Competitors Pack – OCT 2025

Thank you for entering this year's Head of the Dart race. Starting in Totnes and finishing in Dartmouth. The race is 15 kilometres long and will take you anywhere between 50 and 90 minutes.

Run in joint effort by both Dartmouth ARC and Dart Totnes ARC, the Head of the Dart committee wishes you fair racing and hopes you enjoy our wonderful river and all its beautiful scenery. Fingers crossed for good weather!

This competitors pack will give you an idea of what to expect throughout the race at each of the different stages.

We will cover this again at the safety briefing at 8:45am on the day.

Stage 1: Totnes | Boating & The Start Line – Double Bends
We have the use of the entire car park at Steamer Quay (outside of Dart Totnes ARC). Please be respectful upon arriving with your trailer / boat. Parking for competitor vehicles will be available in the pay & display car park 100m up the road, before you arrive at the club.

PLEASE BOAT 30 MINUTES BEFORE YOUR START TIME LISTED ON THE DRAW. Boating will be done in boat type group and once all boats are launched those boats will be set off. Launching will continue for the other boat types while other groups start.

Boating will be done in reverse number order in boat type category based on the start time of that type. For example, all the eights will boat at the same time and queue on the water. Please marshall above the steps, bows facing upstream, until you are called to spin and head for the start. Please take your blades etc. to steps prior to boating, if you do not have someone available to carry them for you. Seine boats and gigs should please moor up to a link or ladder, if necessary.

There will be little time to warm up on the water due to the fact that once the boats for your class are all boated we will endeavour to start the race for that boat class. In the mean time other boat classes will be launching, hence there will be little room for warming up on the water. We recommend warming up on land prior to launching.

The first kilometre is straight down from the club. No turns, no shallows, please just be aware of oncoming craft, the river is in public use and there will be other boats, kayakers, SUPs and other vessels on the river. At the bottom of this straight you will meet the first bend. The first one is a turn to starboard, quickly followed by a turn to port. This bend features the first of several potential shallows. Do not cut these bends aggressively tight – you do risk beaching on mud flats if you choose such a line. **Please see below image.**



Stage 2: Double Bends – Sharpham – Stoke Gabriel Straight
Coming out of this first set of bends, you are now on a short straight (approx. 500m), passing a stone jetty on your starboard side, and reaching a large, sweeping starboard bend with shallow water on its inner corner.

Once you have navigated this turn, you will see The Bathing House in the back corner of the next bend, on your starboard side again. This is a portside bend, with yet more shallows immediately on the inside of this bend. **Please see image below.**

