

LONDON

TIDEWAY HANDBOOK 3

ESTUARY EDITION



MAINLY FOR YACHTS AND MOTOR CRUISERS
APPROACHING FROM THE MEDWAY
AND THE THAMES ESTUARY

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ESTUARY

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TELEPHONE NUMBERS and VHF CHANNELS

London VTS (Vessel Traffic Service)	Port Control Centre Gravesend ☎ 01474 560 311	Seaward limit to Sea Reach No.4 buoy: VHF ch 69 "London VTS"
		Sea Reach No.4 buoy to Crayfordness: VHF ch 68 "London VTS"
	Thames Barrier Navigation Centre ☎ 020 8855 0315	Crayfordness to Teddington: VHF ch 14 "London VTS"
King George V Entrance Lock – for Royal Docks	☎ 020 7511 5086	VHF ch 72 "KG 5 Control"
Gallions Point Marina	☎ 020 7476 7054	VHF ch M(37) or ch 80 "Gallions Point Marina"
West India Entrance Lock – for West India Docks, Millwall Docks, Blackwall Basin & Poplar Dock Marina	☎ 020 7517 5550	VHF ch 13 "West India"
South Dock Marina	☎ 020 7252 2244	VHF ch M(37) "South Dock Marina"
Limehouse Lock & Marina	☎ 020 7308 9930	VHF ch 80* "Limehouse Marina"
St. Katharine Haven	☎ 020 7264 5312 ☎ 020 7481 8350 (ans. m/c)	VHF ch 80 "St. Katharine's"

* When calling Limehouse (or any other marina which uses Channel 80) please ensure that your radio is switched to *International* Channel 80, *not* American (US) Channel 80. Otherwise, the marina will be able to hear you but you will not be able to hear the marina.

Some marinas use Channel M(37). This channel should be available on all sets intended for European or International use, but may not be available on some American (US) sets. It is usually shown as M, 37, or n0; please consult the manual for your set.

Please note that marinas do *not* use channel 14 or channel 16.

SOUND SIGNALS on the THAMES

●	I am altering my course to STARBOARD
●●	I am altering my course to PORT
●●●	I am operating ASTERN propulsion
●●●●	I am turning fully round to STARBOARD
●●●●●	I am turning fully round to PORT
●●●●●●	I do not understand your intentions; keep clear (I doubt whether you are taking sufficient action to avoid a collision)
■	I am about to get underway / enter the fairway or: I am approaching a blind bend
■●	I am unable to manoeuvre (not under command)
■●●	I intend to overtake you on your STARBOARD side
■●●●	I intend to overtake you on your PORT side
■●●●●	I agree to be overtaken

GENERAL INFORMATION

This booklet has been produced mainly for the guidance of small craft (yachts and motor cruisers) coming up-river towards Limehouse Marina from the Medway and the Thames Estuary. All such vessels will be entering the Port of London, the whole of which – from the “seaward limit” all the way up to Teddington Locks – is under the jurisdiction of the Port of London Authority: PLA.

This booklet is not intended, and should not be regarded, as a substitute for the information produced by the PLA. Skippers of all vessels coming to Limehouse are strongly recommended to obtain copies of the relevant PLA publications, especially:

The Tidal Thames – A Guide for Users of Recreational Craft

– which is available in booklet form or from the PLA website:

www.portoflondon.co.uk

REGULATIONS

The conduct of all vessels within the Port of London is governed by the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (IRPCS or Coll.Reg) and also by the Port of London River Byelaws and by PLA Notices to Mariners: sometimes referred to as NOTAMs or NTMs.

PLA Regulations state: *“It is important that the owner / master of any vessel navigating the tidal Thames be aware of any Notices to Mariners in force at the time”*. Please check with the PLA (020 7743 7900) or London VTS (020 8855 0315) whether there are any current NTMs which will affect your passage.

NAME of VESSEL

Within the Port of London (and, indeed, throughout the entire tidal and non-tidal reaches of the River Thames) it is a regulation that **the name of the vessel must be clearly displayed**. If your boat does not comply, you may be challenged.

SOUND SIGNALS

The sound signals used within the Port of London include those specified in the Collision Regulations, *plus some additions*. The main signals are shown in the table at the back of this booklet. The table has been designed so that you can detach it and mount it in your cockpit. Even if you do not have occasion to use the signals yourself, it is important to be able to interpret them immediately.

