

THE
DRASCOMBE
OWNER'S
HANDBOOK

How to get the best
from your boat

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THE DRASCOMBE FLOTILLA

An introduction by the designer.

Contrary to popular belief, boats of the "Drascombe" flotilla were not designed to appeal to the market for nostalgic reasons. It all started when I had sold my boat building concern in 1964 and had retired to a remote farmstead on the top of Dartmoor. After a while I decided to indulge in the pleasure of designing and building a boat to suit my own requirements and, being out of the boat business, I was entirely free of thoughts of "what will sell".

My family did not share my passion for sailing small boats. In fact, it had come to the point when I went boating alone.

Quite simply, if we were going to enjoy our leisure time on the water as a family, I had to design a boat that they could enjoy and, to do this, the first requirement was that they should have complete confidence in the craft. The design began to shape by my thinking solely of our own needs which were

- 1 Ability to trail and for the family to handle on and off the trailer.
- 2 First rate sea-keeping qualities.
- 3 A good motor boat, for to start with, it was going to be a question of fishing and pottering under power.
- 4 I wanted the boat to be lively enough for me to enjoy a good hard sail once I had put the family on the beach.

It was uphill work but eventually the first "Drascombe Lugger" was launched in 1965.

The half decked open boat with a high bulwark did wonders for confidence. The loose footed yawl rig with all sails stowing aloft and out of the way gave the space needed for a family. By making the boat balanced under jib and mizzen as well as under sail, the motor could be cut and fishing lines streamed without fear of hearing that sickening crunch as boom strikes female head. The hard turn to the bilge gave a powerful hull well able to carry sail. Her generous sheer kept her dry.

In short, we started to enjoy our boating together.

But it was not until 1967 that I was persuaded that other men might also have my problem. So at Earls Court in 1968 the first wooden production Drascombe *Lugger* was sold, within 29 minutes of the doors being opened to the public.

The first G.R.P. Lugger came out in 1969. By 1970 the "stretched" version, the *Longboat*, was in full production. This boat was primarily for youth training but the clamour for some shelter led to the "Cruiser" version coming out in 1971. Later still the Americans asked for a pure fisherman version with no sails but having a wheel mounted on a pedestal to steer by outboard.

THE "DRASCOMBE FLOTILLA"

A Guide to Rigging your boat for the first time

In 1971 Honnor Marine asked me to design the smaller *Dabber*. I had been experimenting with double-enders and was most impressed with their performance. The *Dabber*, with her engine offset to allow a transom hung rudder, is basically a double-ender with the upper two planks being allowed to flare away to give the familiar V-shaped transom. Her bow is well V'd so that in effect the underwater shape is the same entering the water as it is leaving. Thus a balanced hull that requires only a shallow rudder results.

The next step was in 1973 with the *Launch*. By modifying the *Dabber* hull and fitting an inexpensive but rugged inboard engine a useful motorboat at a highly competitive price resulted.

In 1974 came the *Driver*. She is a lengthened version of the *Launch* and has the same rugged inboard engine. The propeller can be fully feathered to cause negligible resistance when sailing, as well as having neutral and reverse positions. Short, well-shaped bilge keels assist the long central keel and she sails well to windward under a simple yawl rig. Having no centre-plate trunk amidships, she has an exceptionally large cockpit.

How it is possible for the *Driver* to get to windward like no other bilge keeler I know, yet draw only 13 inches of water, is my secret !

"DRASCOMBE" – the name and its origin. Drascombe lies high up on the fringe of Dartmoor, on or near the ancient Mariners' Way, the path taken by sailors going from North to South Devon ports or *vice versa*. It is first mentioned in A.D.689 and "DRAS" is Saxon for mud.

FOR THE RECORD

- 1968 – 69 Ian Brinkworth cruised the Greek archipelago in his *Lugger*.
- 1969 – 70 David Pyle sailed his *Lugger* from Emsworth, England to Darwin, Australia.
- 1970 Ken Duxbury and his wife cruised the Aegean in their *Lugger*.
- 1971 The same intrepid couple sailed their *Lugger* from Greece to England.

