Rigging and Sailing the Longboats

By Dick Goodey

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Longboat Introduction Notes

1. The Longboat is a Gunter-rigged Yawl, a simple, sturdy and above all a safe boat to sail in any weather when the RS Controller permits sailing.

2. In general, it responds to weather conditions and control inputs like all boats, but due to its design and rig there are a few differences compared to conventional boats that need to be understood to get the best from it.

3. Sailing, launching and recovering the boat safely is a team job, but at all times the whole crew must know who is in charge. This is always the helm when sailing, but may be others at other times.

4. In some minor respects these notes differ from what has been our accepted way of doing things previously. Although most Longboats sailors are ‘Old Dogs,’ please try hard to learn and use these new ‘tricks’. It will benefit your own safety and the life expectancy of our boats, and you will find they are the quickest and easiest way of getting the job done.

5. The one thing to remember above all else; REEF=RED.

6. Some nautical ‘yacht-speak’ is included in the notes, but a ‘plain-speak’ version is added to help understand the terms.

7. These guidelines are intended to be clear and unambiguous, if they are not, ASK.

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Launching

1. Remove and store covers, poles and stands.
2. Remove tow-ball lock and store in port side forward locker, return and secure key to port shroud.
3. Replace bung, checking that ‘O’ ring is in position. Do not over tighten. Replace aft locker cover.
4. Check that required equipment is on board and stowed; Sails and spars, ropes, paddles, ensign and anchor. Check centreboard keel is in the fully up position, the boat will not launch freely if it is not.
5. Crews new to the Drascombe design should look down the empty rudder casing to make themselves familiar with how the bottom of the rudder-post is located. Use a torch on a dull day. Do not try to place the rudder into its working position until the boat is afloat. The rudder arrangement is the least satisfactory part of the whole design and is difficult to fit and remove. Treat it carefully and with caution.
6. Put out fenders.
7. Hitch trailer to tractor. Raise the jockey wheel and clamp in the up position. Check hand brake is off and chocks are clear of wheels. Check that the winch strap and safety clip are securing the boat to the trailer.
8. Stop at the head of the slipway and pass the mooring ropes to crew members on the jetty.
9. Move forward until the trailer tyres are in the water and stop. Although the wheel bearings are sealed it is good practice to keep the bearings and brakes clear of the water.
10. Slack off the winch and unclip the strap and safety line. Two people pushing the bow should result in the boat smoothly gliding down the rollers and into the water. Crew holding the mooring ropes should be aware that the boat gathers considerable momentum during the launch. Do not try to stop the boat quickly, just keep it under control with slack ropes but be careful to avoid rope burn.
11. If the boat does not launch cleanly as described above it is permissible to drive further into the water to allow the boat to float clear from the trailer. In this event, after the launch, check the rollers for free rotation. Clear the problem, most likely weed.
12. Park trailer, unhitch from tractor, placing chocks if required.
Rigging

1. During the sailing season the boats are kept partially rigged with the main and mizzen sails laced to their spars and the jib furled. This is not covered in these notes.

2. With the boat moored head to wind on the lee side of the jetty the first crew into the boat lowers the centreboard keel fully. The heavy keel must be restrained to stop it crashing against the centre-case capping.

3. Having seen the rudder locating details before the boat entered the water, with the tiller amidships but vertical, lower the rudder/tiller down through the slot into its housing, making sure that the bottom of the rudder post enters the bottom locating hole. Test by applying full helm each way. If any stiffness or jamming is detected lift the assembly a few inches and re-locate. Re-test. It is essential to get this right before leaving the jetty.

4. Locate and secure the bumpkin, blue marker to the top, making sure that the sheet is threaded through the hole in the transom board and the inboard pulley block.

5. Screw the flag staff into the top of the mizzen mast, unfurl the flag and step the mast, blue marker pointing forward.

6. Un-furl the mizzen sail and clip on the sheet. The boat can now be kept head to wind by tensioning the mizzen sheet. Particularly effective if there is a wind across the jetty and the boat is moored with a single bow line.

7. It is now time to decide on how to rig the main, depending on the weather, the forecast and the experience of the whole crew. The options are Full Main, Reefed Main or Storm Main (Tri-sail). If necessary, a reef can be put in or taken out or a sail changed while sailing, head to wind under just the mizzen, but this should only be done by an experienced crew. Far better, safer and quicker to set the appropriate rig before departing the jetty. If Special Needs Passengers are to be carried, refer to separate notes.

8. Work as a two-crew team, with the person on the starboard side holding the halyard. Do not let the halyard free end fly in strong winds, it may be necessary to take down the main mast to get it back.

9. Items 4 to 8 above can be done before launch, but if this is the case, tractor drivers must be fully aware of the greater length created by the bumpkin, and drive with great care when turning.