VHF RADIO

For *all* vessels on the tidal Thames, the carrying of a VHF radio (with appropriate licences) is strongly recommended. However, for vessels of more than 20 metres (65 ft) overall length, carrying a VHF radio and maintaining a listening watch on the appropriate VHF channel (see table inside the front cover) is MANDATORY within the Port of London.

SPEED

The Collision Regulations state (Rule 6):

Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

The PLA *Guide for Users of Recreational Craft* also states:

Whilst there is no specific speed limit downstream of Wandsworth Bridge, your speed must be appropriate for the prevailing conditions, the size and type of your vessel, the tidal conditions, your location in the river and, importantly, the safety of others navigating in the area or working or lying alongside. You should err on the side of safety when determining your speed so that there is no risk of injury to persons or damage to property.

SECURITY CHECKS

Marine Police, Coastguard, Customs and PLA Harbour Services launches regularly carry-out routine checks on vessels entering the Port of London. Do not be surprised or concerned if you are challenged – and possibly boarded. Unless instructed otherwise you should slow down, maintain a steady course and speed and let the patrol boat do the manoeuvring!

LIMEHOUSE LOCK: ACCESS

Limehouse Lock (the entrance lock to Limehouse Marina) is *not* manned 24 hours, but according to the following timetable:

Manned (daily): 0800 – 1800 Summer (April to September)
 0800 – 1600 Winter (October to March)

Out of hours availability (daily) 0500 – 0800 and 1800 – 2200 Summer
24 hrs pre-booking required 0500 – 0800 and 1600 – 2200 Winter

24 (manned) hours notice *must* be given for out-of-hours bookings, but *all* skippers are strongly advised to contact the Limehouse Marina Office at least 24 (manned) hours ahead of their passage to confirm their arrival time with one of the Lock Keepers. Leaving a message does not guarantee your booking.

Vessels staying for one night only and wishing to depart before 0800 on the morning after arrival at Limehouse must still give 24 hours notice of their intention. This will normally mean contacting the Marina Office *before* the day of your arrival.

The times of the tides at Limehouse Lock are virtually the same as at London Bridge. The times of High Water London Bridge can be found in any Nautical Almanac, or on the PLA web-site, or in the British Waterways London **Tidal Locks Availability** leaflet.

The “official” access window for Limehouse Lock (as published in the Almanacs) is within a period of 3 hours either side of High Water London Bridge: i.e. HW±3. In practice the window is usually somewhat wider, but skippers must be aware that on a tidal river the actual times of High Water and Low Water, on any given day, can easily differ by half an hour or more from the predicted times, and the actual heights of tide attained at High and Low Water can differ by anything up to a metre from the predictions, due to the effects of wind, atmospheric pressure and other factors. Entry into Limehouse Lock must always be at the discretion of the lock keepers to avoid boats becoming grounded or damaged on the cill.

PASSING THROUGH THE THAMES BARRIER: INWARD-BOUND

The passage of vessels through the Thames Barrier is controlled by London VTS (Vessel Traffic Service), based at the Thames Barrier Navigation Centre (TBNC).

Call London VTS on VHF Channel 14 when you can SEE the Barrier. Your call should be *brief and succinct*, thus:

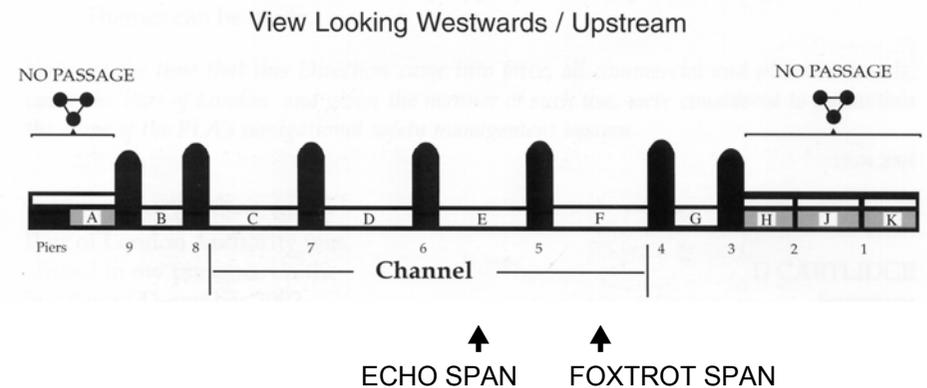
London VTS, yacht Jupiter, yacht Jupiter (motor cruiser Saturn, Saturn)