There have been numerous crossings of the English Channel and the Irish Sea by various Drascombe boats, but –

DON'T FORGET –

THE SEA HAS NO MERCY

and, although the boats are seaworthy enough, when the chips are down, safety depends on the skill and experience of the crew. Good sailing and good luck !

J. L. Watkinson.

The Mizzen. Lace the head through the holes in the top of the mast and then haul down the luff and lace to the tack eye on the mast. The luff does not want to be bar taut as this leads to vertical wrinkles. When the head and tack have been secured, lace the luff to the mast using a marlin hitch (fig. 1).

The Mainsail. Lace to the yard or gaff starting at the throat (lower end) and then hauling out to the peak. Marl to the spar as for the mizzen.

The Mainmast. Slip the ring with the rigging on it over the head of the mast and secure with the large split pin, making sure that the shroud eyes lie fairly in the grooves in the wood. Next reeve off the halyards and loosely secure them to the lower end of the mast. The main halyard reeves through the block on the stainless steel link, the jib through the block on the short wire strop (except in boats fitted with roller jibs).

Now step the mast and hold it in place against the thwart with a turn of the forestay lanyard so that the mast is just touching its lodging place or partner in the mast thwart. Then set up the shroud lanyards evenly and tightly enough to pull the mast back a little from its partner. Finally set up the forestay lanyard taut so that the mast comes back into place.

Mast rakes should be 2 degrees aft for both main and mizzen except for the *Driver* whose main rakes 7½ degrees and mizzen 2 degrees. This is to give as long a cockpit as possible.

Boats with a jib luff spar or jib furling gear call for a different system, as follows:–

Attach the wire at the top of the roller or the swivel, to the middle hole of the adjuster on the stub forestay, step the mast and try for length. The lower end should shackle to the stemhead fitting with the mast hard up to the thwart but with only a very slight forward bend. If the length is incorrect the first time, lower the mast and try a different hole in the adjuster strips. When the jib luff/forestay is the correct length, set up the shroud lanyards taut and evenly.

The *Dabber* differs in that it has a separate forestay whose sole function is supporting the mast. Its lanyard laces to the stemhead fitting and sets up with the shrouds in the normal manner. The jib sets "flying". Its tack simply loops over the bowsprit end, its head ties to the halyard. (A double sheet bend is the best knot).

Hoisting the Sails.

(1) JIBS

LONGBOATS ONLY. To hoist the standard jib, first shackle the tack to

the stemhead and clip the jib to the forestay. Shackle on the halyard and hoist away. Sweat up taut and belay to the pin in the mast thwart (open boat) or the cleat on the cabintop (cruiser).

To hoist a jib on a roller, shackle on the light halyard and enter the luff rope into the slot in the spar. Haul it up and secure the tack with the split pin through the bottom and secure the halyard on the small cleat. Pass the fall of the halyard through the hole in the drum.

Next roll up the sail on the spar by hand, passing the fall of its halyard round and round so that it does not turn up on the drum. With the sail tightly rolled up, pass this fall aft through the fairleads along the gunwale. Then by allowing the sail to unroll the line rolls up on the drum and pulling on the line will roll the sail up any desired amount.

LUGGER and *DRIVER* owners take note of the last paragraph above, for their jib furling gear works in like manner.

(2) MAINSAILS

The Drascombe flotilla all have lugsails. The variations are not great.

The *Lugger* and the open *Longboat* have loose-footed gunterlug mainsails.

The Cruiser *Longboat* has a boomed, loose-footed main.

The *Dabber* and the *Driver* both have standing lugsails, ~~the former boomed as for the Cruiser Longboat, the latter~~ loose-footed.

The difference lies in the gunter mains having jaws to the heels of their yards so that the sail lies all abaft the mast and is laced to the mast (fig. 3). The standing lug has no jaws and so a corner of the sail extends forward of the mast. Needless to say, it does not lace to the mast.

