THAMES DRAGONS





WELCOME TO THAMES DRAGON BOAT CLUB

Your guide to the basics of being a member of our club

2024 Edition



www.thamesdragons.club

Hello and Welcome

We'd like to wish you a warm welcome to our 2024 Dragon boat season. Our club is here to support and provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy and realise their potential within all aspects of dragon boating regardless of your gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or ability.

We're a friendly bunch with a strong competitive spirit on the water and a fantastic social environment off the water.

In this pack, you'll find what you need to get started feeling at home with our team. WELCOME!

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A brief HISTORY

Dragon Boat racing is an ancient sport that originated more than 2500 years ago in southern-central China among the fishing communities along the Yangtze River. The sport has more origin stories than a comic book hero. One of the most widely heard stories attribute the origins to Qu Yuan.

‘And so the story goes with Qu Yuan, an advisor in the court of Chu during the Warring States period of ancient China who was exiled by the emperor for perceived disloyalty. Qu Yuan had proposed a strategic alliance with the state of Qi in order to fend off the threatening state of Qin, but the emperor didn’t buy it and sent Qu Yuan off to the wilderness. Unfortunately, Qu Yuan was right about the threat presented by the Qin, which soon captured and imprisoned the Chu emperor. The next Chu king surrendered the state to their rivals. Upon hearing the tragic news, Qu Yuan in 278 B.C. drowned himself in the Miluo River in Hunan Province.’

The people there loved Qu Yuan very much and raced out in their fishing boats to the middle of the river in a vain attempt to save him. They beat on drums and splashed their oars in the water, trying to keep the dragon’s away from his body.

Today, the sport is done around the globe. Dragon boat is one of the fastest growing water sports in the world. The governing international body is the International Dragon Boat Federation (IDBF). Work is currently being done to include the sport in events like the Summer Olympics. 2023 marked the first time the sport was part of the international Gay Games.

Thames Dragon Boat Club was original established in 1993 as part of Texaco. From there, we grew into a community sports club with year on year growth in our membership. We have competitive Mixed, Women and Open crews.

For those new to the sport, Mixed is a boat comprised of a maximum 10 male identified paddlers. Women is what the title suggests. Open is the most competitive category in the sport because generally anyone can paddle on an Open crew without restriction.

Our club is based in East London. We paddle from the Royal Docks Adventure at Royal Albert Dock, which is situated close to City Airport, the runway itself can be seen from our side of the dock.

We welcome paddlers of all levels, if you live in or are visiting the London area we would love to see you at training. Whether you want to join us just to make new friends or want to rise to the lofty heights of representing your country, Thames Dragon Boat Club has a spot saved for you.





