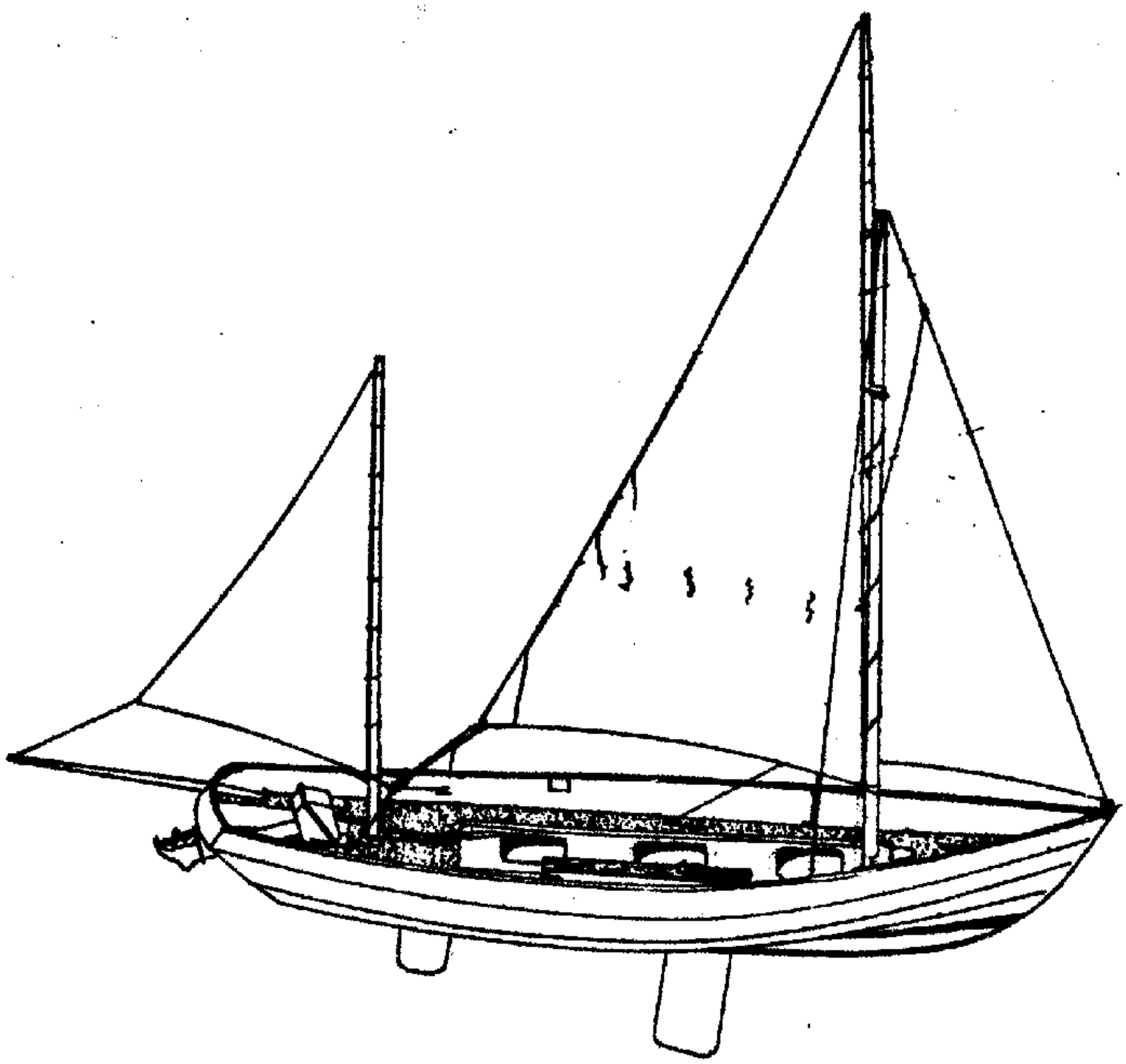
KNOW YOUR

DRASCOMBE LUGGER

By John L Watkinson



The Drascombe Lugger is built in England by
Honnor Marine Ltd
Seymour Wharf · Totnes · Devon - England
Tel: Totnes 2228

INTRODUCTION

I claim that for her size and weight the Drascombe Lugger must be the safest and most seaworthy craft yet designed. However, when a boat is called upon to fulfil so many roles she must be a compromise of many features, and because of this she takes a bit of knowing in order to get the best out of her. What follows is written not only for the benefit of newcomers to sailing, but also for more experienced helmsmen unfamiliar with this type of craft.