To hoist the mainsail bend the main halyard to the yard with a clove hitch or a round turn and two half hitches just below the chocks. Secure the yard up and down the mast with parral beads at the halyard and at the jaws (gunter rigs) (fig. 2). From now until you strip the sails from the spars for winter storage, the yard **need never leave** the mast, even if the mast is unstepped for trailing or **any other reason**.

Now hoist the mainsail right up, secure the halyard to a belaying pin and tension the luff by hauling down the tack. Sufficient stray end should be left on this to tie down the reef cringle/s when reefing.

Finally, lace the luff to the mast, preferably using the method of Fig. 3 which is less likely to jamb than ordinary spiral lacing. This lacing should be barely taut so that the luff leads in a straight line from throat to tack, not pulled in towards the mast.

DRIVER AND DABBER

The hoisting and setting of these standing lugsails is self evident. However, getting the best out of them is quite another matter and I deal with this in the "Hints and Tips" section.

Booms. The Cruiser *Longboat* has a boom that separates from the sail when the latter is furled, so as to retain the stow-aloft feature. At the tack is a galvanised hook that forms a simple goose-neck, (the sail tack laces and reefs as for the other Gunter boats) and at the outer end of the boom there is a simple outhaul that attaches to the clew of the mainsail or reef cringle as case may be. The boom sheets to the iron horse as for the others.

~~round the centre of the boom.~~
Dabber mainsail now loose footed as per Driver.

FURLING THE MAINSAIL ALOFT (Fig. 5).

Lower the mainsail until the heel of the yard nearly touches the mast thwart and belay the halyard.

Lay the yard to the mast (boom as well in the case of the *Dabber*) and roll the sail up tightly and tie with individual gaskets every 18" or so. Inexpensive shock cords with hooks make good gaskets. Nylon or terylene very easily slip and after a gale you may well find a shredded sail.

REEFING

Mizzen. Unbend the sheet and take as many rolls as necessary round the mast. In practice, it is rare to reef the mizzen except when using it as a steering vane when under engine. Incidentally, this is the best means of furling the mizzen.

Mainsails. Apart from very minor variations in the *Driver* and the *Dabber* which don't warrant mention, the procedure is the same for all boats.

Lower the yard until the reef cringle on the luff is a few inches above the tack eye. Using the stray end mentioned earlier, secure the reef cringle. Shift the mainsheet to the reef cringle on the leach, bunch up the foot of the sail and tie off the reef points. Do not **ROLL** the foot of the sail as this will cause it to hold water and thus bear the boat down.

This takes only a few minutes and can be done at ease if the jib is hauled to weather so as to heave to, the mainsheet and the helm being let go whilst you get on with the job.

She will sail perfectly well under either mainsail only or under jib and mizzen but she handles better under the latter rig if sail has to be shortened to that extent.

Jibs. I think these are self evident, so "no comment".

HINTS AND TIPS

When you first launch your new boat, lift the floorboards and look for leaks.

You must be saying, "Leaks in a G.P.R. boat?". But you would be surprised how many people forget to put the bung in. Then you have a heavy wooden keel and bilge keels. If these have been out of the water during a long dry spell you could get seepage round the bolt fastenings. A quarter of a turn with a spanner is all that is needed.

Assuming you have rigged, launched and inspected your boat before getting underway could I ask you to pause a moment.

The *Lugger* and the *Longboat* both have deep forefoots merging into a broad, shoal afterbody. The centreplate and the rudder are not far apart, so this means a finely balanced boat. Angle of centreplate, sail trim and crew disposition are important for best performance.

The *Dabber* and the *Driver* being long keeled, balanced, boats are far less sensitive.

To get to grips with the two-masted rig, try first under jib and mizzen only, even if the wind is light. You will soon find that by playing the sail trim against the centreplate against the crew disposition you can make your boat sail and even go about without touching the helm. She won't run before the wind but no boat will without guidance. Then try her under power, steering by sail and plate dispositions. When trolling you will find this capability invaluable.