Thames Dragon Boat Club

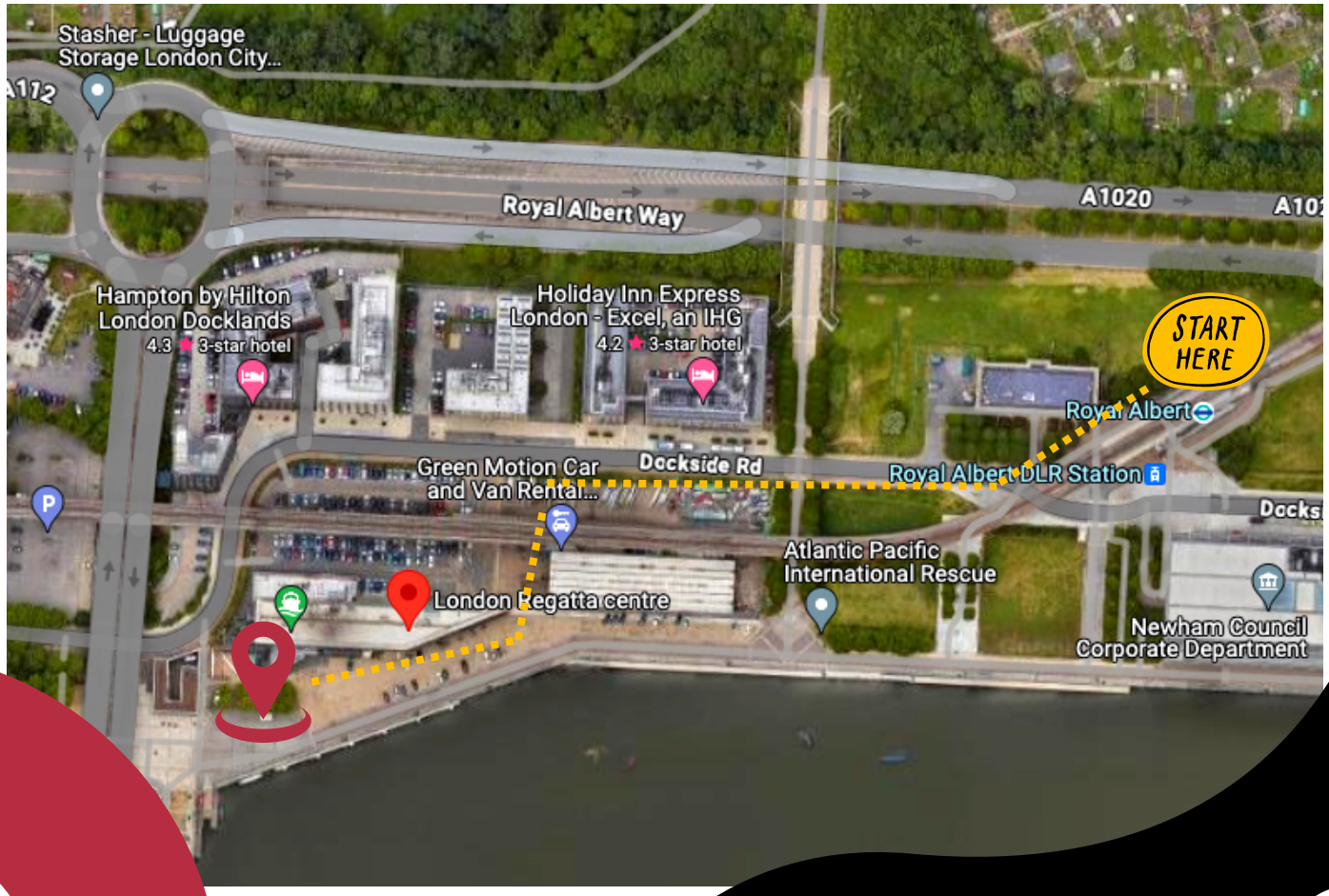
London Regatta Centre
Royal Albert Docks Adventure
London E16 2QT

Reception Number

020 7511 2211

Where we TRAIN

We are a 2-minute walk from Royal Albert DLR station as shown below



Meet your EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This group of volunteers are elected annually by a quorum of members during the AGM in December. We manage and run the club. You can approach any of us directly or by email at **thamesdragonsbc@gmail.com**.



















Meet your COACHES





ROTATE!

LEG DRIVE!

We have a support network to help you achieve your goals, once you've decided what kind of member you want to be. The coaching team with Liam Keane and Linda Barry have over 40 years of Dragon Boating and other paddle sports experience between them. Both coaches have represented Great Britain at World Championship level, and all have been in gold medal-winning squads.

Whether you want to be a social paddler, a competitive club paddler or even try out for the GB national team, there is a place for everyone in Thames. Do you want to stay local, race nationally or travel internationally, amateur or elite level dragon boating - Thames is the club for you.

Membership AND KITS

Once registered, members are able to enjoy all our exciting club offers. In addition, you are eligible to vote at the AGM or apply to join the committee which administers the club and arranges the various events and training schedules. You will receive a copy of the club's constitution which explains the rules and your rights as a member in more detail.

Annual Membership is £120 – our treasurer usually sends out information via email. Annual membership can be paid in one go or £10 monthly direct debit to our Thames Dragons bank account. Your fee covers coaching, water training, use of the club's O1s and more.

In addition, the British Dragon Boat Racing Association's (BDA) charges an Annual Membership of £35 and this is payable to the BDA. Speak to any committee member or fill in the form directly through:

www.dragonboat.org.uk

Please check additional cost for races, plus travel and accommodation, to help you plan your budget for the season.

The Club will provide you with a paddle and buoyancy aid (when required) for your training and also when we go to races. For training, please **ONLY use the wooden paddles** on the left of the container when you enter. All other paddles are those of other members and should not be used unless owned by you.

Most members choose to purchase their own paddles. Ask the committee or other members for information on paddle suppliers, if interested. The bare essentials that you will need on race days include:

- Thames T-shirt - currently being redesigned, so please borrow one from the committee in the meantime.
- Seat pad
- Water shoes (check Decathlon, etc)
- Water bottles (please avoid single use bottles) and snacks
- Change of clothes
- Towel
- Toiletries



The BASICS



3 Ts of Dragonboating are technique, timing and teamwork. These are all required for an optimal effort on the water for a dragon boat crew.