I will begin by explaining the origins of the Drascombe Lugger. I have a very loving wife who unfortunately is not at all happy at sea. Time and again she tried to enjoy it and finally, when I sold my boatyard, I took her and our young son in our 13-tonner to the Mediterranean, promising her calm water and warm sunshine. However, it was the worst year the French have known for mistrals and, having marked our coach-roof with bilge water, I sold the yacht and came home to retire into an old farmhouse 40 miles from the sea.

Nevertheless, I was not going to give up boats and I was most certainly not going to give up my wife, so set out to design a boat which she could enjoy. All ideas of living aboard were discarded - we could camp or caravan - and therefore the boat had to be light so that the family could manhandle her on and off a trailer.

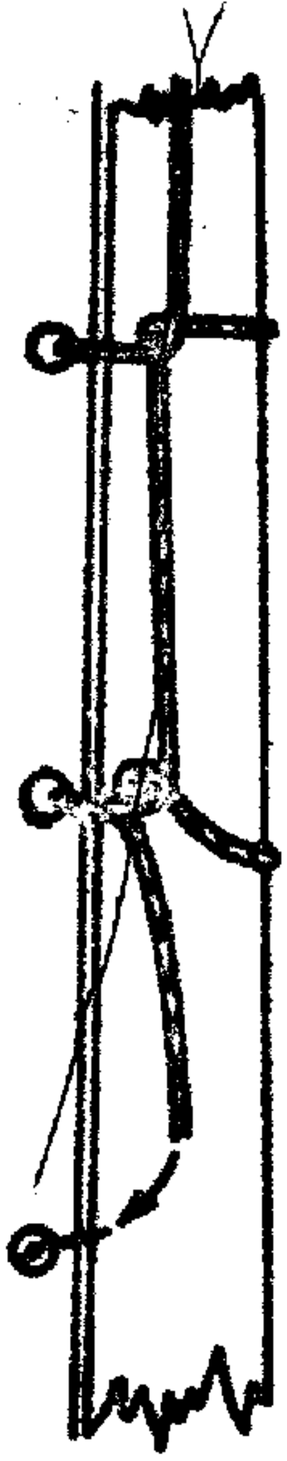
Without any accommodation restrictions I set about designing as large a boat as possible within the weight limitations; a boat that was as safe as could be, a good motor boat, for my family enjoy fishing under power, yet capable of giving me a good sail after they had been put on a beach as near dry shod as possible.

Outboard power was chosen to minimise engine smells and to reduce weight, but as I wanted to be able to change plugs or clear a fouled propeller at sea without leaning over the stern, I settled on the trunked configuration. This is how my own boat, glued plywood, clinker built, came out in Spring 1965. She had originally a dipping lug rig and in a breeze she was dynamite, giving many a modern racing craft a good run for its money. However, to make life easier for the single-hander and the inexperienced crew, I changed to the present rig after the first season.

The family were delighted. With the mizzen set for steadying we would go fishing under power way out to sea, and at last they had confidence in a boat. Remember, we work out of the Yealm River, near Plymouth, which with our prevailing S.W. wind is straight out into the Atlantic, so calm conditions seldom occur. The real breakthrough came when we went 20 miles down the coast to meet Sir Frances Chichester, in quite nobbly water.