Jupiter, London VTS

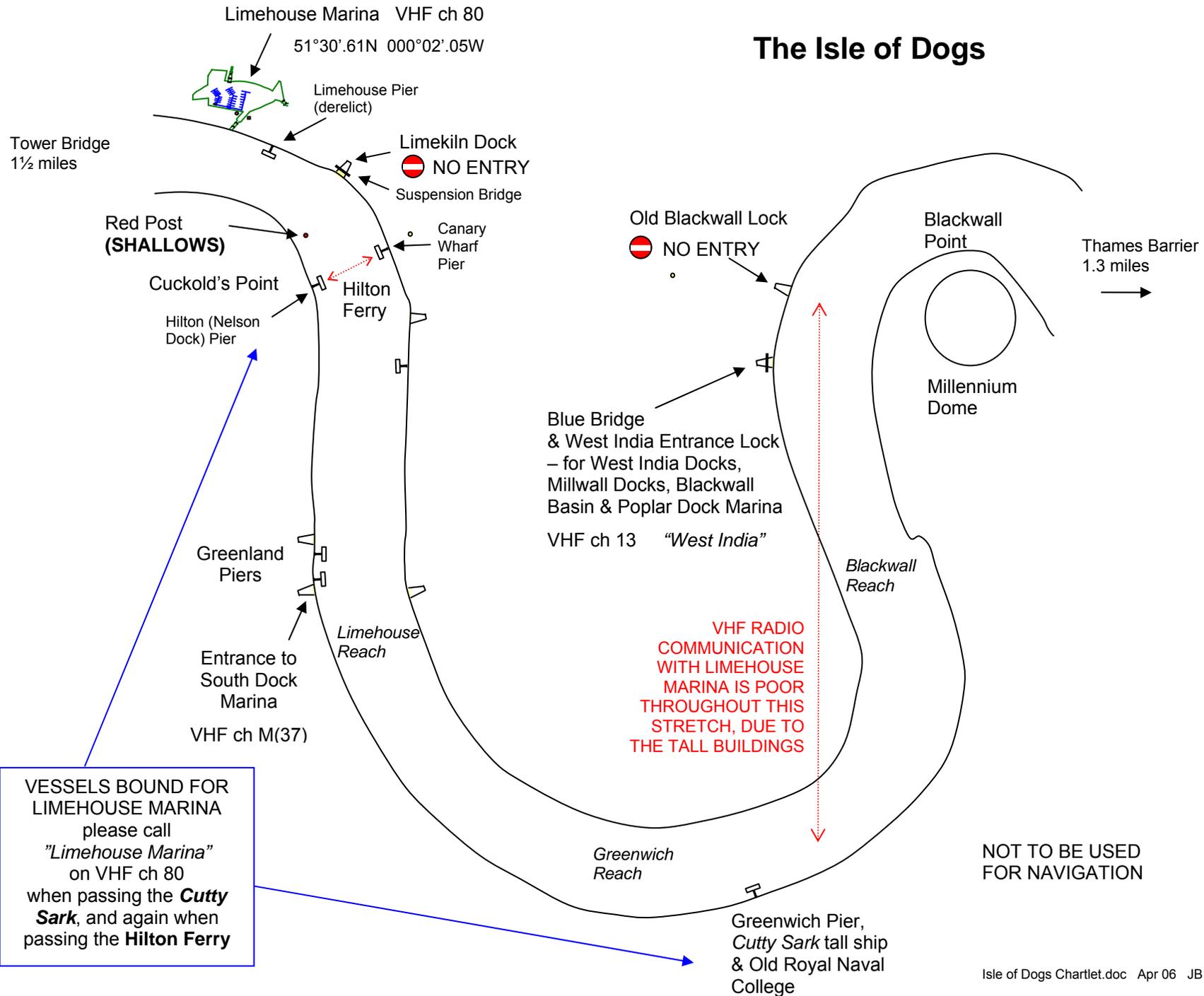
London VTS, Jupiter: Barrier in sight, **INWARD-BOUND**, permission please.

Jupiter, London VTS: take _____ span, between the green arrows.

_____ span, thank you.



The Isle of Dogs



VESSELS BOUND FOR LIMEHOUSE MARINA please call "Limehouse Marina" on VHF ch 80 when passing the **Cutty Sark**, and again when passing the **Hilton Ferry**

APPROACHING LIMEHOUSE MARINA

The entrance channel leading to Limehouse Lock is spanned by a swing-bridge. For *all* yachts, and for most motor cruisers arriving at or near High Water, the bridge will need to be swung open. As this closes the road to traffic, the Lock Keepers will not swing the bridge until your vessel is approaching the entrance. The process of preparing the lock and opening the bridge takes only 10-15 minutes, but if you let us know your progress as you are approaching, then we can try to have the lock ready and the bridge swung open so that you can come straight in, which will be much easier for you. If you do not contact us until you are actually outside, you may have to wait out on the river while the lock is made ready and the bridge is swung open.