Now to full sail. The mistake everyone makes sooner or later is getting into irons and going astern at a rate of knots, unable to pay off on either tack. This is caused by the mizzen and the remedy lies in letting it go quickly.

However this should never happen if you remember that when going about you must get the jib full and drawing on the new tack whilst the boat still has way on. Let the main flog if need be but do attend to that jib first.

MAINSHEET ALWAYS take a dry turn round the cleat on the lee side of the cockpit. The resulting friction on the sheet not only makes it far easier to hold but also the lead ensures that the lower block lies as far outboard as possible on the horse (Fig. 4).

When running or broad reaching in strong winds and rough water it helps the helmsman if you furl the mizzen and move the crew aft. Also lift the centreplate half up.

STANDING LUGS. *Dabber* and *Driver*. (Fig. 6).

As stated earlier, whilst these sails are about as simple as can be, their tuning is important.

When setting the mainsail the yard should be hoisted to within about 9 inches of the head of the mast and the halyard belayed.

The luff or leading edge of the sail is then tensioned by the tack downhaul. As the luff is not laced to the mast, if it is too slack the sail will stall. In a strong wind it wants to be very taut. In lighter winds, if it is too taut vertical wrinkles will form thus spoiling the air flow. The downhaul can also be eased when running. As you will see, in both these boats special attention has been paid to the tack downhauls to ensure that they can be rapidly and easily adjusted. (Fig. 7).

Another wrinkle is to dip the mainsail each time you go about. This involves pulling the heel of the yard round to the new lee side of the mast but it is a fine point of tuning and not essential.

CONCERNING THE DRIVER ONLY.

She has a long straight keel as well as bilge keels and, whilst in rough water this makes for light work on the helm, it does mean that she is slow to turn compared with other sailing boats. Until you are used to her you may well find that you have to back the jib to help her go about. This should really be essential only in light breezes when there is a bit of sea running. In most circumstances, provided that she is kept moving fast and then given full rudder, assistance from the jib is rarely needed. She gets to windward best with about 10 degrees of heel. This means that one keel is flying clear of the water thus reducing wetted surface and the other is deep down in denser water thus increasing grip.

UNDER POWER AND THIS ALSO CONCERNS THE LAUNCH

The technical instructions regarding the engine will be found in the maker's handbook. These remarks are confined to the seamanlike use of the unit. There are many quieter and more sophisticated engines on the market but for price, low fuel consumption, high efficiency, you can't beat the "SHRIMP".

Being air-cooled, the "SHRIMP" is noisy but has no cooling water problems. When the motor is running the propeller is always turning, even when in neutral pitch but you have neither clutch nor gearbox problems. Your one headache is fouling ropes or even your own mooring with the ever-turning prop. All that is needed is a little care and possibly the use of oars until in clear water.

ENGINES

The *Dabber*, *Lugger* and *Longboat* have all been designed for outboard motors and sturdy mountings are fitted as standard. A prime consideration has been the need to facilitate simple maintenance, such as plug changing and propeller clearing while afloat, from safe positions within the bulwarks. This calls for trunk mounting but care had also to be taken to cut out the excessive drag sometimes associated with outboards in trunks. Hence the

MAINTENANCE

narrow slot in the transom which results in the larger motors having restricted turning ability.

However, all the boats are intended to be steered by their rudders when under power, the outboard being left free to pivot so that it will follow turns of its own accord. This, you will find, it does easily, a touch on the engine steering arm being needed only to assist a sharp turn or to bring the engine back amidships after a hard rudder turn.

If you do not have a kick-up rudder, remember always to leave the centreplate half down when motoring in shallow water. When the plate touches bottom it is high time you raised both the rudder and the engine and took to the oars — or else found deeper water.