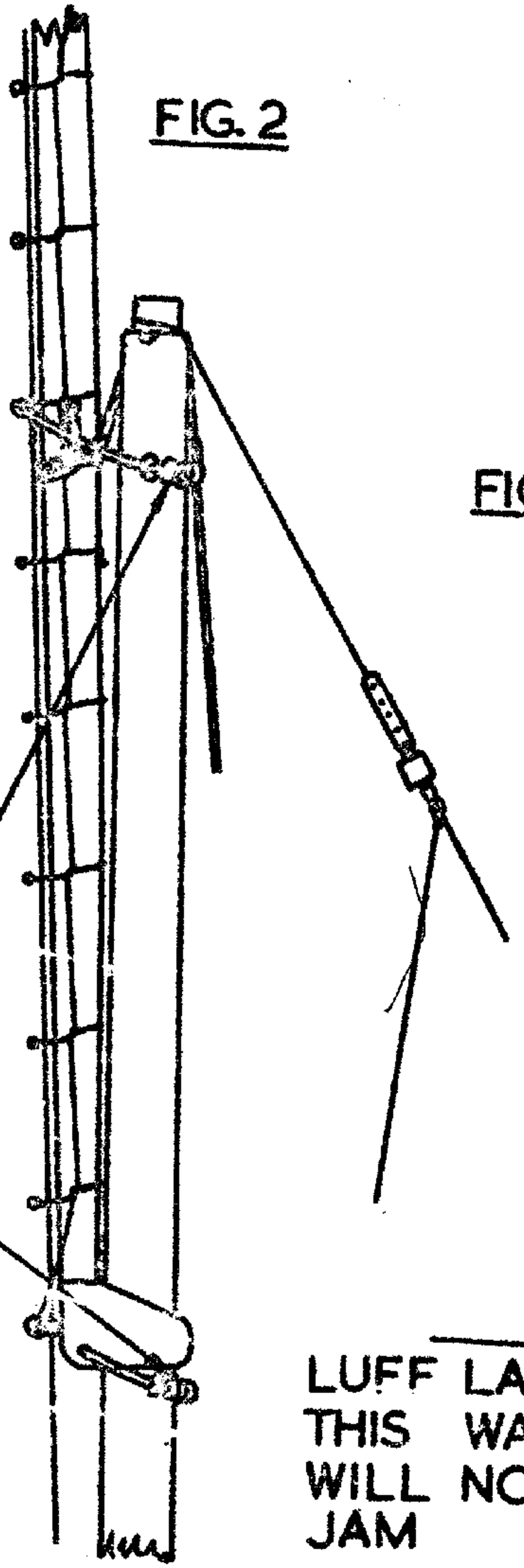
The compromise had been achieved. Of all the boats I have owned this is the only one that my wife has confidence in and actually enjoys herself. Drawing only 2in. aft, the Lugger can land passengers dry shod on a beach; under power with a 6 h.p. Johnson she gives 7 knots; and under sail I can single-hand her in a breeze of wind and get a rattling good sail.

FIG. 1



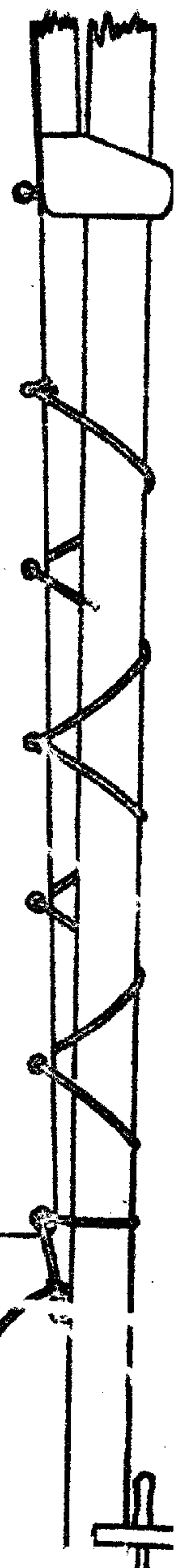
THE MARLIN HITCH

FIG. 2



PARALL BEADS

FIG. 3



LUFF LACED THIS WAY WILL NOT JAM

Mizzen. Lace the head through the holes in the mast and then haul down to the tack eye. The luff does not want to be bar taught as this leads to vertical wrinkles. Once the head and tack are secured lace the luff to the mast using a marline hitch.

Mainsail. Lace to the yard starting at the throat and hauling out to the peak. Marl as for the mizzen.

Mainmast. Bend on the two shrouds and the stub forestay to the mast head. Bend the head of the jib on to the top swivel and shackle the latter to the shroud adjuster fitted to the stub forestay.