Please contact us on:

VHF Channel 80, call sign “*Limehouse Marina*”

or (if you do not have a VHF radio):

☎ 020 7308 9930

IMPORTANT: When calling Limehouse (or any other marina which uses Channel 80) please ensure that your radio is switched to International Channel 80, not American (US) Channel 80. Otherwise, the marina will be able to hear you but you will not be able to hear the marina. Also please note that marinas do not use channel 14 or channel 16.

VHF radio communication with Limehouse can be affected by the tall buildings around Canary Wharf. We therefore recommend that you contact us as follows:

FIRST CALL:

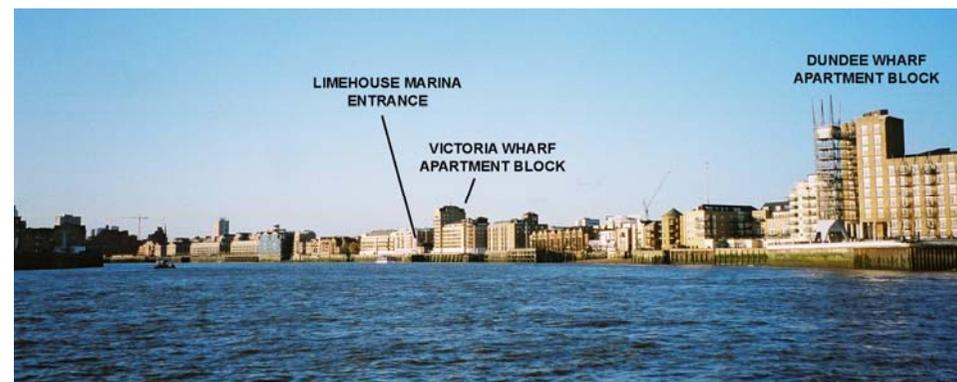
When you are passing the **Cutty Sark** tall ship and the old Royal Naval College at Greenwich;

SECOND CALL: - for final instructions

When you are passing the **Hilton Ferry** (just past South Dock Marina and Greenland Piers)

– these points are marked on the map on page 3.6.

As you pass the Hilton Ferry, the entrance to Limehouse Marina will come into view:



Limehouse Marina Entrance, as seen when passing the Hilton Ferry

Be careful not to mistake the entrance to the old Limekiln Dock for the entrance to Limehouse Marina. Limekiln Dock is about a quarter of a mile before Limehouse Marina on the same side of the river (the right-hand side) and is spanned by a very impressive swing-bridge which does not actually swing; don't try to go in there!



*Dundee Wharf Apartment Block (on the right)
and Old Limekiln Dock: **NO ENTRY!***

Quarter of a mile further on, the entrance to Limehouse Marina is via Narrow Street Swing Bridge, which is painted black. The bridge is situated next to the former Dock Master's House, which became "The Barley Mow" pub but is now known as the "Narrow Street Pub". This was for many years quite recognisable, but it would be fair to say that it is now very difficult to spot from any distance because of all the other buildings around it.

"Limehouse Marina" is painted in large, friendly white letters on the outer, river-facing side of Narrow Street Swing Bridge, but because the bridge is set back from the mouth of the lock cut, the sign can barely be seen until you are almost directly opposite the entrance. If the bridge is swung into the open position – which will need to be done for *all* yachts, and for most motor cruisers arriving near High Water – then it is even more difficult to see the sign. This photograph should help you to identify the entrance in good time:

