

(Draft)

NC Guidelines for rota captains¹

What should rota captains know ?

- Fundamental elements of safe practice, afloat and ashore
- The tide and how to use tide tables
- The weather
- How the weather and tide effect navigation
- The basic rules of river
- Managing crews and teaching beginners
- Care of boat, parts of boat, maintenance, etc.
- The paperwork

Weather

What is the forecast ? Find out from:

- TV, radio, or teletext;
- A newspaper;
- Ring Weatherdial (pricey !): 1550 123 123
- Or Weatherdial FAX (pricey !): 1550 131 838
- The web – there is a good selection of sites, including local winds and tides, on www.kelticwave.com – select “Weather”.

In particular, ask yourself:

- What direction is the wind due to be from ?
- What strength will it be ?
- Is it due to increase or change direction ?
- Will it be steady or gusty ?
- Will it rain ?
- Are conditions right for a sea breeze ?
- What is it like now ?

Also check the local conditions. For instance, recent heavy rain or the opening of the Inniscarra damn will effect the river flow on the marina; and the local topography causes wind to funnel along the marina. Wind effects currachs more than tide, so plan your outward trip against the wind, and the trip home with it.

How else will local weather conditions effect your plans?

¹ Incorporating input from the workshop in February, 2006 and Jenny Wallace and Padraig O Dúinnín’s notes for Bádoireacht instructors.

Tides

You also need to know what the tide is doing. Tides operate in a monthly cycle of springs and neaps, according to the phase of the moon. The highest high tides and lowest low tides occur when there is a full moon and when there is no moon. These are spring tides. Neap tides happen in between these two phases and have the opposite characteristics – the lowest high tides and highest low tides.

The tide goes in and out approximately twice daily, so there is an exchange of a large volume of water roughly every 6 hours. The volume of water that is exchanged during spring tides (highest highs and lowest lows) is greater than during neap tides – so the fastest tidal flows occur during spring tides.

➔ so do not take spring tides lightly !

The rate of tidal flow varies during the 6 hours between high tide and low tide, and low tide and high tide, according to the “Rule of Twelfths”:

Hour after low or high water	Volume of water moved
1 st hour	1/12
2 nd hour	2/12
3 rd hour	3/12
4 th hour	3/12
5 th hour	2/12
6 th hour	1/12

➔ so think about the direction you’d rather be travelling during the 3rd and 4th hours of the tide !

Find out the times and heights of the nearest local high and low water for the day from a set of tide tables (available from any of the local chandlerys), a daily newspaper (usually listed near the weather) or the link on the kelticwave.com website.

Ask yourself:

- Will the tide be rising or falling ?
- Is it spring or neap tides ?
- Will the tide change while you are out there ?

How will the state of the tide effect your plans ?

Remember: plan so that the outward trip is against the conditions, and the trip home is with them.

Local hazards

Whether boating from Shandon Boat Club or elsewhere, find out as much information as you can about the area you will be boating in:

- What are the local hazards ?
- Are there local currents ?
- What other traffic will be on the water ?

- Are there any special regulations in effect ?
- Where are good places to go if conditions change ?

In general, keep out of the way of other users of the Marina. It is difficult to manoeuvre large ships in the narrow channel, and the crew may not even know that you are there. Small fast rowing boats have small, sharp, pointed bows; and, like currachs, are rowed by people who are not looking where they are going.

While afloat you should always be reassessing conditions and be prepared to change your plans.

“Designated worrier”

Will anyone miss you if you don't return ? How soon will they go looking for you ? Will that person know what to do if you need rescued ?

Always tell someone on shore that you are going out for a spin, where you intend to go, and when you will be back (be realistic !). When you do return safely, let them know. This person is your “designated worrier”.

