# General

The BCU has an access agreement with the Environment Agency (who control licences for the Medway) that allows individual members of the BCU to paddle on the Medway without a river licence. Whilst Maidstone Canoe Club is affiliated to the BCU, club membership alone does not cover members for this access agreement. If you are not a member of the BCU you will need to obtain a river licence for the Medway from the Environmental Agency (it is, however, far cheaper to join the BCU if paddling regularly). The club is not responsible if you are challenged and found not to have a licence and are not a member of the BCU. You will also be bringing the Club and other paddlers into disrepute. The BCU access agreement also covers other waterways in the UK so it is well worth becoming a member for this alone.

# Before Getting on the Water

Inexperienced paddlers must not go onto the water without the attendance and guidance of experienced paddlers.

All junior paddlers and inexperienced paddlers must wear a buoyancy aid while paddling a boat or swimming. You must make sure that the buoyancy aid fits you properly as there are different sizes, if in doubt ask advice from the coach or other experienced paddlers. Adult, experienced paddlers can use their own discretion about the wearing of a buoyancy aid whilst paddling on the Medway when it is at its normal flow (accepted risk) but are strongly advised to wear one when the river is in flood, at night, or when near weirs. Crash hats should be used when paddling white water but are not normally needed on the Medway, except when it is in flood conditions. There are canoeing venues, such as slalom courses, where the use of buoyancy aids and crash hats is compulsory.

Use of a club spraydeck is limited to those who have satisfactorily demonstrated to a club coach that they are safe to use one, by means of a capsize drill.

# Carrying Boats and Launching

When going to and from the river take care when lifting and carrying a boat, if it is too heavy for you ask for help. Be aware of traffic using the car park. Give parked cars a wide berth so that you do not accidentally hit them with a boat carried on your shoulder.

When using the slipway for launching be careful because it may be slippery underfoot. Do not slide club boats on the concrete, put the boat as close to the water as possible before getting in. Ask for help if you if need be.

Do not seal launch using club boats unless under supervision of the coach/group leader and using under hull protection to prevent abrasion.

# On The Water

Movement on a river is opposite to that on roads, i.e., we paddle on the right. Because paddlers can usually get out of the way of other craft at the sides of the river, we do use both sides of the river, but we do need to keep a sharp lookout for other craft and anglers. Always show consideration to ALL river users, including anglers.

Keep a look out for other boats on the river, particularly the sculls and rowing boats, as they may not see you, they travel quickly and need a very wide path. Warn other paddlers in the group if other boats are coming and remember that novice paddlers will probably need extra time to get to the side of the river.

The warning to other paddlers in the group is:- Rower Behind or Rower Ahead. (or Boat Behind if it is not a rower)

If you cannot get out of the way of a rowing boat in time shout the warning to the rower:- Head Scull

Whenever possible give way to other river craft and to racing kayaks when they are racing or training.

Experienced paddlers will accompany junior and inexperienced paddlers. When you are paddling with a group remember that there may be others who are slower than you so do not race ahead of the group. If you are tired and want to return to the clubhouse let one of the experienced paddlers know, do not return on your own.

Please try not to bump into moored boats, they are expensive and you may be liable for any damage.