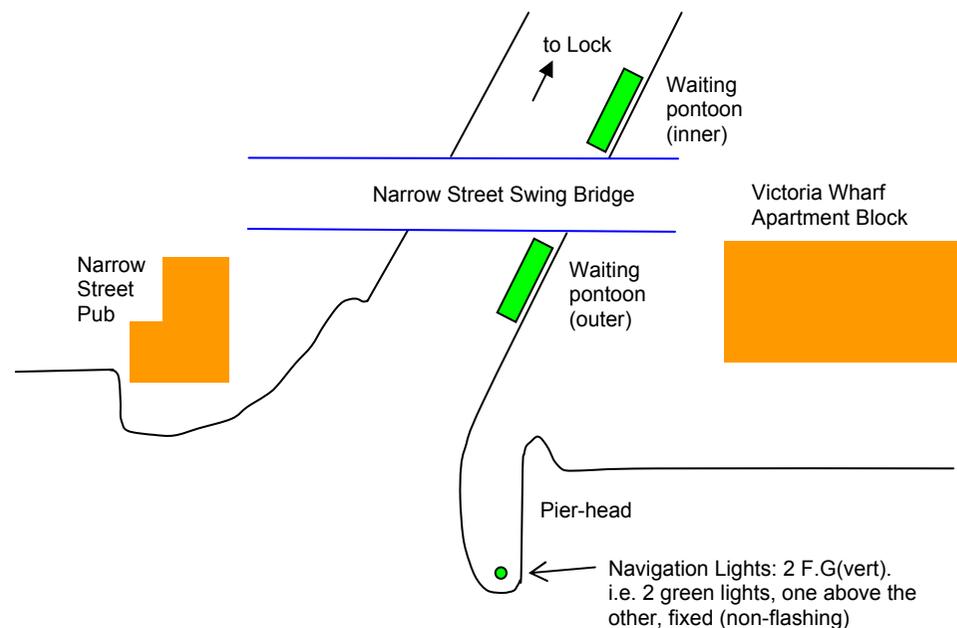


Limehouse Marina entrance

It is intended that in the near future, a FLAG will be flown permanently from the flagpole outside the Narrow Street Pub. This should make the entrance very much easier to spot. At the time of writing, the flag has *not* yet been installed.

ARRIVING OUTSIDE DAYLIGHT HOURS

At night, there are TWO fixed (i.e. non-flashing) GREEN NAVIGATION LIGHTS, ARRANGED ONE ABOVE THE OTHER, on the pier-head which extends out into the river on the right-hand (downstream) side of the entrance to Limehouse Marina:



FINAL APPROACH

You are the skipper, so you must decide how best to make your approach into the lock entrance. If arriving before High Water, while the tide is still coming-in, most skippers choose to come *past* the entrance and turn back *into* the current, so as to have better steerage.

AT LIMEHOUSE LOCK

The dimensions of Limehouse Lock are:

	Length	Width / beam	Depth / draught
Actual dimensions of lock:	30 m 98 ft	8 m 26 ft	Max depth: 8 m 26 ft
Maximum dimensions of vessel:	28 m 91 ft	7.5 m 24 ft	Max draught: 2.4 m 8 ft

At Limehouse, as in any large lock, it is always advisable to rig lines and fenders on *both* sides of your boat; you may end up on the opposite side to that which you intended (!) and other boats may need to share the lock with you.

The lock keeper will normally be carrying a hand-held VHF radio. If you have a VHF radio on board, you should be able to speak directly to the keeper:

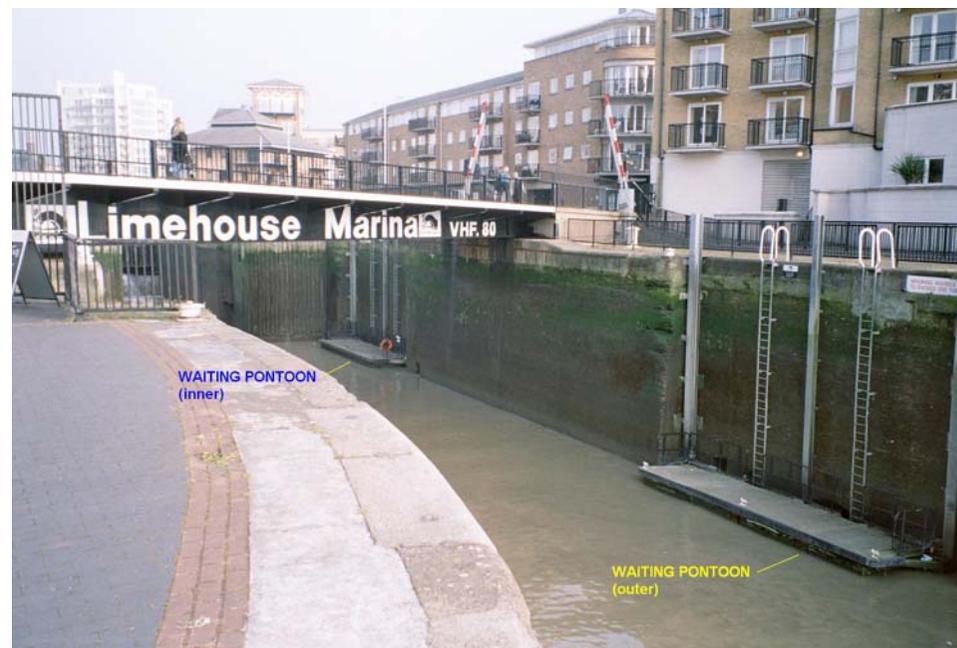
VHF Channel 80 Call-sign: "Limehouse Marina"