The club has a safety recording system for the Saturday rota outing at Shandon Boat Club. The details of everyone who is going on the water are entered by the rota or crew captain on a log sheet and left in the olive barrel where the life jackets are stored. The details needed are set out on the log sheet – names, a contact number (N.B. make sure the contact person is also on shore - the mobile number of someone else in the boat is not much use), number of boats out and crew in each, outing plan, name of shore contact person and time of departure.

The rota captain is responsible for identifying and telling the shore contact about the outing and how long it will take. The shore contact must know where to find the olive barrel and what to do with the information on the log sheets in it. If you make an alternative plan because the conditions change, remember to let the shore contact know.

Ring the shore contact when you return safely. If it should happen that the rota captain and crew(s) do not make contact at the agreed return time, the shore contact should first check (by phone, or by going down to the river in person) to see if this is an oversight, or if the outing has taken longer than anticipated.

If it appears that an accident may have happened, then the emergency services should be rung and given a full account, including the details on the log sheet. Ring:

- **112 or 999**

This is why it is important to fill in the log sheet properly.

Log sheets and housekeeping

Apart from the details of crews, boats and the outing plan, the log sheet also acts as a record of how the outing went, membership income and damage to boats. The more time taken to fill it in, the more helpful the record.

Everyone taking part in a Naomogha Corchaí outing must be a member of the club. Our third party liability insurance only applies to members. Check the details on day membership forms as new members fill them in, particularly information on health. Find out if people have rowed or been in a boat before, and ask if they can swim.

Ask further questions on any health conditions people identify if you need to know more to be comfortable about taking them out (e.g., diabetes). The crew's overall safety is up to the rota captain, so make sure you are secure in knowing how to deal with any potential health situations that might happen on the water; and that you know enough to pass essential details on to any medical personnel that may have to be called out. If you are not comfortable, then be tactful, and explain to the person concerned that you do not feel well enough equipped to risk taking them out.

Day members should be indicated on the log sheet with an asterisk, and all membership money taken should be noted on the form. Bring an envelope with you for the money, and after the outing, post it with any completed new or day membership forms, the amounts paid and the date through the letter box of Murray O Laoire Architects on Victoria Road (beside the Polish bar) for Oisín Creagh, the Treasurer.

Safety equipment

Since 2004 the law requires everyone on board “a pleasure craft of less than 7 metres (23 feet) in length” to wear a **lifejacket/personal floatation device**. (See excerpt from the regulations in the appendix). Everyone taking part in a Naomogha Corchaí outing must wear a life jacket or buoyancy aid. When fitting out crews, make sure that:

- Everybody's buoyancy aid is the correct size for them.
- All jackets are tied and adjusted correctly.
- Everyone is aware of the importance and limitations of their buoyancy aid (e.g., the club jackets are not life jackets; they will not right you if you are unconscious, but act as aids to floating and swimming).

Regular rowers should be encouraged to buy their own life jacket.

Check that everybody is **dressed for the conditions**. Will they be warm and comfortable? What about the risk of sunstroke? Is there drinking water available if it's warm and sunny?

Basic **first aid kits** have been put together for all the boats – make sure they are carried during the outing.

No boat should go out without a **painter** (i.e., a rope for tying up) and a **bailer**.

Decisions - selecting crews and communicating the plan

Know the capabilities of your crew (including yourself). Make yourself aware of the skills, experience and expectations of the people who have turned up for an outing. Who is a beginner; who wants to learn more; who can steer; who wants to look at the view? Check what boats are available – are any away at a regatta, or have any been reported as damaged? Then make the best decision you can about mixing experience and beginners to make up the crews for the outing. Don't expect too much of the weaker crew members, and make sure everybody knows and agrees with the plan for the session and what is expected of them. If you want to keep an eye on anyone, put them at number 2 in your own boat, while

you row bow. Don't take people out if you are not comfortable about it. Apologise and explain your reasons.

Keep in touch with all boats during the session, and consider if any crew or individual could benefit from a change. Watch out for signs of discomfort and/or hypothermia. Ask yourself if you are happy with the way the session is progressing. Make sure that you are: change the plan if you need to. Come ashore if in doubt.