Finally, do not over-power your boat. All that will happen is that your fuel bill will go up while your stern will go down — and you go hardly any faster. Only boats to be used for towing need extra power. The recommended powers for outboards are as follows:—

Longboat:	4 to 8 b.h.p.
Lugger:	3 to 6 b.h.p.
Dabber:	2 to 4 b.h.p.

The *Launch* and the *Driver*, while having inboard engines, can mount outboards additionally on pedestal brackets on the transom for people who habitually wear both belt and braces. However, it is worth remembering that the four-stroke inboard engine is likely to be more reliable than any two-stroke outboard, especially one that lies neglected in a locker.

Built from fibreglass mouldings and having oiled teak wood trim, your Drascombe boat needs very little maintenance in order to preserve her in good condition. The sails are of terylene (dacron) and the rigging is of stainless steel wire or synthetic cordage, so that rot and corrosion find little or nothing to attack. However, she will soon lose her good looks if allowed to get dirty and scratched and the boat-proud owner will make sure the mouldings stay clean by occasionally washing with warm water and detergent. A mild abrasive powder can be used to shift any remaining marks, while petrol may be used for oil and grease. It helps to keep the fibreglass from getting dirty if it is given a good polish with a wax polish such as used for cars.

Minor scratches will have no effect on durability but severe scratching or abrasion which reveals the glass fibres should be dealt with. A coat of polyurethane paint will give protection but for best results the scratches should be filled and sandpapered flush before painting. For filling use a polyester paste. The builders can supply matching gel coat if it is desired to fill without painting. When painting fibreglass mouldings, it is essential to prepare the surface for the paint to key firmly. Special primers can be obtained from the paint manufacturers and must be used exactly in accordance with the instructions. Alternatively, the surface may be rubbed down lightly with a fine grade of sandpaper.

Left to itself, the teak will bleach to a pale greyish brown and many people prefer its appearance thus. To maintain a rich dark brown, an occasional rub over with a rag soaked in boiled linseed oil is all that is required. The floorboards are treated with a special preservative and will weather to a pleasing grey shade. They need no attention other than an occasional scrub to keep them clean. The spars, however, are varnished with polyurethane varnish and need a rub down and another coat whenever they show signs of wear — normally once a year.

Centreplate and rudder are of mild steel, galvanised by the hot dip process, and they should last several years before needing any attention. When they show signs of rust they may be re-galvanised or treated with a good quality anti-rust paint and several coats of marine paint or anti-fouling.

If a boat is kept on a beach or tidal mooring where the bottom is particularly abrasive, the hardwood keel and/or bilge rubbers may need replacement in due course. This, merely a matter of screws, nuts and bolts and is done without having any effect on the structure of the hull, since these members are designed to take wear and be replaced easily.

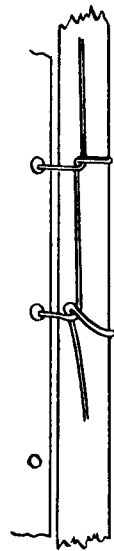
Sails should have the salt washed out of them and be carefully dried before storage for the winter. Moulds can grow on damp dirt on the surface of a sail, although not normally on the material itself. Synthetic cordage can be cleaned when dirty by soaking in a bucket of detergent solution and then

rinsing in fresh water. Stainless steel wire may occasionally show signs of brownish, rusty-looking stain but this can be polished off, leaving the bright surface beneath. Wiping with wax or thin oil helps to prevent this.

My last words are about Trailers, so often neglected.

