

Cheshire Ring Canoe Race Guidance Notes

- The event began in 1977 when two Ardeche tourer relay teams from Poynton Canoe Club (now Macclesfield and District Canoe Club) took up the challenge to paddle the newly re-opened Cheshire canal ring. The winning boat finished in 20 hours and 20 minutes. The race has since been held every year (with one interruption due to foot and mouth disease), and more than 1300 people have completed the ring in a variety of classes.
- The main classes are the 5-pair relays in double kayak, either tourer or racing K2; the important point of these classes is that each of the 5 pairs includes a junior, so that the race is good for clubs and youth groups. Almost any combination of boats and paddlers can be entered, but you may not be eligible for a record or a prize if you are in a unique class.
- Boats are started at intervals on Saturday morning, typically between 8am and midday, with the fastest boats last to go, so that there is some overtaking. Your start time will be notified to you approximately 1 week before the race.
- The Cheshire Ring is a challenge and preparation is essential, both for the paddlers and the support team. Please study these notes on the canal and the relay change-over points, make sure you know the way on the water and on the land. Ordnance survey Landranger 1:50000 series maps 108, 109, 117 and 118 cover the route. A canal guide to the Cheshire ring can be helpful (e.g. Pearson or Nicholson).
- The ring is part of a canal network and follows an anti-clockwise route. There are some blind branches off the ring, as well as junctions to other canals leading to e.g. Rochdale and Llangollen, so read the instructions for each section.
- **The most important navigation point to remember is to turn left at major junctions and ignore tempting-looking opportunities to turn right!**
- The relay change points are in built up areas and parking is restricted. Please minimise the vehicles taken to each point, park considerately, only use pub car parks if you are a customer and please be quiet at night.
- **We rely on the goodwill of pub owners at change over points. Please make occasional purchases of drinks, snacks etc. This enables pubs to benefit from our event and be welcoming in the future. Pubs to support are at: Broken Cross, Middlewich Big Lock, Preston Brook Tunnel Top and Broughton Arms, Rode Heath.**
- Paddle on the right when passing oncoming boats, give way to barges at narrow bridges and do not try to squeeze through gaps.
- Remember to be properly prepared; you will be alone out in the country and in the dark at times.
- There will only be a small team of roaming marshals from the club monitoring the race. However, after dark, there will be Raynet radio operators at most change points; give them your boat number so they can pass it in to control and monitor race progress. Also please chat to the Raynet operators; they are on duty for a long and boring time.
- At dawn please phone the chief marshal to provide a precise location of your paddlers.
- When you get to change point 19 ring the timekeeper to warn of your approach to the finish as the timekeeper may be asleep in a car waiting for the first finishers.
- The relay sections are listed in the table overleaf and notes given below that.
- The sections are all different lengths but in a five-pair relay team, the total distances paddled by each pair are similar. For a two-crew relay, the second crew can combine sections 2 and 3 to give a reasonable share.
- The table gives approximate guide times for each section for completing the Ring in 20 hours. If you note your team times at each change point you can learn to predict arrival times.
- You will finish on Sunday morning.

Section number	Name of start point	Section length (miles)	Section locks/ tunnels	Guide minutes for 20 hrs
1	Bridge 18 (Miners Arms)	5		57
2	Marple top lock	5	16 L 2 T	65
3	Apethorn Lane, Hyde	3.25		37
4	Dukinfield Junction, Ashton	6.25	18L	91
5	Ducie Street, Manchester	8	9L	95
6	Marsland Road, Sale	6.75		71
7	Burford Lane Underbridge, Lymm	6		70
8	London Road bridge, Stockton Heath	6	Half T	75
9	Preston Brook Tunnel	3.5	Half T, 1 L	39
10	Valley Farm, Little Leigh	7.25	2T	86
11	Broken Cross	5.5		64
12	Middlewich Big Lock	6.75	9L	87
13	Wheelock	4	14L	59
14	Rhode Heath	2.25	10L	35
15	Red Bull, Hardings Wood	4.0	3L	65
16	Bridge 80, Dodds Lane, Astbury	6.25	5L	75
17	Bosley Lock N ^o 5 (A54 bridge)	4.5	7L	48
18	Bridge 44, Bullocks Lane	3.25		37
19	Bridge 29, Clarke Lane back to bridge 18	3.75		43
				1199 mins

NB distances are approximate

Guide to the Ring relay change-over points

Please note that the guide includes information about where toilets are available for competitors and support crews.

Canal and Rivers Trust canal side toilet and shower blocks are available at intervals around the Cheshire Ring: keys can be purchased from the CRT website online shop. This will allow access to all toilet blocks nationwide. There are also additions for support crews on route. It is of course, always polite to either ask or make a small purchase at pubs if using their facilities.

