

Magdalen College punts: information for alumni

The College punts will be in the water from 1st May until mid-September. Please take the time to read the following notes, particularly if you've never punted before.

- Bookings are made by completing the Alumni punting booking request form
- Depending on availability bookings are then confirmed by the Alumni Office
- Keys can be collected from the Porters' Lodge. These give access to the shed with equipment and the booked punt
- Punt can only be taken out during daylight hours
- You may not book more than one punt at a time, or book a punt for more than 2 hours at a time
- Please make sure you are on time for your booking. If you are running late to pick up the keys and have not telephoned ahead to the Porters, your punt will be made available to anyone else who might be waiting. If you are running late to return your keys at the end of your booking, make sure you telephone the Porters to let them know (01865 276000)
- By taking out punts you are declaring you, and any others in your punt(s), are able to swim adequately. It is the responsibility of the person caring for a child to provide a life jacket or buoyancy aid and to ensure it is of the right size and specification for the child, and properly worn. College does not provide this equipment
- In case of emergency, please advise the Lodge on 01865 276000

Equipment

- In exchange for your own College keys, the Porters will give you a set of three keys. The first, bronze key opens the punt shed, marked MC Punts and located on Addison's Walk just opposite the Old Kitchen Bar. – For punting, you should collect a paddle and cushions from the shed. – For the rowboat, you should take the two oars, as well as the two brass rowlocks to rest the oars in when rowing (these slot in and out of the side of the boat). – If there is water in the boat (e.g. because it has rained overnight), there are plastic scoops in the shed you can use to bail the water.
- The second key, with a blue tab and no coloured dot, opens the pole cupboard, located to the left of the punt shed. You should take one pole from the cupboard if punting. Please Magdalen College Punts 2023 Page 2 ensure that you lock both the shed and the pole cupboard before leaving.
- The cupboard has a tendency to lock itself and cannot be unlocked from the inside, so be careful not to get trapped. Always leave at least one person outside with the keys.
- The punts are beyond and behind the shed in the river, and are marked with numbers corresponding to those on the key floats. The third key will unlock the padlock which ties the punt to the bank. Please remember to get in the punt before unlocking it.
- When returning, please tie up your boat as far as possible from the Bridge. After securing your boat, please ensure you return all equipment, lock the shed, and take all your possessions and any rubbish with you before returning the keys to the Lodge.

Where to punt

- You can punt upstream or downstream on the Cherwell from Magdalen Bridge. Upstream takes you past the College meadows, the Fellows' Garden (always steer to port – left – at

the fork here), past Mesopotamia Walk and through to the University Parks. Here, you can drag your punt up the rollers to continue in the direction of LMH.

- Punting downstream, you can circumnavigate the School playing fields and punt past St Hilda's and along Christ Church meadow. Both forks around Boathouse Island will take you to the Isis, although the route that follows the Christ Church meadow side is shallow and you risk running aground.
- You can certainly continue punting along the Isis, so long as the punt's registration plate is visible. You should endeavour to obey the Rules of the River (below) and stay out of the way of other craft. Remember, in particular, that rowers may not see you coming, since they are facing the other way; even a cox may have limited vision.
- Punting downstream on the Isis takes you towards Iffley Lock (which is about as far as a reasonably fast punter could travel and return in 2 hours); there are convenient moorings on the bank outside the Isis pub. Punting upstream takes you towards the Head of the River and, beyond that, it is even possible to punt to the Trout and the Perch (albeit not in 2 hours and only by navigating Osney Lock, which is a deep lock with end-filling sluices and should only be attempted by experienced punters equipped with a long line).
- You can find more information about the places you can see en route, as well as some instructions on how to punt, at <http://www.dailyinfo.co.uk/guide/punting.htm>

Rules of the river

- There are, three basic rules of the river. First, it is essential always to keep a good lookout and be prepared to slow down or stop. Even if you are on the correct side of the river and you have right of way, you have a responsibility to avoid collisions.
- Second, unlike driving on the roads, you navigate on the right-hand side of the river and pass oncoming boats port side to port side (left side to left side). Overtaking also takes place on the port (left) side of the other boat, towards the middle of the river.
- Third, near bridges and bends, boats travelling downstream have right of way. Motor boats should give way to sailing and rowing boats.
- Avoid turning your boat near bridges, bends and locks. Do not turn across the bow of an oncoming boat; wait until it's safe to turn.
- You can moor your boat in the river, so long as it does not cause an obstruction to other users. Mooring to the bank, even where there is a towpath, can be problematic, as the bank is often privately owned.
- Please don't throw any rubbish of any kind overboard – even apple cores take a long time to disintegrate. Litter can kill wildlife, and it can cause problems for other river users.
- Do not tamper with the registration plate in the boats



Keep to the side
of the channel
on your right side

General punting advice

- Punting is a uniquely pleasant experience, so long as you remain in the boat. Try to avoid falling into the water. Watch out for branches that trap your pole and feel for muddy stretches of riverbed when you drop your pole: both can leave you in jeopardy. If faced with choosing between holding on to the pole and staying in the boat, always choose the boat.
- If you are handling the pole, standing up or otherwise risking accidental immersion, it is a good idea to remove your phone, watch, wallet, etc. first (and consider stashing your phone in a plastic bag out of the way in any event).

- Do not assume that anyone in any other vessel knows what he or she is doing, let alone what you are doing. If it looks as though you might bump another boat, warn the passengers on both vessels. Avoid putting any part of yourself between the boat and a bank, tunnel, bridge or another boat.
- If you punt upstream along the Cherwell, you will pass (at the lower level of) several weirs. You will also pass (at the upper level of) several weirs if you punt along some of the side-channels and streams off the section the Isis downstream of Boathouse Island. Always take great care near weirs and sluices. Unless you are a very strong punter, you should steer clear of the weirs on the Isis and even experienced punters should be ready for strong flows. At the upper level of weirs and sluices, always turn around where there are warning signs. At the lower level, be aware of eddy currents when sluices are open. Do not underestimate the power of the river.
- Do not go up or down rollers with people in the punt: the results are likely to be expensive and it can be highly dangerous.
- Watch out for floating tree trunks and other debris.
- Always keep a good distance from anglers on the bank and from their tackle.
- There are occasionally regattas, processions and other events on the Isis. You should avoid obstructing or passing these. If you are approaching an event, navigate slowly and cautiously and take advice from officials or marshals.
- Be aware of waterborne diseases such as Weil's disease (leptospirosis), though these are extremely rare. Keep cuts and scratches covered; if you fall in, take a shower and treat cuts with antiseptic; make sure you wash wet clothing before you wear it again.



Punting is a part of the Oxford experience, especially at Magdalen – enjoy!