ROWING COMMANDS

When a Gig is under way any command given is obeyed after completing one more full and complete stroke to the finish, after the command "ready, go".

The exception is "Hold Water" which is undertaken instantly. All such commands are given by the coxswain, when the blades of the oars are in the water, during the drive.

On obeying the command, the timing is taken from the stroke oar or the most aft oar. When Bow Side or Stroke Side is included in the command, it refers to the bank of oars on the Bow Side or Stroke Side of the Gig respectively.

ENTER THE GIG
The crew gets into the Gig and sit in their respective positions. They should get in one at a time in a safe manner as directed by the coxswain. Do not stand on the thwarts. Once in the Gig the crew will adjust their stretchers, sit safely and await the coxswain’s instructions. Specific crew will be directed by the coxswain to make ready the bow and stern lines, depending on the berth, environment, weather and sea state.

PINS IN
The crew will insert their thole pins into the sills.

LET GO BOW
The crew member holding the bow line, lets go and once the Gig is free replies with “All gone bow”.

LET GO AFT
The crew member holding the stern line, lets go and once the Gig is free replies with “All gone aft” then enters the Gig.

BEAR OFF
This command will be followed by an instruction to a member of the crew i.e. No 1, or No 2 or No 3. Whoever is given this command, is to push off with the loom of the oar.

IN FENDERS OR OUT FENDERS
This command may be followed by either Bow Side or Stroke Side to indicate which side the fenders are to go out from, or brought in from. DO NOT leave fenders out whilst underway, it is considered to be bad seamanship.

OARS IN
This command is given to get the oars in place and into the “Easy Oars” position and may be given to the whole crew, sides of the boat or individuals. The crew working as a team place their oars into the thole pins (there will be times when the bow will work independently). The oars then move into the “Easy Oars” position, out with the blades feathered.

ARMS ONLY
The indicates to the crew that the stroke is only with the arms; body upright, no swinging from the hips, small, effective strokes.

COME FORWARD READY TO ROW
This is the command for a full stroke and can be given to pairs, sides of the boat or the whole crew. The crew should reach well aft with the loom of the oars, the blade at right angles to the water and just above the surface. The command is then followed by:-
READY, GO!
This is the command to actually start rowing; it is obeyed by all the crew directed to row, and led by the stroke or the most aft tower. If only one bank of oars is required the word “Bow Side Only”, “Stroke Side Only”, “Stroke pair”, “Bow pair” etc, precedes the command.

EASY OARS
This command has several applications, all of which result in the crew sitting squarely and upright on their thwarts, with their oars horizontal and at right angles to the fore and aft line of the Gig, with the blades squared. The command may be given to cease rowing or prior to rowing when the oars are in the “Rest on your oars” position.

BACKING DOWN
This is the command to row by pushing instead of pulling on the looms of the oars and making the Gig go astern or assist in turning the Gig. Individual rowers, pairs or sides of the boat can be given this command, as well as the whole boat, to manoeuvre the Gig.

HOLD WATER
This is the command to reduce or stop the way of the Gig by holding the oars at right angles to the fore-and-aft line of the Gig, in a controlled manner, with the blades in the water. The command can be modified to either bank of oars by changing the command to “Hold water Bow Side or Stroke Side to assist in slow speed manoeuvres. This command should be obeyed as soon as the command is given, so that the oars are inserted into the surface of the water in the upright (squared) position.

ONE DIP
All the crew take one stroke only. This order can be flowed by Bow Side, Stroke Side or an individual position (i.e. “one dip No 6”) to assist in slow manoeuvres.

EASY
The crew pull less vigorously to reduce the Gig speed, or to assist in turning when the command is changed to Easy Bow Side or Stroke Side. To resume normal rowing the command “Come in together…Go!” is given.

FULL, HALF, LIGHT PRESSURE
The crew pull more or less vigorously to increase the Gig speed, or to assist in turning.

MIND YOUR OARS
Given to warn the crew of an approaching obstruction where they need to keep their oars clear. Bow Side or Stroke Side can be added to the end of this command.

EYES IN THE GIG
This is an instruction to the crew to keep their gaze from wandering abroad, and pay attention to what’s happening in the Gig.

SHIP OARS
This is the command given to any position or sequentially from now, to place their oar in the Gig. They slide the loom of the oar aft and along the bow side of the Gig. They will then sit facing forward and await the coxswain’s further instructions.

FEND OFF BOW, BOW SIDE OR STROKE SIDE
This command is given to the bow crew member or the crew to fend-off, if safe to do so to prevent damage to the Gig, or when coming alongside a jetty or another Gig. It can also be used if the Gig is coming alongside for a short duration without securing.
REST ON YOUR OARS
The oars are slid inboard and across both gunwales. The oarsmen can now relax and rest on them. This command is only given from the Easy Oars position.

OARS ALOFT
This command is given to bring the oars inboard from the Easy Oars position. Pressure is exerted on the loom to bring the blade up. The oar is then handled to be raised vertical in the Gig, placed between the knees and ankles and held by both hands.