If you contacted Limehouse as you approached, you were probably advised whether the lock would be ready for you. Ideally the gates will already be open, with the lights on green and with the road bridge swung into the open position if necessary. If not, it is probably because:

- traffic is using the road bridge
- other boats are using the lock (either going in ahead of you, or about to come out towards you) or:
- there is not enough depth of water for you to get over the cill into the lock (although this is unlikely for vessels coming up-river, which usually arrive near High Water)

There are two WAITING PONTOONS: one before the bridge and one after the bridge. If it is not possible for you to go straight into the lock, you may choose (or you may be instructed) to tie-up to one of the pontoons.

Vessels out on the river can create a considerable wash in the lock cut, and the waiting pontoons can pitch quite violently. Please exercise extreme caution when using the pontoons. Around Low Water (when the difference in height can be up to 25 feet) please do not try to climb the ladders unless absolutely necessary.



Limehouse Lock has no "sluices", and water is let out of the lock simply by starting to open the outer gates. Please do not be alarmed by this!

The keeper will almost certainly be standing on the left-hand side of the lock as you enter, because that is the side where the control consoles are situated. The keeper *may* indicate which side of the lock he wishes you to go to, but otherwise it will be easier for the keeper to assist you if you come to the left-hand side of the lock: i.e. "port-side-to".

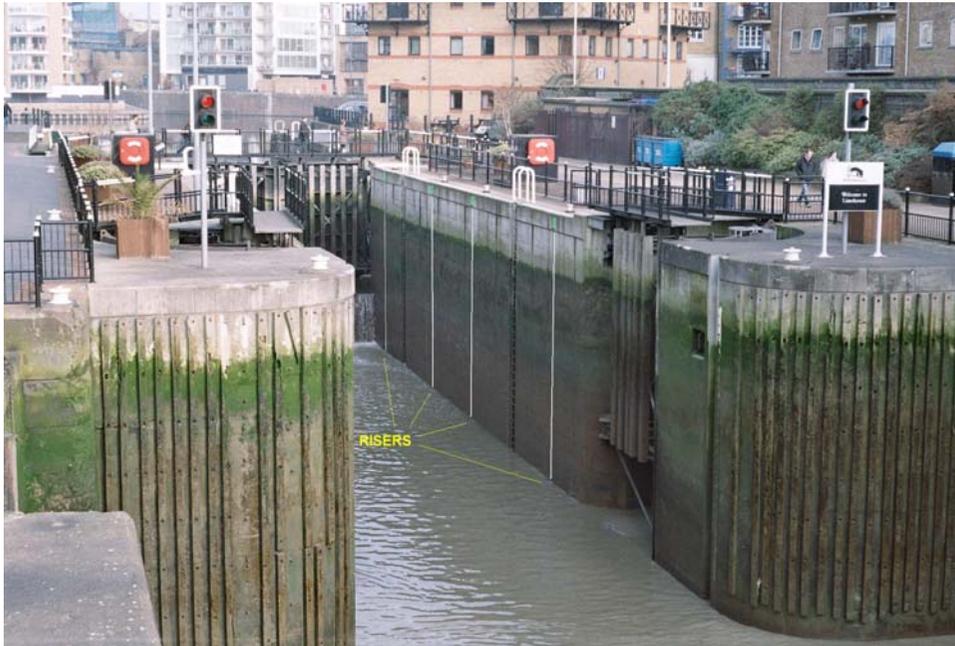
PLEASE COME IN SLOWLY, so that even if your engine fails to go into reverse, you will not do any damage. Ensure that the boat is STATIONARY before you leave the helm.

You must use your own lines, so HAVE YOUR LINES READY.

