

# BOATING ON SUSSEX RIVERS



**NRA**

*National Rivers Authority  
Southern Region*

**Guardians of the  
Water Environment**



NRA

# BOATING ON SUSSEX RIVERS

## *Introduction*

The Sussex Rivers have a unique appeal, with their wide valleys giving spectacular views of Chalk Downs within sight and smell of the sea. There is no better way to enjoy their natural beauty and charm than by boat.

A short voyage inland can reveal some of the most attractive and unspoilt scenery in the Country. The long tidal sections, created over the centuries by flashy Wealden Rivers carving through the soft coastal chalk, give public rights of navigation well into the heartland of Sussex.

From Rye in the Eastern part of the County, small boats can navigate up the River Rother to Bodiam with its magnificent castle just 16 miles from the sea. On the River Arun, in an even shorter distance from Littlehampton Harbour, lies the historic city of Arundel in the heart of the Duke of Norfolk's estate.

But for those with more energetic tastes, Sussex rivers also have plenty to offer. Increased activity by canoeists, especially by Scouting and other youth organisations has led to the setting up of regular canoe races on the County's rivers in recent years.

## CARING FOR OUR WATERWAYS

The National Rivers Authority welcomes all river users and seeks their support in preserving the tranquillity and charm of the Sussex rivers. This booklet aims to help everyone to enjoy their leisure activities in safety and to foster good relations and a spirit of understanding between river users.

Navigation on Sussex rivers is subject to speed limits enforced by the NRA. These safeguard other river users, wildlife and bankside vegetation as well as protecting river banks and flood defences from erosion. Anyone failing to comply with speed limits is liable to conviction and substantial fines.

Please observe the Navigation rules and hints given in this Guide and obey the Waterways Code (see Useful Leaflets).

## NAVIGATION RIGHTS AND ACCESS

Tidal rivers, as "arms of the sea" are open to public navigation with a general right of navigation extending up-river through the estuary to the tidal limit. However, waterborne activities are subject to the byelaws of local Harbour Authorities at Littlehampton, Shoreham, Newhaven and Rye. NRA byelaws, limiting speed and protecting the free flow of rivers, apply to all stretches of "main" river.

The right of navigation does not include rights of access above the High Water mark, though most rivers have public access points. Launching and landing from other points requires the consent of the landowners.

On non-tidal reaches permission to use watercraft must be obtained from the riparian owners.

## HAZARDS WHEN NAVIGATING

The Sussex rivers are fast flowing and very responsive to heavy rainfall. There are times when flood conditions make it inadvisable, if not impossible to navigate the rivers. These conditions are more likely to occur in the winter, but there are occasions when adverse conditions occur during the boating season.

Heavy flooding brings timbers and debris downstream and causes shoals to develop in the rivers, particularly downstream of bridges and bends. River users should therefore proceed with caution, particularly in the early part of the season and at any time after flooding has occurred.





## RIVER ARUN

<i>Tidal Limit:</i>	TQ073214 Pallingham
<i>Speed Limit:</i>	6.5 knots (Littlehampton to Arundel Bridge) 5.5 knots (Arundel Bridge to Pallingham Lock).
<i>Tidal Differences on HW Littlehampton:</i>	Ford add 25 minutes Arundel add 50 minutes Houghton Bridge add 1 hour 30 minutes Pulborough add 4 hours
<i>Harbour Authority:</i>	Littlehampton Harbour Board (Paul Naish – Acting Harbour Master).

### NAVIGATION NOTES

Care should be given to the speed of flood and ebb tide flows in the Arun's lower reaches. The River Arun is one of the fastest flowing rivers in the country. Tidal velocities at Ford Railway and Arundel Bridge are particularly high, especially on the flood tide. The freshwater discharge velocities down the river are very much less – about 3 knots at Arundel.