Watch out for the weirs and underwater piles on the south channel, and beware low bridges on a rising tide – make sure all your crews end up on the right side of them at home-coming time !

Don't overloaded any boat so that safety is compromised. It is very unusual for a naomhog under oars to capsize, but care must be taken at all times to prevent such an occurrence.

Beginners - onshore instruction

Never assume that people turning up for Saturday rows are familiar with the water. Particular care must be taken with children or young people. If necessary, explain the need to take care near the water's edge, and warn that steps and slipways may be very slippery.

Make sure everyone is clear about the rules of the club:

- All members on the water must wear a lifejacket/buoyancy aid.
- The boat captain is in charge of the boat and must be listened to.
- Do not stand up in the boat.
- Only one person at a time should get into or out of a boat.

Explain that bow has charge of steering the boat, and that this is done with the oars, by taking longer and/or shorter strokes on different sides. At this point, it can be useful to demonstrate how the wrists cross-over at the mid-point of the stroke.

Encourage everyone to have a stretch and warm-up before lifting the boats.

Checking the boats, lifting the boats, launching the boats, getting crews into the boats

Are all the boats and equipment seaworthy ?. Double check the skins and interiors for damage, and check the oars for splits.

New crews need to be told that the boats are heavy, and that lifting them requires concentration. Tell them the theory of lifting and spinning the boat beforehand. Always ensure there are enough people to lift each boat safely, and pair them off around the boat according to their height and potential strength so that they will be comfortable. Try a test lift up off the stand and directly down again to give people an idea of the weight they will be dealing with. Points to remember:

- Lay the oars out on the ground beforehand, set about 8 feet apart.
- Don't lift the point of the bow – this puts strain on the boat.
- Lift with the legs, not the back.
- Keep the boat off the ground – spin it over on the oars.
- Check for painter, bailer and dowels at this point.

- Be careful on the slipway – it can be very slippery.
- Put the stern in the water first, with someone holding the painter.
- Brief your painter holder well !

On a coastal trip, all boats should also carry a small anchor, flares and a klaxon for signalling or contacting the shore or other boats. At least one boat should have a full first aid kit.

Ask the crew members to bring the oars down to the boat, and get into it one-by-one while an experienced person holds the gunnel steady. Warn people not to put their fingers (or other body parts) between the boat and steps/slipway. Crew members should be encouraged to get into the boat gently, transferring their weight into the centre of the boat, low down, in a controlled way (rather than leaping in over-energetically and pushing the boat away from the slipway). As each person gets into the boat, the oars can be handed to them by the next to go aboard.

As a general rule, the oars on the outside (riverside) of the boat should be put on the dowels first – this provides stability on that side of the boat, while the person holding the gunnel provides it on the shore side. Dowels put in place in the cleats on the shore side gunnel before the crew are in the boat are potentially dangerous implements – watch out ! At least two members of the crew should have both oars in place before pushing off, so that way can be made once the slipway has been cleared.

Beginners – on-the-water instruction

Instructing a crew of beginners can begin once the boat is safely mid-stream. The general idea is to give individuals a feel for the stroke by themselves before the full crew attempts to row together. Begin with using one oar at a time, for a single stroke at a time, so that the boat is rowed around in circles:

- No. 4 pulls clé; stop
- No. 3 pulls clé; stop
- No. 2 pulls clé; stop
- Whole crew pull clé; stop

And then:

- No. 4 pulls deas; stop
- No. 3 pulls deas; stop
- No. 2 pulls deas; stop
- Whole crew pull deas; stop

Getting crews to call “in” at the catch can help with timing. Ask people to focus on rhythm and relaxation. Try:

- All together rowing clé whilst calling “in” at catch
- All together rowing deas whilst calling “in” at catch