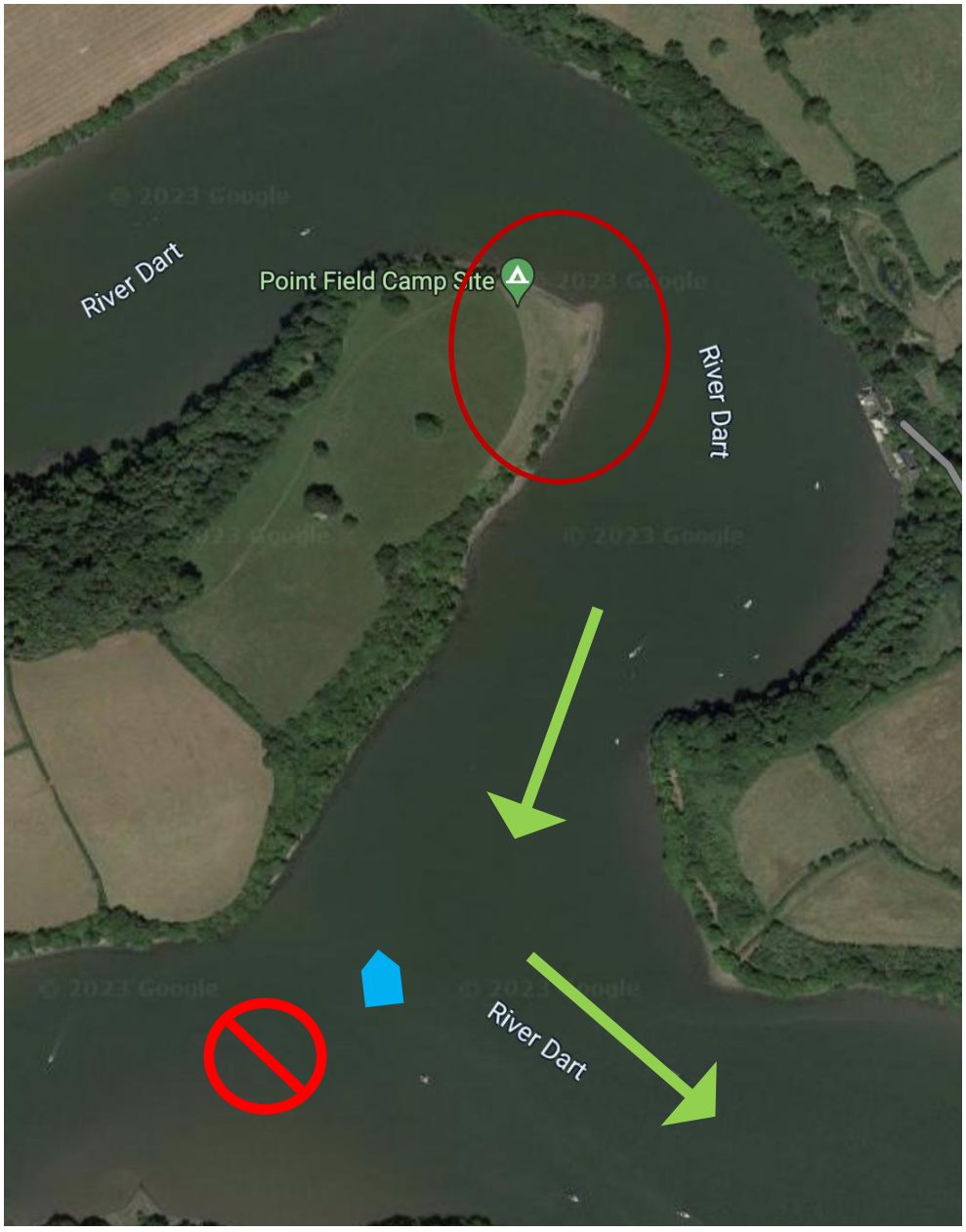


This is one of only two mandatory navigation markers on the course – **all boats MUST go round this green buoy, leaving it to port (coxes left, steerspersons right).** There are channel markers in this next straight. It is advised