Masted and super-structured vessels should check water levels before attempting passage under bridges at Ford, Littlehampton, Arundel By-Pass, Offham and South Stoke though all have clearances over 8ft at HWS. Arundel Town Bridge, Houghton, Pulborough and Swan Bridges all have clearances of 5ft at HWS.

Depths of water vary considerably depending on tides and river conditions. Generally at mean tides there is a depth of about 8ft at Houghton with 2-4ft in the Pulborough Area.

The river upstream of Timberley Railway Bridge is only suitable for small craft and attention should be paid to water levels at Greatham and Pulborough. "Amberley Pies" are a collection of mud islands between Timberley Bridge and Coldwaltham which must be navigated with extreme caution (see River Arun Guide).

The 'Reach' between Railway Bridge and Thorndale is particularly hazardous between low and half tide. There are no public or private facilities for boating on the River Rother.

Swan Bridge in Pulborough is impassable at low water and the river should be navigated on the rising tide from Timberley to Pallingham.

The arched bridge at Houghton should be navigated at half tide.

Navigation is not advisable at Burpham loop due to the presence of mud shoals.

### MOORINGS

#### *Littlehampton Marina*

(0903) 713553. Moorings, slipway, launch and recovery, mobile hoist and crane.

#### *Ship & Anchor Marina*

Yapton (0243) 551262. Slipway, pontoon berths.

*Arun YC*

(0903) 714533. Moorings for 100, slipway, pontoon berth (members only).

*Littlehampton Sailing & Motor Club*

(0903) 715859. Members only for moorings and slipway.

*Wm Osborne*

(0903) 713996. Three slipways, pontoon berths.

*Hillyards*

(0903) 713327. Moorings, slipway, alongside berths.

**PUBLIC ACCESS POINTS**

*Fisherman's Quay, Littlehampton Harbour*

Located on the East bank of the estuary. A small fee may be payable to the Harbour Master.

*Littlehampton Marina*

Located on the West bank of the estuary. Since the marina is privately owned, there is a fee payable.

*Ship and Anchor, Ford*

Slipway fees payable on site.

*Old Swan Bridge, Pulborough*

The slipway here is somewhat complicated. A 40m length of rope is recommended for launching larger craft.

Small boat hire is available in Arundel from Buller's Boatyard.

For further information on tides and conditions, harbour dues, heights of bridges, maps etc, please contact:

**Littlehampton Harbour Board**  
**(Paul Naish – Acting Harbour Master)**

The River Arun Guide (see Useful Leaflets) also gives excellent navigational details.





## RIVER ADUR

### *Tidal Limit:*

TQ 190176  
Partridge Green (W. Branch)  
TQ 210183  
Shermanbury (E. Branch)

### *Speed Limit:*

Seaward of Tollbridge: 10 knots through the water when going with the tide or 10 knots over the ground when going against the tide.

Upstream of Tollbridge, to Shermanbury Place (East Adur) and Bines Green (West Adur): 5½ knots.

### *Tidal Differences on Shoreham:*

Beeding Bridge – Add 60 minutes

### *Harbour Authority (to Tollbridge):*

Shoreham Port Authority  
(Captain John Robertson)

## NAVIGATION NOTES

The popularity of the Adur for boating is illustrated by the numbers of craft moored in the shelter of Shoreham Harbour. Shoreham Port Authority controls the river moorings and provides berths for visiting vessels within the locked canal section of the Harbour. Commercial activity around the harbour mouth makes the area unsuitable for the inexperienced, though upstream of Norfolk Bridge there is often plenty of activity by smaller craft. Sussex Yacht Club and Sussex Motor Yacht Club are both based in the Harbour area and have an active sailing and windsurfing membership. The Adur Water Activities Centre and the Sea Scouts also have riverside facilities on the West bank between Norfolk Bridge and the railway bridge.

Windsurfing is restricted to this section of the river. There is a ban on the use of jet skis in the harbour.

Shallows occur at low water in several places between Shoreham High Street and Beeding Bridge, particularly at Streatham Railway Bridge.

