all members are expected to make themselves available for the weekend of the Head which is held in the middle of April. It really is a case of more hands making light work! Please take this event seriously, it is very important the ARC membership all pull together to help ensure the continued success of this essential event for the club.

Navigation and Safety

The Thames at Abingdon is enjoyed by many people. As well as Abingdon Rowing Club, local canoe clubs, sailing clubs and leisure boats also take advantage of this stretch of River. To help make the river a safe place to be, all river users should be aware of the following navigational rules:

- Always boat and land with the bows of the boat pointing upstream
- Boats landing have priority over boats going out on the Landing Stage

- Always keep to the right of the river (So the bank should always be on your left (Unless you are the cox, in which case it should always be on your right))
- Crews being overtaken should maintain course and speed. The overtaking crew is responsible for ensuring it is safe to do so before proceeding.
- Rowing boats must give way to sailing boats
- Powered craft (including launches and pleasure boats) must give way to rowing boats
- Always ensure the river is clear both ways before spinning, and never spin on a bend
- In high stream, spin by the petrol pumps at the town end of the river, and just past the danger sign at the weir end of the river

A map of the river, showing hazards and turning points, can be found on the next page.

Rowing is an extremely safe sport, but as with all river activities, please remember the following guidelines:

- Always bring a spare change of kit and a towel with you to the club if you are planning a water outing – Although rare, capsizes do happen!
- If there are adverse weather conditions, or high stream, please consider the ability of yourself and/or your crew to deal with the conditions, refer to the competency sheets on the boat booking google site, and heed the advice of the Club Safety Officer on all matters to do with Water Safety.
- All members must be able to swim at least 100 meters in light clothing and complete a capsize course as soon as possible after joining the club. All members wishing to use club boats must attend a capsize drill every two years as a minimum requirement.

Social

We are a very friendly club, with a busy social calendar, which includes our annual Christmas Party, regular organized “Row to Oxford” outings (Via the Isis pub!), Fun Race Days, Barbecues and Halloween/Fireworks parties. Keep an eye out for emails from the club secretary for details of any upcoming social events.

Club Kit

Abingdon Rowing Club has a wide range of club kit, for both racing and training. Bulk club kit orders are generally put in two to three times a year, so that we can make the most of large order discounts and pass these savings on to our members. If you are new to the club and need any racing kit before you have had a chance to order any, then our members are always willing to help out by lending kit, so please do ask if you need something.

If you are racing in a competitive British Rowing event, then there is a requirement for you to wear the Abingdon Rowing Club kit.

In addition to club kit, t-shirts, hoodies, tracksuit bottoms as well as various other ARC items are also available for purchase.



Boat Racking

Members of the club can apply for space to store (rack) their private boats at the club for an annual fee, either inside the boathouse or on the outside racking. There is also space within the far boat-bay for members private blades to be stored. The charging rate for boat storage at the club is dependent upon the boat type (size) and storage location.

On the lawn behind the club, members can also store their kayaks. A fee of £50 per annum is charged for the storage of kayaks.

Abingdon Rowing Club – River Thames Map