CRT = Canal side; mainly relevant to paddlers.

ST = For Support crews on route.

1. Bridge 18 Wood Lanes, near Poynton. Start and Finish, 5 Miles, no portages to first relay change.

Parking on approach roads and at the Miners Arms (toilets available from 08.00 on Saturday 24th June).

2. Marple, Relay Change Over Point, 5 miles, 16 locks, 2 tunnels to next relay change

Bridge 1 Macclesfield Canal, Junction with Peak Forest Canal.
This is a T junction of the two canals, **TURN LEFT** down the locks.
Limited Parking on Lockside and Brickbridge Lane.

Hyde Bank Tunnel (308yds).

Get out left, compulsory portage, use towpath over tunnel, follow path upwards turn left at a T junction, and fork left at a Y back down to the canal.

Woodley Tunnel (176yds).

Get out left, compulsory portage of tunnel, use path through tunnel but take care as this can be slippery.

3. Apethorn Lane, Relay Change Over Point, 3.25 miles, no portages to next relay change.

Very limited parking at bottom of narrow lane.

“All the way” support crews please avoid parking here.

N.B. For relay teams, the paddling time to the next changeover is not long and the roads could be congested.

4. Dukinfield Junction, Relay Change Over Point. 6.25 miles, 18 locks to next relay change.

Junction with Ashton Canal

This is a T junction of the two canals, **TURN LEFT**

Plenty of parking behind museum.

ST toilets in museum (free entry).

CRT Droylesden marina, before first lock. After this point you are entering Manchester.

Lock 7 (Spiral Bridge)

Towpath changes from left to right. There are two options.

1. Cross the foot bridge immediately after the lock and go down a spiral ramp. This is difficult to negotiate and you can have the help of your support team for this.

2. Cross the busy dual carriageway (Alan Turing Way). **Take care crossing**, a path on the right of the road bridge leads back to the towpath.

5. Ducie Street, Relay Change Over Point, 8 miles, 9 locks to next relay change

Limited meter parking on roadside, or nearby pay and display car park.

Crew taking over, pass under the bridge straight ahead, turn sharp right under another bridge and then sharp left, get-out is on the left hand side of the lock.

Portage options are to follow the towpath where the canal passes under buildings (this passageway is not easy for large heavy boats).

Crews need to be aware that the initial underground towpath section is gloomy and enclosed and not salubrious, although unlawful activities are unlikely to take place during the daylight hours when the race passes through this section.

An alternative is to follow the adjacent road route to avoid the underground section but this crosses some busy streets in a city centre – see the Cheshire Ring Changeover Locations Guide for details of the above ground route.

ST Piccadilly railway station. Cost 30 pence.

Castlefield Junction

After the 9 locks of the Rochdale Canal, the Ring joins the Bridgewater Canal. At the bottom lock the route is straight on, keeping the railway line to your right. Avoid the short branches to left and right.

Follow the main canal out of Manchester. Soon after Man United's Old Trafford ground on your left, there is a junction at which you turn left.

ST Dukes 92. A large bar & outside tables at the last lock 92.

ST Tesco extra, Chester Road, Stretford, M32 0QW.

6. Marsland Road, Relay Change Over Point, 6.75 miles, no portages to next relay point.

Good parking at metro station but may be crowded.

CRT/ST – toilets at pub by station if you buy something.

7. Lymm (Burford Lane Underbridge), Relay Change Over Point, 6 miles, no portages to next relay change.

Small canalside car park with height restriction barrier.

8. London Road Bridge, Relay Change Over Point, 6 miles, no locks, ½ a tunnel to next relay change.

Toilets. At the change over point. Ask for key at shop.

Parking on side roads.

Toward the end of this section, just before passing under the motorway bridge, there is a branch off to Runcorn on the right. Keep left and continue to compulsory portage over Preston Brook tunnel (1239 yards long), follow path on right up the hill to relay changeover point by Tunnel Top pub at top of hill.

CRT At Cotton's Bridge, WA4 4BA. Moorings just after going under motorway.

9. Preston Brook Tunnel, Relay Change Over Point, 3.5 miles, 1 lock, ½ a tunnel to next relay change.

Parking at the pub; please make use of the pub to justify parking.

The relay change over point is on the bridle path adjacent to the Tunnel Top pub car park. Take extreme care crossing the road. On reaching the canal again there is a small stop lock shortly after the tunnel; continue portaging to pass this lock.

10. Valley Farm, Little Leigh, Relay Change Over Point, 7.25 miles, no locks, 2 tunnels to next relay change.

Limited roadside parking. "All the way" supporters, please avoid.