There are two retention weirs in the vicinity of the Fork at Henfield causing an obstruction to the channel. Chates dam on the eastern fork may be submerged at high water.

The river upstream of Shoreham is best navigated on rising tides but please note that there is only four feet headroom at Beeding Bridge on top of a spring tide.

## MOORINGS

### *The Lady Bee Marina*

(0273) 593801. Slipway, moorings, alongside berths, electrical facilities, shower and toilet, water to boats, lock gates.

### *Surry Boatyard*

(0273) 461491. Moorings solely, slipway not suitable for applications other than launching boats out of shed.

### *Riverside Yard*

(0273) 592456. Berthing.

### *Sussex YC (Shoreham)*

(0273) 464868. Moorings, slipway, alongside berths, electrical facilities. Members only.

## **PUBLIC ACCESS POINTS**

### *Little High Street Hard (Ropetackle Hard)*

This is the most frequently used slipway and is suitable for trailers.

### *Surry Hard*

This public hard is located opposite Surry public house. Good approach but no parking.

### *Kingston Beach*

A wooden slipway is provided at this public hard near the harbour mouth, adjacent to the lifeboat station. The facilities are for canoes and dinghies only, with fees payable to Shoreham Port Authority.

### *Emerald Quay*

This slipway on the Shoreham Beach side of the harbour is immediately to the West of the new housing development but suitable for high tide use only.

The following public hard suffer from siltation and blockages and are of marginal use:

Shipstreet Hard (opposite Ship Street). Stars Gap (opposite Church Street). East Coronation Green (opposite East Street). Stows Gap, access across Sussex Yacht Club car park. No parking facilities. (Please note, the nearby slipway within the perimeter of the Club is for the use of members only). Tarmount. West of Parcel Force industrial building.

There are numerous other launch sites around the harbour, for further details please contact Captain John Robertson, Shoreham Port Authority.





## RIVER OUSE

<i>Tidal Limit:</i>	TQ431149 Barcombe Mills
<i>Speed Limit:</i>	5 knots (Along whole tidal length)
<i>Tidal Differences on Shoreham:</i>	Lewes Bridge add 65 minutes
<i>Harbour Authority:</i>	Newhaven Port Authority (Captain Alec Flint)

## NAVIGATION NOTES

Commercial traffic in Newhaven Harbour renders it unsuitable for small craft. Lewes Rowing Club has a private slipway and moorings on the East bank of the river, ½ mile downstream from Cliffe Bridge. There are areas of shallows on the river between Newhaven and Lewes, particularly above Piddinghoe at Dean's Corner.

Bridges at Newhaven, Southease, Southerham and Lewes restrict masted vessels. The river above Malling is only navigable on a rising tide, and Hamsey Weir is navigable on spring tides only. The river is a popular fishery and a good look-out should be kept for anglers.

On the non-tidal river, paddle and rowing boats are available for hire at Anchor Inn on the west bank, with access to 3 miles of the river.

## MOORINGS

### *Newhaven Marina*

(0273) 513881. Slipway. Full Marina facilities.

### *Newhaven Marina YC*

(0273) 513976. Visitors welcome.

### *Cantell & Son*

(0273) 514118. Moorings, tidal pontoon berths, use of slipway by arrangement only.

### *Meeching Boats*

(0273) 514907. Moorings, slipway, tidal pontoon berths.

## PUBLIC ACCESS POINTS

### *Lewes Town Steps*

Near Cliffe Bridge, Lewes.

Only suitable for launching small craft (eg canoes).

### *Newhaven Marina*

Harbour dues payable to Harbour Master.

(No public access points.)

Further information on the Harbour from:

**Captain Alec Flint**  
**Newhaven Port Authority**



## CUCKMERE RIVER

*Tidal Limit:*

TQ524036  
Milton Lock

*Speed Limit:*

5 knots  
(along its whole length)

*Tidal Differences  
on Shoreham:*

Milton Lock add 50 minutes

Though the tidal limit is at Alfriston, access North of the A259 is restricted since this area is a nature reserve. This leaves around 1.5 miles of river South of the road which may be used.