Step the mast and shackle the jib roller gear to the stemhead fitting. By stepping and unstepping the mast the correct hole in the adjuster will be found, namely bowing slightly forward before the shrouds are set up. When the shrouds are set up with the lanyards this bow will disappear and the fore side of the mast will be just touching the mast thwart.

Now bend on the main halyard to the yard with a clove hitch just below the chocks, and hoist until the yard lies vertical against the mast with the jaws at thwart level.

The parall lines should now be rove off, the upper paralls should be at halyard height on the yard and be secured round the mast so as to leave the yard about ½in. clear of the mast. The lower paralls reeve round the mast securing to the holes in the yard jaws (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 latter is unstepped for trailing or any other reason.

Now hoist the mainsail right up and secure the halyard to one of the belaying pins on the thwart. The luff is tensioned by hauling down the tack to the lacing eye on the aft side of the mast. Sufficient stray end should be left on this lacing to be able to lace down the reef cringle when reefing. Finally, lace the luff of the mainsail to the mast.

Ordinary spiral lacing is inclined to jam when hoisting. The lacing pattern in Fig. 3 seldom jams and can be left set up except when reefing. This luff lacing should be barely taut so that the luff leads in a straight line from the throat to tack, not pulled too tightly in to the mast.

REEFING.

Mizzen. Unbend the sheet and take a roll or rolls around the spar.

Jib. Haul on the furling gear line as required.

Main. Lower the yard until the reef cringle on the luff is a few inches above the lacing eye on the mast. Using the stray end mentioned earlier, lace down. Shift the carbine hook to the reef cringle on the leach. Bunch up the sail and secure with the reef points. Don't roll the sail - it can fill with water and thus add weight.

It should be mentioned here that with the jib hauled aback the Lugger heaves-to very well, so that you can leave the helm and get on with the job of reefing. Whilst the Lugger is balanced either under jib and mizzen or under main only, she handles