that you adhere to them to give you the

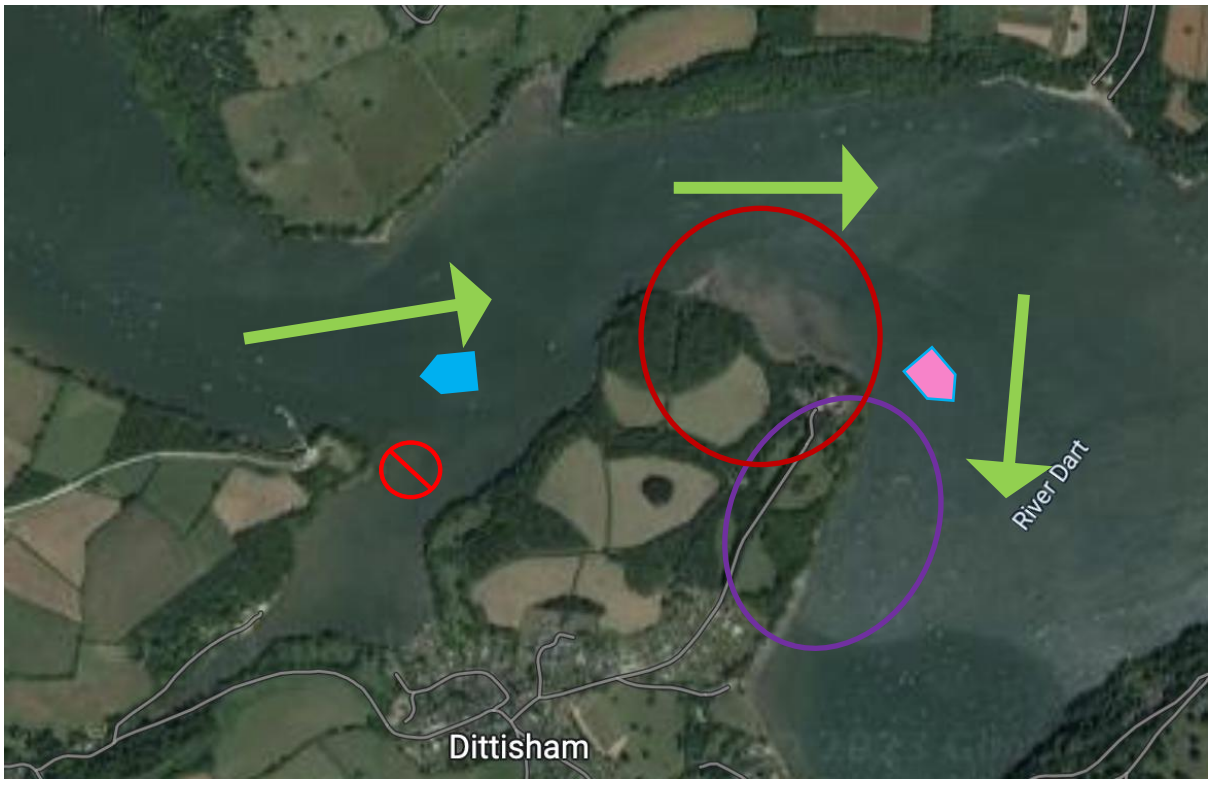
best depth, tide and avoidance of hazards. There can, at times be fallen trees and various other hazards in this next 500m straight of the river. Please proceed with attention to your line.