There is very little water at low tide between the Cuckmere Haven mouth and Alfriston. The river is largely unsuitable for passage by boat but is used by canoeists from time to time.

### PUBLIC ACCESS POINTS

There is a slipway in the Seven Sisters Country Park carpark on the A259 on the eastern side of the valley. Canoeing is permitted on the non-tidal meanders, in the end of the park closest to the road (Tel. 0323 870280).

Boats may launch from the beach to the East of the river mouth, though care should be taken to avoid the strong ebb tides.

For further information, please contact:

**Steve Wilkinson**, access officer of the Cuckmere Canoe Club.



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## **EASTERN ROTHER (EAST SUSSEX)**

<i>Tidal Limit:</i>	TQ9033227 Scots Float
<i>Navigation Limit:</i>	TQ784254 Bodiam
<i>Speed Limit:</i>	6 knots (Along whole tidal length).

### **RYE HARBOUR**

This tidal harbour has good facilities for small and large craft alike. For further details, see NRA booklet "Harbour of Rye" or contact:

**Carl Bagwell**  
Harbour Master  
Harbour Office  
Camber  
East Sussex  
Tel. (0709) 225225

The harbour is controlled by the National Rivers Authority. For navigation licences and permits to launch from Rye Harbour slipway, contact the NRA Income Section at Guildbourne House, Worthing.

**Regional Office (0903) 820692**  
**Rye Area Office (0797) 223256**

Note that caution is required due to West to East tidal flows at the entrance to Rye Harbour. Notice must be given to the sluicekeeper at Scots Float before attempting any journey upstream. Low bridges on non-tidal section above Scots Float Lock restrict the passage of masted vessels.

### **PUBLIC ACCESS POINTS**

Scots Float Lock – Military Road, Rye, (contact Area Office). Harbour Slipway, Rye Harbour.

### *River Rother*

Access from the Harbour to the middle reaches of the river is through a lock at Scots Float Sluice. Although there is no charge, the NRA requires notice during the working week of intention to use the lock, (Tel. 0797 223256). An NRA owned slipway for trailed boats is situated immediately upstream from the sluice which may be used on application. The River Rother above Scots Float sluice is navigable by small craft, as far as Bodiam, given suitable water conditions.

Water levels may vary considerably, particularly as they may be regulated to meet land drainage needs. River users are advised to contact the NRA Area Engineer (Tel. 0797 223256) in advance for information on the depth of water available.

At Iden, there is a road bridge over the river, beneath which the headroom may be as little as 1.14m (3ft 9in) when river levels are high.

### *Royal Military Canal*

Although there is no waterborne access from the River Rother to the Royal Military Canal, canoeing is permitted between Iden Lock and West Hythe Dam for holders of an NRA licence. The Canal is obstructed by a dam 800 metres South West of Appledore Bridge. Water levels are not always sufficient for navigation and intending users should contact the NRA Area Engineer in advance of their visit for up-to-date information. Powered vessels are not permitted.

The Canal between West Hythe Dam and the Seabrook outfall is controlled by the Shepway District Council and hire boats are available on this stretch. Enquiries should be addressed to the Treasurer, Civic Centre (Tel. Folkestone 0303 57388).



## **WATER SKIING**

Harbour byelaws and Land Drainage byelaws prevent water skiing on Sussex rivers but facilities are available on inland sites at Rye and Chichester. Rye Waterski Club enjoys exclusive rights to 1½ miles on the River Rother between Monk Bretton Bridge and Scots Float Sluice. By arrangement with the Club Secretary, Dianne Mantel, 4 Langham Copse, Maidstone, Kent (Tel. 0622 861756).

Southern Leisure Centre allows non-members to use a private lake Monday to Friday. Contact Tony Mortimer, Southern Leisure Centre, Vinnetrow Road, Chichester (Tel. 0243 787715).