Saltersford Tunnel (424 yards) Compulsory portage; get out on the right and follow the path over the tunnel.

Barnton Tunnel (572 yards) Compulsory portage; get out on the right and follow the path over the tunnel, crossing straight over single track road at the top.

End of Barnton Tunnel.

Some roadside parking, good for supporting "all the way" crews.

ST Tesco 24 hrs, Manchester Road, Northwich, CW9 5LY.

CRT Anderton, Uplands Road, Marina. Right hand side after Anderton Lift.

11. Broken Cross, Bridge 184, Relay Change Over Point, 5.5 miles, no portages to next relay change.

Parking at the pub for customers.

12. Middlewich Big Lock, Relay Change Over Point, 6.75 miles, 9 locks to next relay change.

Roadside parking (or at the Kings Lock pub for customers).

In Middlewich there is a branch to the right under a white bridge to the Shropshire Union Canal. If you are on the water **do NOT** turn right under the bridge into the branch, if you are on the tow path follow it over the bridge, **do NOT** follow the path under the bridge. **Do NOT** turn left into the short blind cut near the marina. You must continue straight along the Trent & Mersey canal, passing the white Kings Lock pub on your left.

Lock 71, adjacent to A533 leaving Middlewich.

Roadside parking; an alternative to Middlewich Big Lock to support "all the way" crews.

13. Wheelock Wharf, Relay Change Over Point, 4 miles, 14 locks to next relay change.

Change over just after the bridge on right bank.

NOTE: Parking at the wharf by Barchetta is policed by Parking Eye and fines are imposed. Support cars can be parked on main road or by pet food shop opposite.

CRT At change over point.

14. Rode Heath, Relay Change Over Point, 2.25 miles, 10 locks to next relay change.

Parking at pub if you are a customer.

15. Red Bull, Relay Change Over Point, 4.00 miles, 4 locks to next relay change.

Parking on roadside.

The transfer from the Trent and Mersey Canal to the Macclesfield Canal is via some steep steps (this bypasses two locks). The incoming and outgoing crews can assist each other (for "all the way" crews their support team can help).

16. Bridge 80, Dodds Lane, Astbury. Relay Change Over Point, 6.25 miles, 7 locks to next relay change.

Parking adjacent to the canal bridge. Change under the bridge on the canal towpath.

17. Just below Bosley Lock No 5, bridge 56 on A54. Relay Change Over Point, 4.5 miles, 5 portages to next relay change.

There is good roadside parking at Bullgate Lane at Bosley top lock (lock number 1). The outgoing crew should walk down from here to the changeover at lock 5. If the boat is to be changed then the outgoing crew can carry the incoming craft plus paddle(s) up to the top lock and then transfer to their own boat.

No parking on the A54 or adjacent lanes before 08.30. This is a noise sensitive area. Only the incoming and outgoing relay crews should be here before 08.30 – without support cars.

All the way crews should receive support at Bosley top lock.

The incoming crew is permitted to portage all 12 of the locks at Bosley and hand over to the outgoing crew at Bosley Top Lock if preferred.

CRT At Bosley top lock.

18. Bridge 44 Bullocks Lane, Relay Change Over Point, 3.25 miles, 0 portages to next relay change. Roadside parking.

19. Bridge 29, Clarke Lane, Relay Change Over Point, 3.75 miles 0 portages to finish at bridge 18.

Roadside Parking. Change over under bridge on right bank or immediately after bridge on left bank.

Aqueduct over Grimshaw Lane (Bollington).

Good parking, suitable for “all the way” support crews.

Toilets: Middlewood Way car park, Adlington Road, Bollington, Cheshire, SK10 5JT (not 24 hours).

Hospitals close to the route with Accident and Emergency departments.

Macclesfield & District general hospital, Victoria Road, **Macclesfield**, SK10 3BL

Stepping Hill hospital, Poplar Grove, **Hazel Grove, Stockport**, Cheshire SK2 7JE

Tameside General Hospital, Fountain St, **Ashton-under-Lyne**, Lancashire OL6 9RW

Manchester Royal Infirmary, Oxford Rd, **Manchester** M13 9WL

Warrington Hospital Lovely Lane, **Warrington** WA5 1QG

Royal Stoke University Hospital, Newcastle Road, **Stoke-on-Trent**, ST4 6QG

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR CYCLISTS.

- Avoid cycling where your tyres would damage the path or verges (e.g. when they are soft or wet).
- Give way to others on the towpath and warn them of your approach.
- Watch out for angler’s tackle and give them time to move it before you pass.
- We recommend you obtain third party liability insurance and equip your bike with a bell or equivalent.
- Carry a spare inner tube, pump, and puncture repair kit. Consider plastic reinforced tyres.