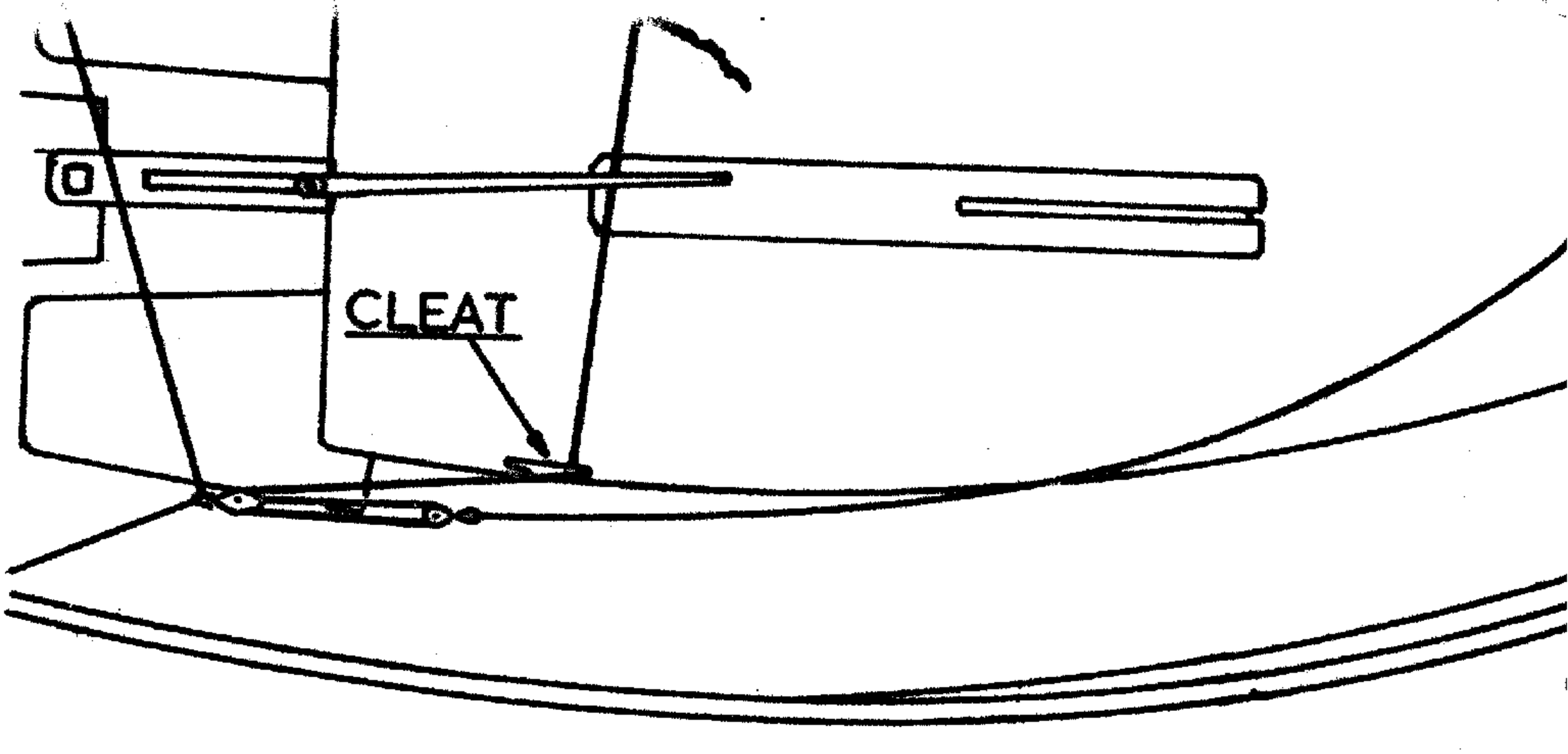


FIG. 4 MAIN SHEET LEAD

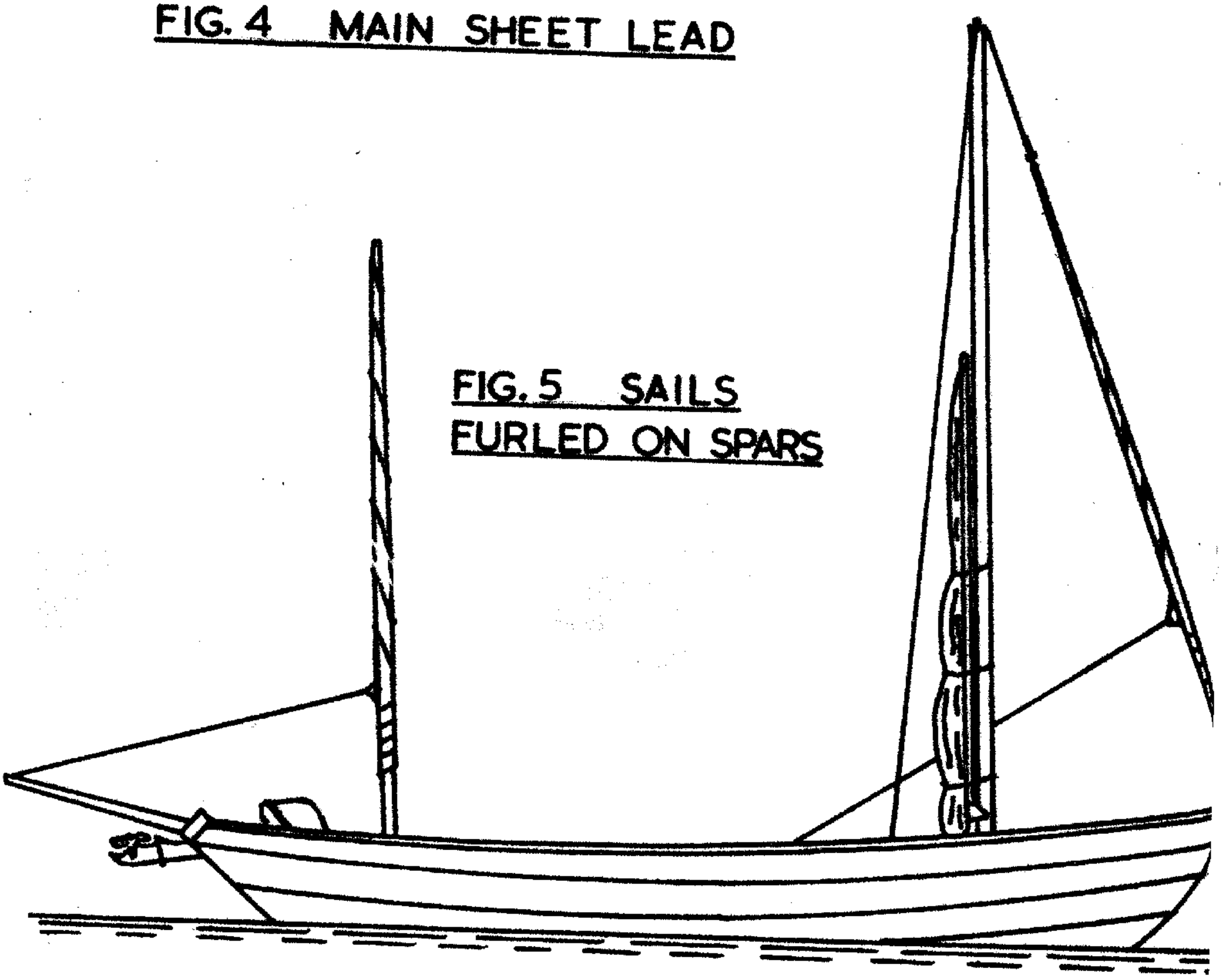


FIG. 5 SAILS FURLED ON SPARS

SAILING HINTS AND TIPS

When launching for the first time, lift the floorboards and check for leaks. The most common cause of the bilges filling with water is the leaving out of the screw bung but sometimes there may be a weep from the centreboard bolt, calling for an extra turn of the nut, while after a long dry spell causing the keel timber to shrink there may even be weeps from one or more of the keel fastenings. Please check that all is well before leaving her.

When you have rigged and launched your Lugger, can I suggest that you pause and think for a moment. She has a deep forefoot and a broad shoal afterbody. This, coupled with the necessarily small distance between keel and rudder, means she will be finely balanced. Even if there is only a light wind try her under jib and mizzen only. After a short time you will find that by trimming these sails, not only can she maintain a course from wind abeam to close hauled without touching the tiller, but she can even be made to go about, again without touching the tiller. To accustom yourself further to the balance of the boat, try steering her under engine by mizzen and drop-keel adjustments alone. Of course she won't motor down wind steered thus - no boat would - but later on when trolling under power you will find this capability invaluable. If the wind is above Force 3 it is as well to take a roll or two in the mizzen.