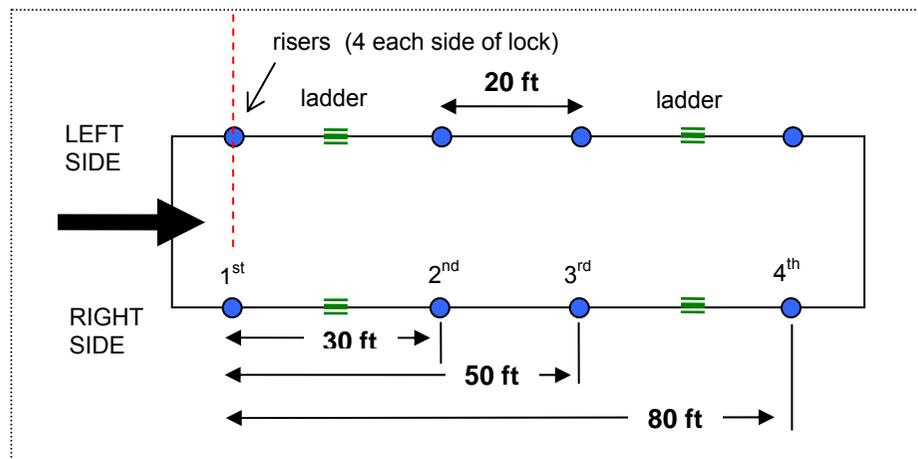
If you are arriving near High Water, it should be possible to use the bollards along the edge of the lock, and the keeper may be able to help you.

However, if the difference in levels is significant, then DO NOT TRY TO THROW YOUR LINES TO THE KEEPER; instead, pass your lines through the vertical risers (plastic-covered cables) which are set into the lock walls.

The positions of the risers are indicated by arrows ↑ just below the parapet:



There are only 4 risers on each side. **Unless instructed otherwise, craft should aim to stop with their stern only just inside the lock, in line with the first riser; they can then be moved forward if necessary:**



Simply pass the line *once* through the vertical riser, pull it all the way through, lead it back to the boat and **take a turn round something**. **Do not just hold the rope**, as the pull can be significant.

YOU MUST NOT SECURE TO THE LADDERS.

Small craft will find it easiest to use a single line led from a centre cleat. Heavier craft should use one line from the stern, and a second line from the centre or the bow.

Motor cruisers, whatever their size, will find it much easier to lead one line from a centre cleat, with another from the stern if necessary. If you *have* to use a bow line, bring it back amidships and attach it from there; **it is impossible to reach the risers in the wall when standing at the bow of a cruiser (or a yacht).**

Large motor cruisers are recommended to **ATTACH THE STERN LINE FIRST**: this will hold the boat, and the stern will not swing out. If necessary, you can then motor forward gently and the bow will swing in automatically, allowing you to attach the bow line. If you try to attach a bow line first, the bow will inevitably get pulled in and the stern will swing out.

You *may* be asked to turn your engine off in the lock. In any case, do not rely on the engine (or any side thrusters) to keep you in place.

Limehouse Lock has no “sluices”, and water is let into the lock simply by starting to open the inner gates. Please do not be alarmed by this!

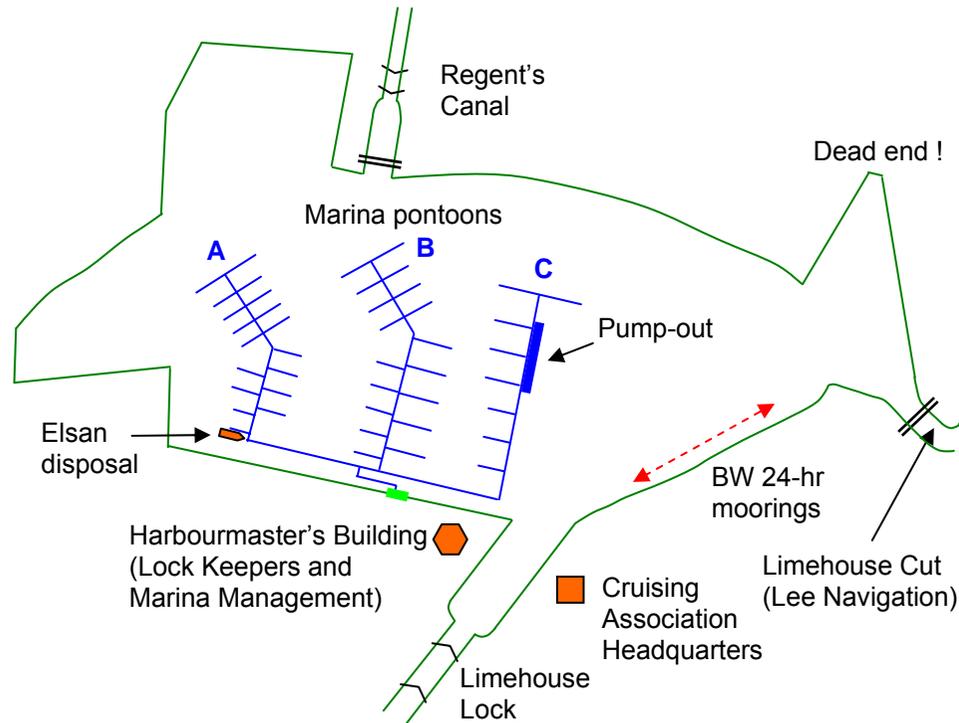
After you have “come up” in the lock, **PLEASE DO NOT CAST OFF UNTIL THE GATES ARE FULLY OPEN**. The pull from the surface flow of water is at its *strongest* during the last few seconds while the gates are opening, and you will not be able to keep hold of the rope.