On the boat, your concentration should be on your technique, the drills you team is practising, and your timing within the boat. This type of deliberate training helps keep you on task.

When training, it is important to distinguish between fitness and performance. Fitness includes your aerobic and anaerobic capacity, your muscular strength, and your power. Performance is how well you can integrate the fitness you have achieved with the technique that you have learned in paddling.

If you are just starting out as a newbie, have patience with yourself and don't be intimidated. It will be hard at the beginning, see it as an opportunity for growth and talk to other paddlers. Don't expect to master every aspect of the stroke at once. Paddling technique is not as easy as it seems. There are many components to it and as you begin focusing on one thing, all other aspects of the stroke go by the wayside.

- Be patient with yourself and don't be intimidated
- Learn to paddle on both sides
- Be open to coaching and feedback
- Recognise your part in the team's success

THAMES DRAGONS

Boat
COMMANDS

Familiarise yourself with the boat commands/calls used by helms (the people at the back of the boat doing the steering and coaches). They should be the **ONLY people to give you directions** unless there are drummers on the boat as well.

• **Come to Attention** – Adopt the set-up position (your helm will call this out often when checking the boat balance)

• **Come for light paddling / Set it up (followed by "attention, go"** – Start paddling forward, take timing from the front (also called the Strokes)

• **Backwards paddling (followed by "attention, go")** – Start paddling backwards; however, take timing from the front

• **Brace the boat** - Paddles are flat on the water, this provides stability to the boat (used when in choppy waters or when trying to steady the boat for seat changes)

• **Bring down/up the power** – Reduce/Increase the strength of the stroke when your paddle is in the water, maintain your rate

• **Light paddling / 50% / 75% / 100%** – Different power levels that are called

• **Bring down/up the rate** – Reduce/Increase the frequency and speed of the stroke, maintain your power

• **Down and ready** – Bury the paddle so your hands are grazing the top of the water; this is the race start position

• **Easy / Let it run** – Both commands mean stop paddling

• **Go** – Start paddling forward, take timing from the front (also called the Strokes)

• **Light paddling, 50%, 75%, 90%, 100%** - Different power levels

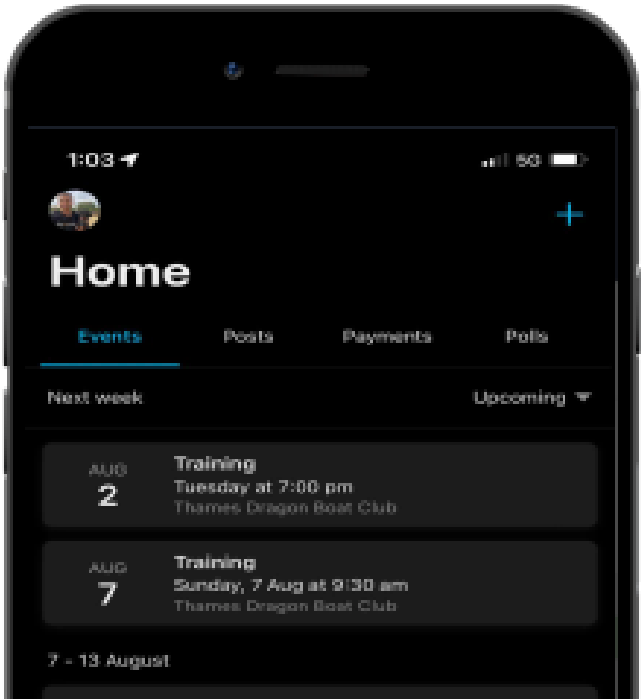
• **Stop the boat** – Most important call; dig your paddles in, we may be about to hit something!

Water Training
SESSIONS

From April to September, we have water training twice a week; Sunday morning we meet at 9:30 am with a prompt 10 am start and Tuesday evenings, we meet from 7:00 pm with a prompt 7:30 pm start. From October to March, we train only once a week on Sunday morning, meeting at 9:30 am for a 10 am start.

Please arrive 30 minutes before the start of training as we need everyone to help move the boats to the dock, plus do warm ups prior to getting onto the boats. Following our warm ups, we are then put into crews depending on the number of boats and immediately get onto the water - Don't get left behind!

Download the **Spond APP** and RSVP to our weekly training sessions. Please ensure **your status is always up to date at least 48 hours in advance**.