Now to full sail. The mistake everyone makes sooner or later is getting into irons and going backwards at a rate of knots, unable to pay off on either tack. This is caused by the mizzen; if you miss stays the first thing to do is to let go its sheet. Sailing single-handed, when going about never mind the main but concentrate on getting the jib home whilst there is still way on the boat, so that she balances on the new tack.

Once settled, sheet home the main, <u>always taking a dry turn around the cleat on the lee side of the cockpit</u>. The resulting friction on the sheet not only makes it far easier to hold, but also the lead ensures that the block on the wire horse lies as far outboard as possible (Fig. 4).

By now you will begin to understand the Lugger's fine balance, so here are some hints for when out in rough water. The first point is steering. Don't apply violent tiller correction every time she yaws. Let her yaw a bit; she will come back as each sea passes. Then the mizzen. Once the wind is abeam the best thing to do is to get rid of it. You are probably driving at maximum speed and the odd 21 sq.ft. makes no difference. Take it off - (it is only a few seconds work to roll the sail around the spar) - and she is a different boat altogether.

Crew position is also important. When running or broad-reaching the crew should move aft so as to raise the forefoot and minimise the risk of griping. When under power only, in heavy weather it is as well to either get the plate right up or at least halfway. Otherwise, with no lateral pressure on it, you will have a splendid pendulum, swinging as she pitches.

Don't worry about stability. The boat has a very powerful hull and the following extract from a letter from a Lugger owner proves this point. This particular Lugger was Bermudian rigged by its owner, and had a much larger mainsail than the standard boat.