## **WINDSURFING**

Windsurfing is permitted on the River Adur upstream from Norfolk Bridge. There are also stillwater facilities in the county at Hove Lagoon (Tel. 0273 430100); Southwater Lakes (Tel. 0403 731218); Southern Leisure Centre (Tel. 0243 787715); West Hampnett Water Park (Tel. 0243 776439); Ardingly Activity Centre (Tel. 0444 892549) and on gravel pits at Rye (Tel. 0580 753438).

## **CANAL RESTORATION**

The Wey and Arun Canal Trust, founded in 1971, is promoting the restoration of this waterway link. Further information is available from the Secretary of the Trust, J.R. Wood, 24 Griffiths Avenue, Lancing BN15 0HW (Tel. 0903 753099).

The Chichester Canal Society maintains a four mile stretch of canal between Southgate Basin and Birdham Road Bridge. The Charity's aim is to restore the canal's original industrial archaeological features and eventually re-open it to through navigation between Chichester and the harbour. The Society manages all recreational activities which include angling, canoeing and rowing boats which can be hired from the canal basin. A 30ft narrowboat, with facilities for disabled persons, provides trips between Chichester and Hunston. Along the canal bank are excellent opportunities for walkers and nature lovers to enjoy the peaceful environment and diverse flora and fauna. Volunteers welcomed. For more information tel. J. Cooper, (0243) 671051 or 512144.

## **CANOEING**

British Canoe Union, Flexel House, 45 High Street, Addlestone, Weybridge, Surrey KT15 1TU. Contact Barbara Simmonds – Secretary, Southern Region. Tel. (0784) 255085.

### *Sussex Canoe Clubs*

#### *Arun Canoe Club*

Terry West, 3 Hobs Acre, Upper Beeding, West Sussex. Tel. (0903) 815571.

#### *Adur Centre*

Tony Sandry, 89 Bonchurch Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 3PJ. Tel. (0273) 695373. Tue 7-9pm, Sat 10-1pm, Sun 10-1pm.

#### *Crawley Canoe Club*

Dawn Bradley, 22 Yarmouth Close, Furnace Green, Crawley, West Sussex.

#### *Cuckmere Valley Canoe Club*

Sue Alcock, 63 Pashley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 8EA. Tel. (0323) 641715 (evenings).

#### *Forest Canoe Club*

N. Woolven, 2 The Close, Southwater, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 7UG.

### *Martlet Kayak Club*

C. Childs, 294 Madeira Drive Arches, Brighton, East Sussex.  
Tue 6pm, Thurs 5pm, Sat/Sun 12 noon.

### *South Eastern Paddlers*

Garry D. Nevin, 23 Manor Road, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 3LL.



## **NAVIGATION RULES AND HINTS**

- Obey the general rules of Navigation and know the "rules for the avoidance of collisions". Craft should avoid collisions by keeping to the right – the normal practice of seamen and oarsmen.
- Look out for others on and in the water and change speed and direction as necessary to avoid an incident. Powered craft should slow down and give clear indications as to their intention. If in doubt, STOP.
- Remember when you are travelling faster than other craft that "overtaking vessels must keep clear". Take care at all times when overtaking. Do not turn across the bows of oncoming craft, wait until it is safe.
- Do not get in the way of other craft by suddenly altering course, particularly in narrow waters. Remember that larger boats are less manoeuvrable and unable to use shallower water available to dinghies, canoes and smaller craft.
- Do not follow close astern of larger vessels.
- In the vicinity of bridges and sharp bends, a vessel going upstream should give way to a vessel coming downstream.
- On some boats children can be "out of vision" – they often sit in dangerous positions and a sharp turn, change of speed or wash from another boat can toss them in the water.
- Avoid pollution. It is an offence to discharge sewage, oil or any other matter likely to cause pollution into the river, or to leave rubbish on the banks. Take special care with petrol when refuelling. Oil-contaminated bilge water is another potential source of pollution and must on no account be pumped into the river.
- Buoyancy aids or life-jackets should be worn at all times. Water users should preferably have had formal instruction, and be able to swim.
- If on the water at dusk, after sunset or in restricted visibility, an all-round white light should be displayed. Sailors, canoeists and users of other small craft should wear light coloured tops.
- Show understanding to other river users, learn about their activities and appreciate their needs.
- Keep a sharp lookout for anglers, who normally fish from the bank. Keep a good distance from them, avoid their tackle and create as little disturbance as possible.
- Rivers can be both fun and dangerous and due account must be taken of prevailing river conditions. All river activities can be enjoyed with minimum risk if the simple guidelines on safety are followed.
- Be aware of the potential health and safety risks associated with water recreation.



