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Riverside Mooring Review

Report to
Conservators of the River Cam
Quarterly Meeting

9th July 2009

Introduction

This report contains a number of points that Camboaters would like the Conservators to consider before making a decision on whether to ban mooring along the Riverside retaining wall at the quarterly meeting on the 9th July 2009.

The following points are key:

- Boats have been moored on Riverside for over 12 years and do not pose an obstruction to navigation.
- Collisions occur everywhere on the Cam and are caused in the main by traffic volume, excessive speed and novice rowers.
- Rowing along Riverside should be at light-pressure.
- Moored boats do not cause any additional risk to capsized crews by limiting access to the chains.
- This issue is broader than navigation; the Cam Conservators have to balance the use of the river for leisure and sport against the livelihoods of resident boaters.

Navigation

Cam Con Byelaw 12.1 states that, “Except in an emergency or due to unavoidable cause or with the consent of the Conservators the master of any vessel shall not anchor, moor, berth or otherwise stop in such a position as to impede the clear and free passage of any other vessel or otherwise obstruct the navigation of the river or the use of the banks or towpath thereof”. Any obstruction to navigation should be considered a serious impediment to being able to navigate the river. Having to decrease speed to pass on a narrow stretch should not count as an obstruction.

The minimum width requirement for navigation nationally is accepted to be 15 metres (Conservators of the River Cam 2008 Mooring Review). The Cam along Riverside is not a uniform width (please refer to map below). It is over 20 metres from boat offside to opposite bank by the Selwyn/Churchill/Kings’ Boat House, and at no point is the river less than the 15 metre national minimum (from boat offside to opposite bank).

Camboaters rejects the suggestion that boats moored along Riverside pose any obstruction to navigation. Rowing eights have been navigating and passing safely for all the time that these boats have been moored on Riverside. As can be seen in the photographs below, two rowing eights can easily and safely pass each other at any point along Riverside.



Two rowing eights pass successfully during bumps. 13th June 2009.



Rowing eights can pass with enough space between oars. 13th June 2009.



Two eights and Georgina pass without any navigational obstruction. Please notice overhanging trees. 13th June 2009.



Rowing eight pass upstream of the cycle bridge routinely. 13th June 2009.

Furthermore, despite some attempt at curtailing the foliage along the bank, this continues to overhang by approx 2 metres. This was a key criterion the Chairman outlined had to be met before a decision could be made.



View of overhanging trees and reeds downstream from the new bridge.



View of overhanging trees upstream from the bridge.

Please find attached a CD with additional photographic and video evidence of rowing eights passing freely.

River width

Camboaters point out that the Cam is inherently not suitable to Rowing as outlined in the CUCBC Guidelines for Coxes and College Coaches, “The Cam is not a river that lends itself to convenient rowing due to its narrowness and sharp bends...particularly dangerous corners are: The Road Bridge (Queen Elizabeth Way), Chesterton (Green Dragon), Ditton and Grassy)”.

In fact, the width of the river at Grassy Corner is a mere 50 feet (15.24 metres) from bank to bank. This is a similar width to the narrowest width at Riverside (from boat offside to opposite bank). Camboaters refutes the rowing lobby’s demand for a minimum of 20 metres for navigation at Riverside, when they tolerate less width at Grassy Corner.

As can be seen in these photographs, Grassy Corner is also a significantly sharper bend than Riverside, which obstructs the view of coxes and yet is routinely used for races and hard rowing.



Grassy Corner.



Riverside.

Speed

Furthermore, the CUCBC Rules of the River 2008/2009 11.a state, “That there be only light-pressure paddling between Chesterton footbridge and Jesus Lock except for the progress of the Fairburn Cup Races, and for bung starts during the two days prior to the Lent and May Bumps”. If these rules are followed consistently by all crews in all clubs, any risk of collisions would be significantly reduced.

Congestion

The number of registered Rowing crafts on the River Cam has increased year on year over the past decade. The latest registration period in 2009 has once again shown an increase of 27 new rowing craft bringing the total to

652. This is an overall increase of 32% for the period. Please see the table below:

	Sculls	Double sculls	Pairs	Fours	Eights	Total crafts
31 March 2000	108	10	38	108	229	493
31 March 2001	114	9	39	113	234	509
31 March 2002	118	8	39	111	228	504
31 March 2003	127	4	45	116	231	523
31 March 2004	130	4	50	117	230	531
31 March 2005	142	15	44	117	232	550
31 March 2006	140	18	49	113	246	566
31 March 2007	151	20	46	123	242	582
31 March 2008	167	22	47	132	257	625
31 March 2009	179	25	50	134	264	652
% increase, '00-'09	66	150	32	24	15	32

Source: Cam Conservators March 2009.

These statistics do not give any indication of the number of excursions; however the general consensus amongst river users is that rowing traffic has also significantly increased. This has led to congestion during the peak morning period, when novice crews routinely get in the way of the more experienced crews.

The CUCBC have only imposed limited restrictions on rowing traffic. These are limited to being enforced voluntarily during Michaelmas and Lent Terms between 'Lighting down' and 08:30, where each college Club is restricted to two boats on the water.

This does not solve the problem of congestion in any way. Outside of these hours can be a chaotic free for all. Blaming mooring for this situation is a red herring.