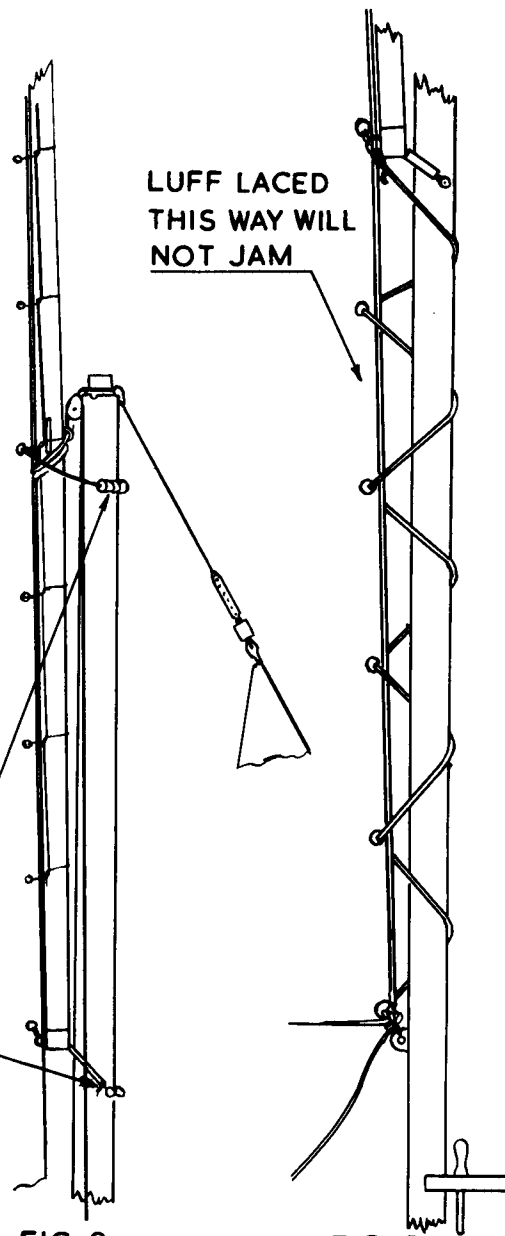
NEVER immerse a trailer whilst the hubs are still warm.

ALWAYS keep the trailer greased, both hubs and hitch.