Introduce rowing with both hands:

- No. 4 both oars, clé in airde
- No. 3 both oars, clé in airde
- No. 2 both oars, clé in airde
- Whole crew, both oars, calling “in” at catch together for 15 minutes

You could also try them with a different hand leading:

- No. 4 both oars, deas in airde
- No. 3 both oars, deas in airde
- No. 2 both oars, deas in airde
- Whole crew, both oars, calling “in” at catch together for 15 minutes

If you have a passenger, then swop them into stroke and repeat the process. Reassure your crew that everyone hits other people’s oars and bangs their knuckles at the beginning. Mix individuals around and take plenty of breaks; aim to have given everyone a chance to row for at least one uninterrupted spell of 10 – 15 minutes with the complete crew by the end of the session.

Coming ashore and tidying up

Come into the slipway against the conditions. This will give you more control of the boat, as it will be travelling more slowly. It is important that the crew captain remains in charge while the boat is coming alongside for disembarking. Crew members may be tired and forgetful, so keep control, and give clear instructions. Make sure that dowels in the shore side cleats are removed before people leave the boat.

The boat must be made fast or held securely before anybody gets in or out, and make it clear that only one person in the boat should be standing up at a time. Care must always be taken to prevent people falling in, and tired crews at the slipway are particularly vulnerable to mishaps.

The procedure for lifting and returning boats to the stands is the reverse of for launching, but there is no harm in repeating the instructions to make sure people understand what is required of them.

Briefing session, paperwork, “designated worrier” and locking up

Get your crew together after the boats and equipment are tidied away and make sure they are happy with how the outing went. Ask for feedback to record in the logsheet if you like – it makes for more interesting reading afterwards.

Complete the log sheet with the time the session ended, a record of the outing, and details of any damage to boats or equipment before leaving Shandon Boat Club. Remove any completed new and day membership forms from the olive barrel, and pass them on to the Treasurer (see “Log sheets and housekeeping” above).

Report a safe return to the shore contact.

Lock up if you are the last to leave the Shandon Boat Club site.

Report any damaged boats to the Naomogha Chorcaí Captaen (Stefan Wulff), and to Meitheal Mara at Crosses Green House (021 – 4316813; mmara@iol.ie). This is important in case anyone has plans to use particular boats in the coming week, and to ensure that damages are repaired as soon as possible.

Appendix: Merchant Shipping (Pleasure Craft) (Lifejackets and Operation)

(Safety) Regulations 2004 (S.I. 259 of 2004)

The Regulations came into effect on 2nd June 2004 and apply to all pleasure craft regardless of propulsion being operated in Irish waters. Pleasure craft include sailboats, personal watercraft (jet skis) and fast power craft (speed boats).

The main provisions of the regulations are:

- Lifejackets/personal floatation devices to be carried on every pleasure craft (other than personal watercraft) regardless of the size of the craft.
- Everyone on board a pleasure craft of less than 7 metres (23 feet) in length must wear a lifejacket/personal floatation device.
- Lifejackets/personal floatation devices must be worn by those up to the age of 16 years on all pleasure craft.
- Lifejackets/personal floatation devices must be worn by persons being towed by a pleasure craft or on board a craft or on board a vessel or object being towed by a craft,
- Every person on a personal watercraft or while being towed by a personal watercraft, must wear a lifejacket or personal floatation device.
- Controls on the operation of pleasure craft while under the influence of alcohol or drugs and control of consumption of alcohol or drugs, have been extended to all pleasure craft.

The regulations do not apply to rowers involved in ‘Olympic style rowing’. These are the boats used in the rowing events in the Olympic games and are governed in Ireland by the Irish Amateur Rowing Union.

Also it is not necessary to wear lifejackets/personal floatation devices when:

- wearing, putting on, or taking off scuba diving gear when the pleasure craft is not underway.
- involved in swimming or snorkelling when the pleasure craft is not underway.