Health and Safety

Moored boats do not cause any additional risk to capsized crews by limiting access to the chains. Camboaters feels that this suggestion is unfounded for the following reasons:

- a) Rule 3.4a of the CUCBC Regulations and information for Club Captains and water safety officers (2008/2009) states that, "...each Club's Safety Officer must submit a written statement to the CUCBC at the start of each academical year confirming...that each rower in the Club has signed an individual statement clearly specifying their ability to swim a minimum of 50m." Regulations for other clubs are unclear.
- b) The depth of the water is less than a metre next to the wall. An adult could easily stand, making the chains redundant.
- c) If the boats were not there, any swimmer would have to crawl along the length of the wall to the one ladder, or Stourbridge or Midsummer commons anyway. It is unlikely that any person could

scale the 6ft Riverside Retaining wall. The grab chains are not an aid to swimmers, but may provide some aid to swimmers if they cannot stand until help can be provided.

- d) Boaters are more likely to hear and see a capsized swimmer than House Residents, and can provide immediate assistance or call for help.
- e) Most importantly, the boats along riverside offer many more opportunities for a swimmer to climb out of the water than a 6ft retaining wall. Swimmers are welcome to use fenders and gunnels to climb out of the water and onto the wall.
- f) Finally rowing crews are instructed to stay with their craft should they capsize.

The safety of swimmers is simply not a valid reason for banning mooring along Riverside in this instance.



Grab chains and the retaining wall.

Livelihoods

This issue is broader than navigation, the Cam Conservators have a duty to balance the use of the river for leisure and sport against the livelihoods of resident boaters. Any mooring ban will have serious consequences for the people who live along Riverside. The livelihoods of these people cannot and should not be overlooked. Some have lived on Riverside for as long as 13 years. Others work daily in the city. What exactly are the Conservators proposing to do with these people, when the Cam has some of the most

limited mooring on the network? Effectively a mooring ban will be making these people homeless and compromising their incomes.

Mr Davies asked the Conservators in April 2008 (Minutes) to “not over-dramatise the decision with fears of making people homeless”. Camboaters assert that it is never acceptable to wilfully displace people from their homes and livelihoods.

Conclusion

It is clear from the evidence presented in this report that the boats along the whole stretch of Riverside do not pose any obstruction to navigation.

Rowing craft congestion is caused by ever increasing numbers of rowing craft, together with insufficient regulation of traffic at peak periods. Boats moored along Riverside cannot be blamed for causing congestion and alternative solutions need to be found to resolve this.

Moored boats do not pose any additional risk to swimmers, the river is shallow enough to stand along the wall and most boats have fenders.

Camboaters and riverside residents intend to resist any attempt by the Conservators to impose a full or partial ban on Riverside. The arguments in this report apply to the full length of the retaining wall, any attempt at a partial ban could be construed as a concession to the rowing lobby. We feel this would be a concession that is political, which would not be justified given the evidence in this report. We would welcome a firm and unanimous declaration of support from the Conservators for the continuation of mooring along Riverside.

Thank you for your time.

Personal Statements from boaters who live on Riverside

Whilst the main points have been covered in the attached report we feel that consideration should also be given to the impact on those affected. To this end below are some brief summaries from a few people who live on the river and work in and contribute to the city.

Andre (CC650 Later)

I have been living on the river for 12 years - nine of which have been in my present location on Riverside in the area currently being reviewed. I work as lecturer at Cambridge Regional College teaching on the Practical Learning Opportunities programme for disaffected 14 - 16 year olds. I also work for the National Probation Service as a Community Payback (unpaid work) Project Supervisor. Both jobs are within easy cycling distance.

I have lived and worked in Cambridge all my life. I have children, grandchildren and an elderly mother, who in her later years requires more and more support. All of whom live within the city. I feel that a decision to ban mooring along this section of Riverside would be a decision taken in favour of sport over a valid way of life.

Angela (G10070 Little Bear):

I have been living and working in Cambridge for 7 years and been living on the river for 6 years. I work as an Administrator on a part-time basis for both the Society of Editors and the Riverboat Georgina. With the current situation regarding liveaboard moorings in Cambridge my initial research tells me I would have to live many miles away. This would effectively prevent me from continuing my present employment as I do not have transport and walk to and from work.

Andrew (G10070 Little Bear):

Over the past 12 years I have spent much of my time living on the river. I am employed by Cambridge City Council. The stability of my current location ensures easy access to my work within the city. This is a distinct advantage bearing in mind the current economic climate. Moving to another mooring in an as yet undefined location may jeopardise my employment as transport links are a well known problem.

Clare Laidler and Neil Waters (Djovaki)

We would like to express our concern regarding the potential mooring ban along Riverside which is currently being looked into. We are both professional teachers who work in Cambridge and have lived on our boat moored along the riverside railings for 18 months, we are currently on the waiting list to be residential licence holders who can moor along the commons. If this ban is imposed we will technically become homeless as

there are no other areas to moor whilst waiting for the mooring licence. We consider our boat to be our home and a ban on Riverside would effect us enormously in all aspects of our lives.

Jared (Nancy Yvonne)

I have lived in Cambridge for three years and I've been living on Nancy Yvonne for half that time. I am a full time primary school teacher working at a school in the city and I am studying part time for another degree. I cycle to work every day and I can't afford a car. Mooring is extremely restricted and competitive on the Cam and if mooring were banned along Riverside, there is no other place I could go where I could get into work every day.

Darren (Rebecca)

I have lived on the river for 10 years. I work as a self-employed Landscape Gardener. My boat engine does not work so being moved would present me with not only the problem of finding somewhere accessible to moor but also getting there. I would also need to find somewhere secure very nearby to park my vehicle which is essential to my livelihood.

Basil (Narrow escape)

I have lived in the Riverside area for 20 years and moved onto my boat 16 months ago. I run a small web based business selling cargo trailers for bicycles in Cambridge. The web-site also provides information on cycling and green issues in Cambridge and the rest of the UK. I do not own a car and deliver trailers around Cambridge by hand. If mooring were banned along Riverside, my income and livelihood would be at risk.