WELCOME to LIMEHOUSE

Boats going into the marina will be given directions to their berth.

All crews are welcome to visit the Cruising Association (☎ 020 7537 2828) where drinks and food are usually available.

There are also pubs, restaurants, general stores and a Post Office nearby; please ask for details.



DEPARTURE from LIMEHOUSE

- When leaving Limehouse Lock, as you reach the end of the lock cut:

sound ONE LONG BLAST: ■■■■■■

– which in the Port of London means:

“I AM ABOUT TO ENTER THE FAIRWAY”
(PLA Byelaw 36)

This *might* be heard by a vessel about to pass the entrance, but you should still leave the lock cut with great caution.

- If you are turning RIGHT to head up-river, remember also to look LEFT (i.e. behind you) as you leave the lock cut. Also be aware that – because of the **BLIND BEND** just down-river from Limehouse Marina – vessels may suddenly come up behind you only a few moments after you have set off.
- Be prepared for the **STRONG CURRENT** which you may encounter (depending on the state and direction of the tide) as soon as you leave the shelter of the lock cut.
- KEEP A GOOD LOOK-OUT** at all times, **BEHIND** as well as in front.

PASSING THROUGH THE THAMES BARRIER: OUTWARD-BOUND

The passage of vessels through the Thames Barrier is controlled by London VTS (Vessel Traffic Service), based at the Thames Barrier Navigation Centre (TBNC).

Call London VTS on VHF Channel 14 when you can SEE the Barrier. Your call should be *brief and succinct*, thus:

London VTS, yacht Jupiter, yacht Jupiter (motor cruiser Saturn, Saturn)

Jupiter, London VTS

London VTS, Jupiter: Barrier in sight, **OUTWARD-BOUND**, permission please.

Jupiter, London VTS: take _____ span, between the green arrows.

_____ **span, thank you.**

FURTHER INFORMATION

PLA (Port of London Authority)

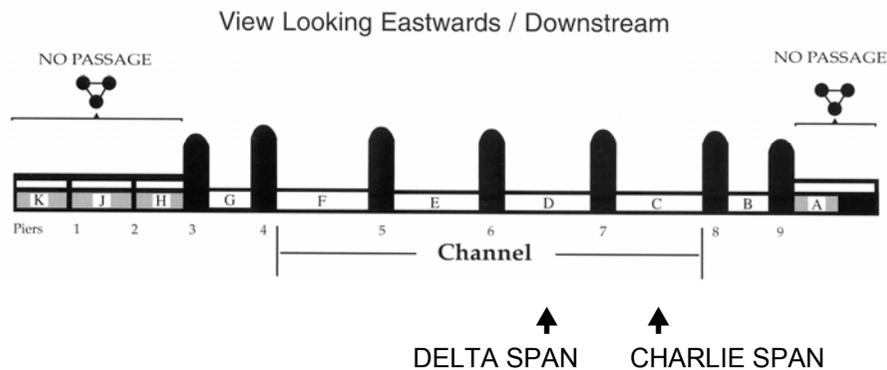
Bakers' Hall, 7 Harp Lane, London EC3R 6LB

☎ 020 7743 7900 www.portoflondon.co.uk

- *The Tidal Thames – A Guide for Users of Recreational Craft* (free)

Other PLA publications:

- *Port of London River Byelaws*
- *PLA Permanent Notices to Mariners*
- *PLA Tide Tables and Port Information*
- *General Directions for Navigation in the Port of London*



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thames Barrier diagrams reproduced from *General Directions for Navigation in the Port of London*, © PLA.

Photographs were taken by the Lock Keepers at Limehouse.

Thanks to the Port of London Authority for their assistance in compiling this book.

The information in this Handbook is offered in good faith. Neither British Waterways nor the contributors to the Handbook can accept any liability for the safety of craft on the tidal Thames. Although our staff are always pleased to offer advice, the safety of a vessel is the responsibility of the skipper.

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