## USEFUL LEAFLETS

*National Rivers Authority Publications in Southern Region*

**Land Drainage and Sea Defence Byelaws.**

**The River Arun, The River Adur, The River Ouse, The Cuckmere River, The Eastern Rother.**

**The Harbour of Rye.**

**Guide to the Medway Navigation.**

**Fishing in the South.**

*Other Publications:*

**River Arun Guide.**

G.H.F. Skinner & R.J. Cossey, West Sussex County Planning Department, for Inland Waterways Association. Available from M. Laishley, 14 Albert Road, Cosham, Portsmouth PO6 3DD. Price £2.37 payable to IWA Solent & Arun Branch.

**The Public Right of Navigation. PP 101-113 River Arun and Rother.**

A. Telling & R. Smith. Sports Council Publications Department, 16 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0QP.

**How Safe Is Your Craft?**

A guide containing recommended safety equipment. Published by the Department of Transport and available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

**The Water Sports Code.**

The Sports Council Publications Department, 16 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0QP.

**The Waterways Code.**

British Waterways Board, Brindley House, Corner Hall, Lawn Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 9YT.

**Seaway Code – A guide for small boat users.**

Published by The Department of Transport and available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

**Shoreham Port Authority (Speedboat) Byelaws 1972.**

Shoreham Port Authority.

## USEFUL ADDRESS

National Rivers Authority, *Southern Region*  
Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing BN11 1LD.  
Tel. (0903) 820692.

National Rivers Authority, *Chichester Area Office*  
(R. Rother, R. Arun, R. Ouse),  
Oving Road, Chichester PO20 6AG.  
Tel. (0243) 786431.

National Rivers Authority, *Pevensey Area Office*  
(R. Ouse, Cuckmere River),  
Coast Road, Pevensey Bay, East Sussex BN24 6ND.  
Tel. (0323) 762691.

National Rivers Authority, *Rye Area Office*  
(Eastern Rother and Royal Military Canal),  
Scots Float Depot, Military Road, Playden, Rye, East Sussex.  
Tel. (0797) 223256.

Rye Harbour Master,  
Harbour Master's Office, Camber, Rye TN31 7QS.  
Tel. (0797) 225225.

Shoreham Port Authority,  
Harbour Office, Albion Street, Southwick BN42 4ED.  
Tel. (0273) 592613.

Newhaven Port Authority,  
Port Office, Beach Road, Newhaven.  
Tel. (0273) 514131.

Littlehampton Harbour Board,  
Paines Wharf, Pier Road, Littlehampton.  
Tel. (0903) 721215

Inland Waterways Association,  
114 Regents Park Road, London NW1 8UQ.  
Tel. 071-586 2556

Royal Life Saving Society,  
Mountbatten House, Studley Place, Warwickshire.  
Tel. (0527) 853843

Royal Yachting Association,  
RYA House, Romsey Road, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO5 4YA.  
Tel. (0703) 629962

Sports Council,  
16 Upper Woburn Place, London WC1H 0QP.



# National Rivers Authority

Guildbourne House  
Worthing

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## NRA

National Rivers Authority  
Southern Region

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Worthing  
West Sussex BN11 1LD  
(0903) 820692  
March 1992

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