**FIG. 1 THE
MARLIN HITCH
(ALL BOATS)**

**PARALL
BEADS**



**FIG. 2
LUGGER & LONGBOAT ONLY**

FIG. 3

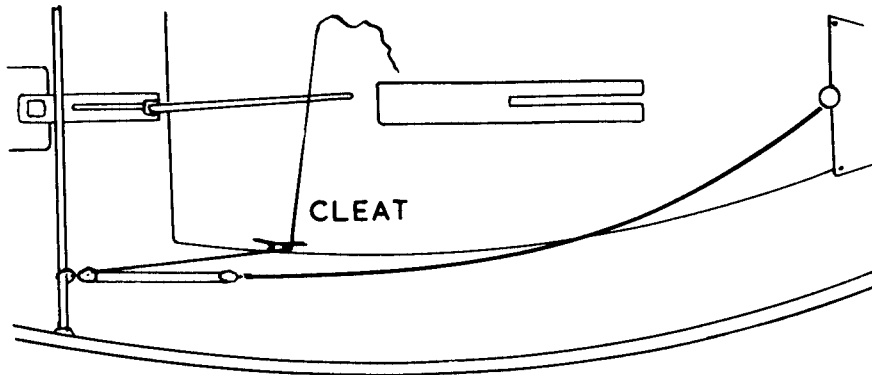


FIG. 4 MAINSHEET LEAD ON LUGGER & LONGBOAT. DRIVER HAS ROPE HORSE

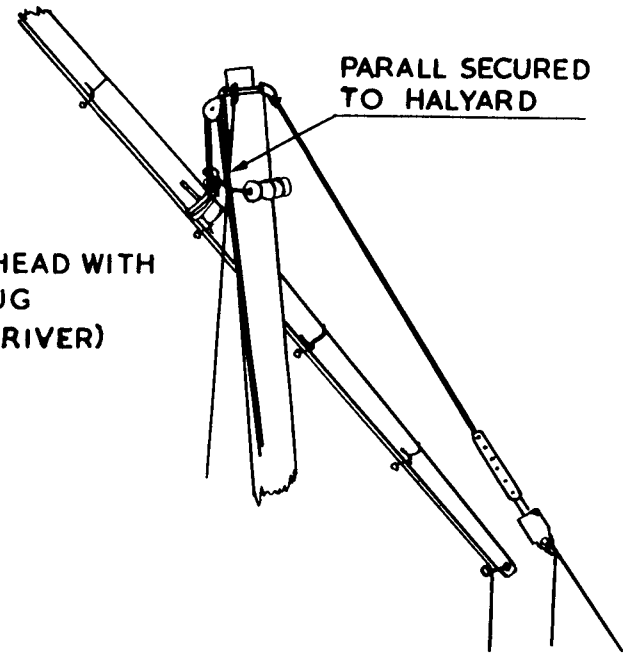


FIG. 6 MASTHEAD WITH STANDING LUG (DABBER & DRIVER)

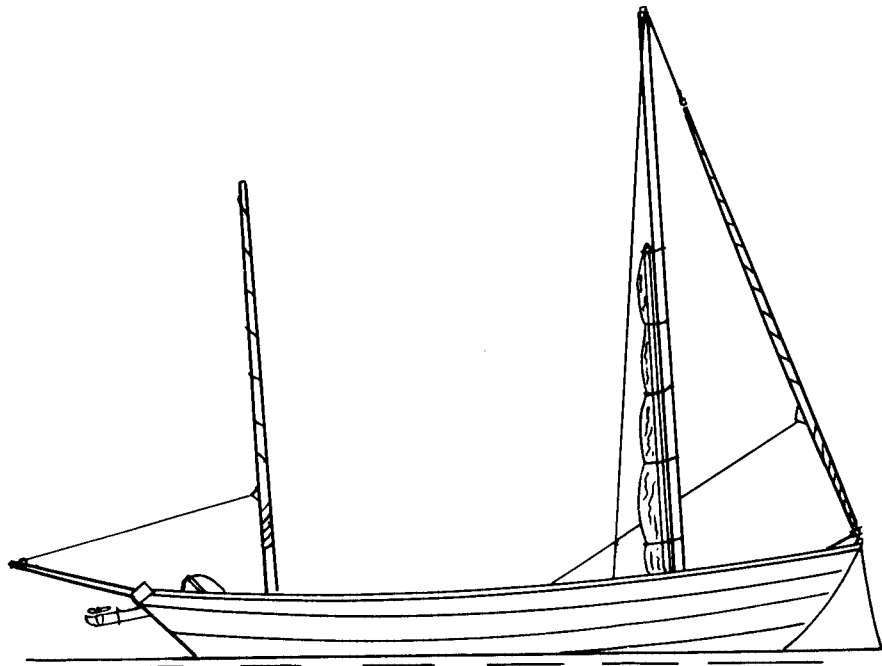


FIG. 5 SAILS FURLED ON SPARS

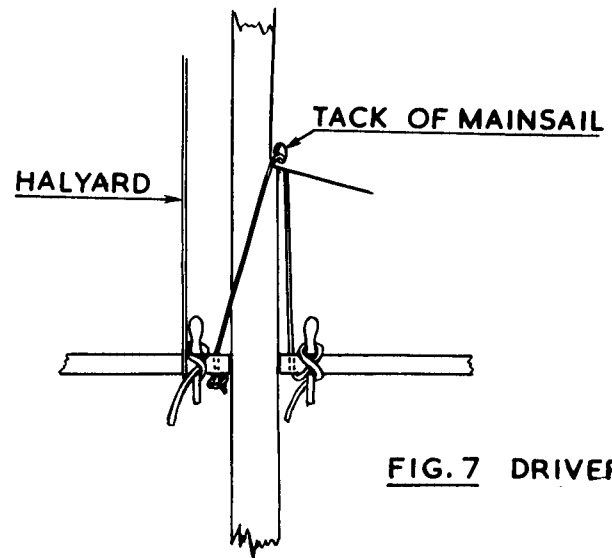


FIG. 7 DRIVER