We provide the boat, paddles, bouyancy aids (when needed) and everything else you need to participate, you just need to bring the following:

- Clothing to paddle in, generally what you'd wear to the gym, but expect to get wet
- Old trainers or water shoes/crocs
- A set of clothes to change into after your hot shower (available in the regatta centre as part of your membership)
- Money for the pub/coffee afterwards, if you want to join

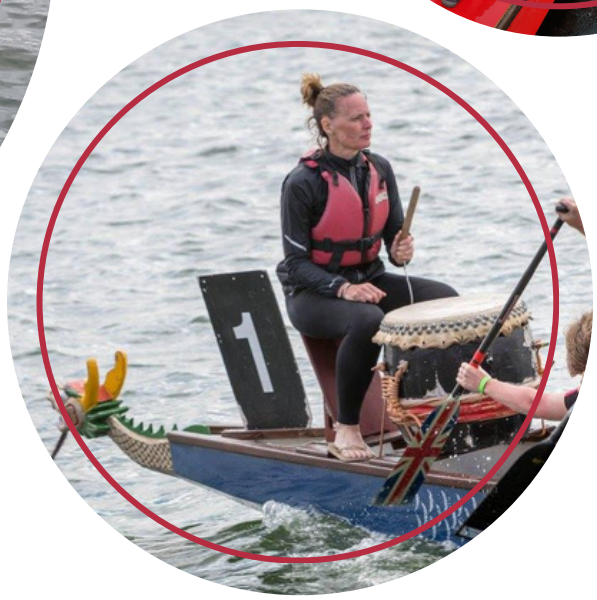
PLEASE NOTE

No boats will be allowed on the water unless coaches, responsible for their supervision, are satisfied with the following conditions for safety:

- Safety boat - available if considered necessary for group/individual and used by appropriately trained personnel
- Wind speed not in excess of 17mph or 15 knots
- Wind direction east/west and max speed 7-10mph or 6-8 knots. Check weather observations and forecast. Weather apps provides near real time weather maps of wind strength and direction at London City Airport.
- Fog with minimum visibility of 500 metres in 360 degrees direction before going on water
- London City Airport should be visible to the south and the 1500 distance marker on the south wall in an easterly direction.







The drummer AND HELM

The drummer sits at the front of the boat. We plan to hold a few specialised training sessions for this position. However, generally setting up the boat for this position, during trainings, is not practical. The position is core to the race as they help the front of the boat maintain timing through hitting of the drum when the front two strokes' paddles hit the water as well as repeating and relaying the calls from the helm.

The helm is a specialised position that requires a fair amount of training and are responsible for the safety of the crew and boat.

The Basic Helm operates at the foundation level of the sport and is the basic personal skills award from the BDA that is the pre-requisite for anyone wishing to hold an Advanced Helm Award or any of the Coaching Awards; it is for those wishing to either develop their helming skills or become involved in coaching the sport.

more info here

Competition and **RACING**

The BDA National League is an annual series of dragon boat racing events organised by BDA registered clubs on behalf of the BDA at venues throughout the UK. We attend as many races as we are able to do throughout the year to encourage people to get race experience.

BDA Race Calendar 2024

- Sunday 5 May at Stockton-on-Tees
- Sunday, 9 June in Manchester
- Saturday, 22 June in Milton Keynes
- Sunday, 14 July in Wath Upon Dearne
- Sunday, 28 July in Nottingham
- Sunday, 11 August in London London Regatta Centre (LRC)
- Sat-Sun, 21-22 September is National Championships in Nottingham

The BDA National Championships is usually a two-day event held at the end of the season. All crews that have competed during the race season are invited to take part. Races are typically over 200m, 500m, and 2000m distances. There are races for Open, Womens, Mixed and Under 18 crews. A round of heats determines which crews qualify for the Cup competition, and which go into the Plate or Bowl competition for runners-up.

As a team, we also look to have races locally and internationally. It is a great time to bond with other team members as well as experience other cultures including different race organisations. In the past, we have competed in Venice Italy, Cyprus, Cork Ireland, Czechia, and more. The team was also represented at the 2023 Gay Games (GGHK) in Hong Kong, where we won Silver and Bronze medals.

Local Race Calendar 2024

- Sunday, 3 March in Henley
- Sunday, 7 April in Wraysbury

International Race Calendar 2024

- Fri-Sun, 17-19 May in Barcelona, Spain
- Thurs-Sun, 24-27 October in Sarawak, Malaysia



Race

Travel

The saying ‘The best things in life are the people we love, the places we’ve been and the memories made along the way’ truly resonates with our spirit of adventure and friendship.