At the bottom of this straight is one of the biggest meanders in the River Dart. As you come towards it, proceed with caution around the inner corner on your starboard side as this can once again become quite shallow. Only 500m will pass before you need to turn to portside in order to reach the top of Stoke Gabriel straight. There will be a marker boat (blue) here making it clear to **not continue straight.**

This is the entrance to Bow Creek and can be extremely deceptive. We have had many a crew wander up there in years gone by. Save yourself the time and make sure you follow the bends. There will be a marshalling / safety boat on this bend to make it clear you are NOT to enter. **Please see image below.**



Stage 3: Stoke Gabriel Straight – Galmpton / Dittisham Turn
This can be one of the most treacherous parts of the race. The further down the course you get, the wider and more exposed the river becomes. This is also the longest straight you will row in this race. As you come to the bottom of this straight, it is easy to turn **too early** and mistake the creek for the larger turn toward Dittisham. A spotter boat will be patrolling this area (blue), be sure to wait – keep heading down river until you pass the muddy, woody outcrop on your right which also turns into shallows (marked red) – then begin your starboard turn. Again, marshalling boats will be around to make things clear to you **Please see image below.**



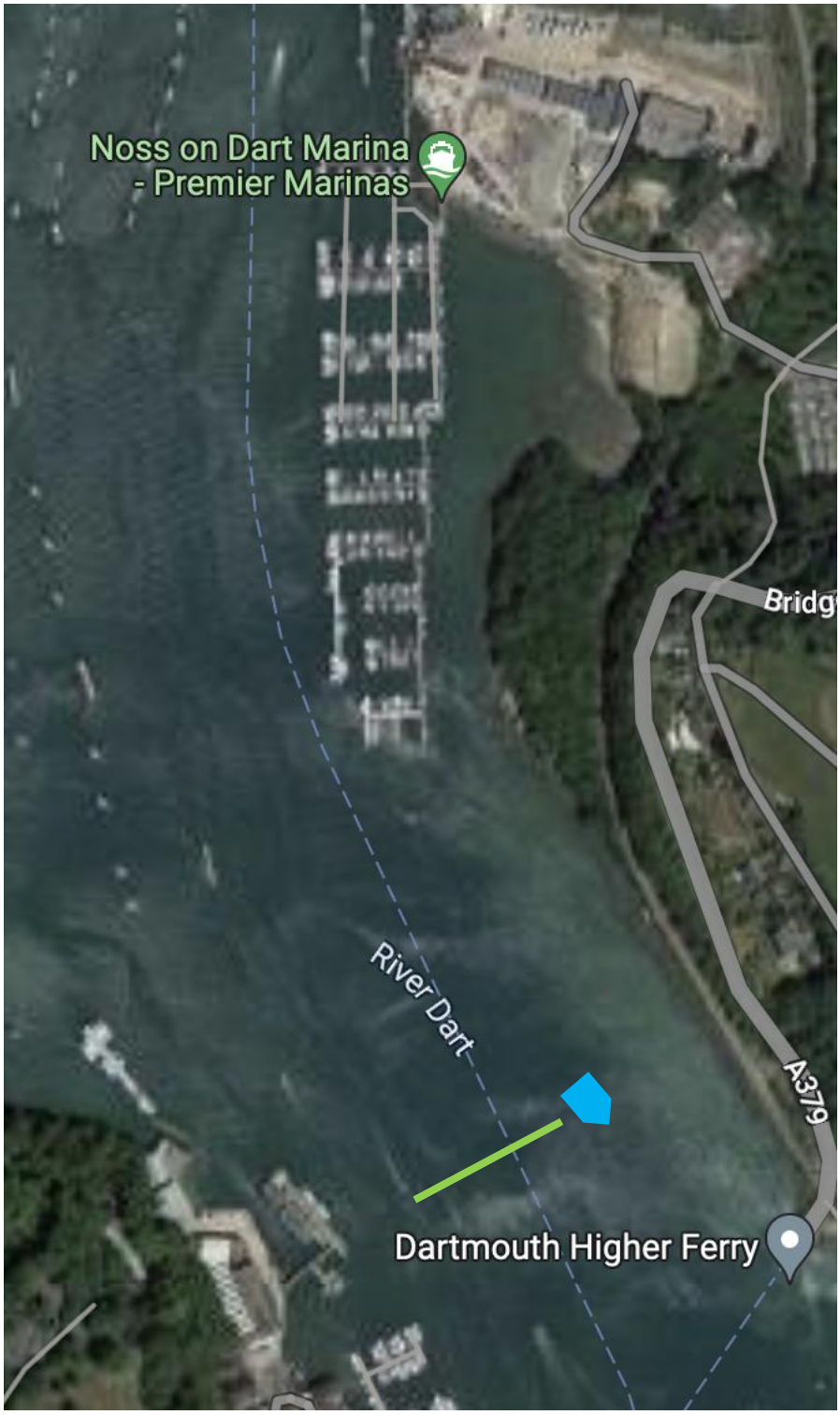
The marker boat once you have made this bend is a **compulsory marker boat. You must have this boat on your starboard side, or you will receive a time penalty. This boat is here for your safety and to prevent you from cutting inside the moorings at Dittisham (shown in purple).** Head toward the pink building on land (The Ferry Boat Inn Pub).

Stage 4 : Dittisham – Dartmouth
This is the final few kilometres of the race; once you have passed the Galmpton bend (image above), you have just 750m before navigating the turn at Greenway. As you are heading toward the pink pub, start your portside turn, passing Greenway Quay on your left. There will be a safety / spotter boat here.

Once you have made this turn you will see a red marker pole, which is marking Anchorstone Rock. **Keep this marker at least 5m to your starboard side. There is a lot of current here and it marks a very large, hazardous rock. Steer clear at all costs.**

Now you are in the final stages of the race – there is nowhere you can really wander off to. Please steer your line to the channel, fairly central down the river; there are moorings either side that will make it quite clear, as well as spotter and safety boats.

Coming into the last 1km of the race, you will have Noss on Dart Marina on your portside. **The finish boat will be approx. 200m off the end of these pontoons (blue). Please see image below.**



Stage 5: The Finish & Deboating

100 – 200 metres beyond the finish is the Dartmouth Higher Ferry (route shown in image above) (image of ferry shown below)



This ferry is connected to land on both sides of the river by thick, metal cable. It weighs a lot and it will not stop for you.

Do not under any circumstances row in front of it when it is crossing. *You can tell if it is crossing the river either by the lights at each end of it flashing (shown in yellow in image above) or you should be able to hear it.*

The circulation pattern for de-boating after you have passed the ferry is **as below**. Please adhere to it; it is done like this to ensure minimal risks to competitors and their boats – we are a tidal river so coming into the slipway at any other angle will make your life very difficult.

There will be marshalls on the slipway from Dartmouth ARC to instruct you – please listen to them. If you have a coxswain or helpers at the end of the race, please make them aware blades / anything else needs to be taken with you straight to the park at the top of the slipway – **you cannot leave anything on the slipway.**

Heading to the park you will have to cross the road; again please be careful, we do not have control of how fast people come round this corner.