"I was sailing my Lugger on the River Severn near Oldbury Power Station, three up, with just the main up. The recorded wind strength at the Power Station 25ft. above sea level, was Force 6 gusting to Force 8. We were beating back to our moorings after quite a thrilling broad reach when I caught a gust. I tried to spill wind out of the main but the mainsheet was snarled in tho block and would not pay out, so I luffed and unintentionally went about. By now I had no steerage way and the boat presented her beam to the wind where we caught the next gust which laid us flat, or nearly so as I still had the mainsheet jammed. The water came over the top of the gunwale and the inside edge of the cockpit. All three of us were standing on the centrebox, which was almost horizontal, about to climb over the side to try and get her back up. But there was no need as she slowly came up by herself. Once upright we quickly got the main down and set about baling out the water which was up to within 3in. of the top of the centrebox. Once we were rid of most of this we set jib and mizzen and sailed back with no more than our feet wet."

Boats built in 1972 and later may have rudder guide plates with holes at both ends, the addition of the after hole enabling the rudder to be shipped furtheraft. It is turned with the blade forward of the shaft for shipping or unshipping and then rotated through 180 degrees.

Advantages are slightly improved handling under sail owing to increased separation between centreplate and rudder, and more room for the helmsman between tiller and centreboard trunk. It is, however, inadvisable to ship the rudder in this way when sailing in shallow waters which may call for it to be lifted quickly, with the boat still moving ahead.

MAINTENANCE

Built from fibreglass mouldings and having oiled teak wood trim, your Drascombe Lugger 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 glassfibres 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 brown and many people prefer it's appearance thus. To maintain it a rich dark brown, an accasional rub over with a rag soaked in boiled linseed oil is all that is required. The floorboards are also oiled and amay be kept that way or varnished or painted if prefered. 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 and 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 accasionally show signs of brownish, rusty-looking stain but this can be polished off, leaving the bright surface beneath. Wiping with wax or thin oil hepls to prevent this.

CHOICE OF ENGINE

The boat was designed for a 6 h.p. engine. I don't believe an increase in power will give any appreciable increase in speed. The added power will only drag the stern down and make a big wash, and the extra weight right aft will not help her sailing qualities.

I favour Johnson or Evinrude which lock in tilt by friction. Many Luggers have British Seagull engines, and the aperture is large enough for the big propellers these swing. Other engines with positive tilt locks require a length of shock cord to retain them tilted on account of the stern configuration. Whatever engine is fitted there is no need to lock the steering. When you put the rudder over the engine follows, and only after a very tight turn at speed do you need to reach aft and bring it midships again.

Johnson, Evinrude and Mercury engines should be long shaft models, British Seagull standard shaft.

CHOICE OF TRAILER

The Snipe 80B is most favoured. This is fitted with highspeed wheels suitable for fast trailing in countries without trailer speed restrictions. By far the easiest way of getting the boat on to the trailer is hauling out "dry" using a trailer winch, or, as I do, a fourfold tackle led under the boat to the outboard bracket.

LOOSE ENDS

Rigging. The great advantage of this rig is that all the sails stay aloft all the time and so leave a completely free cockpit. The mizzen furls (and reefs) by letting go the sheet at the clew and rolling it round the spar. The jib has roller furling and reefing gear. The main furls by lowering the yard or gaff to the tack level and lashing it and the upper part of the sail to the mast. The lower part of the sail is gathered up and stuffed in the adjacent locker (Fig.5).

Beaching. Always beach stern to. If there is any sea running on the beach, anchor off and let yourself back by paying out the anchor warp, using the oars if required.

Bumpkin. It appears light and this is deliberate. It is strong enough for sailing under severe conditions, but weak enough to break if you inadvertently go stern first into a wall, or have some similar mishap. It is far cheaper to replace a bumpkin than to repair a transom board.

Rudder. This is a lot stronger than it looks. I have personally committed the inevitable, namely anchoring off on a falling tide to go and have a drink, fallen foul of friends and at closing time found my Lugger high and dry with the rudder still down. This must be the supreme test and suffice to say the rudder design has not been altered.