As a team, we travel to different cities within the UK to take part in national races once a month from April to September. Some of our favourites are Henley, Wath upon Dearne, Exeter and Bristol regattas.

We also look for new opportunities to venture out abroad every year and have paddled in France, China, Italy, Canada and many more places.



In terms of travel and accommodation arrangements, a committee member for travel and accommodation will send out an email or you can organise your own travel and stays. You can find the estimated cost here for national races.

• Accommodation depends on one or two nights stay (about £30-£40 per night).
• Travel is £10 return to cover the petrol cost for the person driving or join the fun bus.
• Race Fees (per regatta day) are £10 each on the day. The crew manager will collect the fee on the day of the regatta. You can also pay by bank transfer.

International races are considerably more costly in terms of flights or trains alongside cost of hotels or other forms of accommodation. Please reach out to other members and the committee if you need assistance for any race you are hoping to commit to.

We are one team :)

Land fitness and O1 Training

Whether you plan to try out for your country's national team, or you simply want to feel stronger on the boat, training sessions are essential for your paddling development. Time on the water will help you to improve, but don't neglect the training time off the water either.

- Supplement On-Water Practices with land-based training (Ask Linda for any assistance)
- For strength, you should have a solid weight lifting plan. Our coaches can hopefully help you develop a gym plan to help build muscle.
- For cardio, there are many great options. Swimming really forces you to focus on your breathing while improving your lung capacity. Running is also a great way to work on your cardio. If you aren't familiar with the ERG (a converted rowing machine), hop on one. It is a great total body workout! It engages your leg drive, your lats, your abs, basically every muscle that you will use for paddling, just in a different type of movement.
- Yoga and pilates are awesome for stretching and strengthening as well.

O1 are single craft boats that members can use as pairs or more to practice their technique as well as gain paddle fitness outside of regular training sessions. Experience on O1s is also important to qualify for the national team. However, there is a lot of safety to cover about them.

The club currently has 4 club O1s, if you would like to use one please approach a member of the coaching team (Bill or Linda) who will go over the process with you or designated team members (Kevin) to go through proper handling prior to going out with other paddlers.

Full Must Read O1 Guide





Safety and SAFEGUARDING

Telephone Numbers to be programmed on your mobile phones especially if you're going out on the O1s.

Royal Docks Adventure Reception

- 020 7511 2211

London City Airport Rapid Response Rescue Boat

- Emergency Line – 020 7646 0111
- Watch Room - 020 7646 0123

A staff member at reception, on duty, will have had first aid training.

Coaches are recommended to carry first aid kits and a number of 'Space Blankets' in the event of boat and participant capsize.

Water Users and Coaches should be familiar with NGB guidelines for water safety (BCU, BDA, BR)
Example **'Row Safe' – A guide to Good Practice in Rowing**.

The executive committee constantly works to keep our club protected and a safe space for members. To help ensure this, we have trained a safeguarding officer.

Our safeguarding officer is
Teijo: **teijo.palovaara@gmail.com**

Read more about safeguarding here:

- **BDA safeguarding resources**
- **Ann Craft Trust resources**







Off the water

SOCIALS



Training and racing on the water are not the only experience you will get as a member of our Club. You join a very social bunch off the water. Throughout the year we hold a variety of events, outings and get togethers (like dancing, karaoke and film festivals) to help bring the team closer together and create bonds that translate to better teamwork on the water.

The key events in our **social calendar** include but not limited to (check *thamesbroadcast* and *keane2banter* on WhatsApp as events come up to join):

- Start of season social
- London Pride, Saturday on 29 June
- End of Season Party
- Christmas lunch and AGM



Corporate
PARTNERSHIPS



Throughout the year, we work with local businesses and organisations to provide on-going team building exercises that help raise funds for the club. We also work to build our relationship with the different communities that live and work in the London metropolitan area.

If you work for a business or know a business looking for team building exercises, please contact the Executive Committee at:

thamesdragonsbc@gmail.com

These trainings are a means for our club to fundraise and allows members to volunteer for more time on the water. Don't be afraid to help out at one of these sessions when they come up!



THANK YOU!

for joining





We hope you get to love

DRAGON BOATING

as much as we do.



THAMES DRAGONS

www.thamesdragons.club