10. FOR FULL MAIN. Un-roll the sail from the gaff spar, and offer the jaw up to the mast. Fix the beads across the mouth of the jaws by threading the whipped end through the jaw hole. Then...
thread the halyard through the LOWER gaff hole, marked BLUE and secure with a figure 8 stopper knot. Haul on halyard to raise the gaff to vertical, hold, fix the bead string around gaff at the halyard position. Fix the upper Parral bead string around the mast. Haul up, hold and fix the middle and lower luff beads. While hauling, make sure the gaff does not snag the shrouds and stays central. Haul gaff to its full height, then slacken off slightly so it 'floats' on the gaff beads. This is why these beads are needed, to ensure that the gaff is at the right angle to the mast. At the head of the mast the clearance to the gaff should be between 1 to 2 inches (3 to 5cm) which is difficult to judge while on board. The gaff Parrals ensure the sail is correctly set, the halyard can then be made off around the starboard belaying pin. The gaff bead string has an additional important safety job. If the halyard is inadvertently let go, the spar will be kept vertical, close to the mast when it crashes down, instead of onto the heads of crew in the centre of the boat. The downhaul is permanently secured to the mast cleat, thread it up and through the tack eye or cringle and down to the mast cleat, then up to be made off around the port belaying pin. In light winds the downhaul does not have to be too tight. In strong winds it will need greater tension which can be achieved by making two turns between the tack eye and mast cleat before making off around the pin. Never put excessive tension on the downhaul. Some creasing of the luff will be seen at this stage, but this will vanish when the sail is filled with wind. Practice will show how much tension is needed for a given wind strength.

11. Unless sailing immediately, roll the sail anti-clockwise and secure to mast with one or two lengths of string to stop flapping.

12. For REEFED MAIN. Follow the instructions as listed in 9 above, EXCEPT; Secure the halyard through the TOP gaff hole marked RED and fasten the adjacent top bead string. Haul the gaff part way up, fixing the top two luff parral bead strings only. Bunch or roll the foot of the sail and secure with the reefing strings with reef knots. Raise the gaff to its full height, and when floating on the gaff beads make off the halyard around the starb'd belaying pin. You will notice that the gaff is about 36 inches (90cm) lower on the mast, but the reefed foot is the same height as usual. Fully tension the sail with the downhaul, with two turns between the luff reef point eye and the mast cleat. Wally Goldsmith has a second set of reef points, only fully experienced crews should make use of this facility.

13. STORM TRI-SAIL MAIN. If this sail is selected due to either high winds or inexperienced crew, put the main sail and its gaff ashore. Bend (fasten) the halyard to the head of the small sail with a full turn and two half hitches or a bowline. Haul down on the halyard to raise the sail, pausing to fasten the two strings of parral beads around the mast. When the tack of the sail is level with the blue mark on the mast, make off the halyard around the starb’d belaying pin.
Tension the downhaul as described above. Moderate tension needed. Roll sail and secure to mast with string until ready to sail.

14. Tidy up all ropes, coil and stow surplus.

15. Free the jib furling sheet and fully deploy the sail to port and starb’d to check all is in order.

16. Check that the main sheet blocks are correctly threaded, not twisted and are free to travel along the horse (pipe) on its ring, from full port to full starb’d and back. Unfurl the main sail and attach the mainsheet block to the clew.

17. Do not cast off the mooring lines, and do not allow the jetty party to let go until this is ordered by the helm.

18. The boat is now ready to sail.
Rigging when carrying Special Needs Passengers

1. All procedures outlined in the chapter “Rigging” should be followed, but the standard main sail should NOT be hoisted.
2. In light winds the Cropped Main with the blue gaff should be used.
3. In stronger winds the Storm Main, without gaff should be hoisted, with the foot of the sail level with the blue mark on the mast. If in any doubt as to which sail to use, always err on the safe side and use the smaller sail.
4. Adjust the jib sheet travellers to the fully aft position.
5. When boarding SN passengers, always have the jib and main sails furled to prevent flapping, which can be unnerving to some passengers. Passengers who need to be hoisted should be loaded first, together with their carers.
6. When passengers are seated, unfurl the jib and deploy fully to port and starb’d to ensure that all is free to operate. All crew should alert to and prevent hands becoming trapped between boat and jetty.
7. Unfurl main sail and clip on sheet. Check tiller, full port to full starb’d. With these checks complete the boat can then leave the jetty.
8. When alongside and moored to the jetty at the completion of the sail, furl the jib and main sails before commencing disembarkation.
Sailing Notes

1. The object of these notes is not to instruct the reader how to sail, only to highlight the characteristics of the Longboat that make it different from conventional boats.

2. The obvious difference is the second mast which carries the third sail. This configuration is called a Yawl rig, because the Mizzen mast is astern of the rudder post. Similar boats that have the Mizzen ahead of the rudder post are Ketch rigged.

3. Although the mizzen sail does contribute some thrust to drive the boat, this is relatively small, but remember this thrust is acting towards the stern. The main function of the mizzen is to steady the boat.

4. Sailing without the main is a useful training exercise as the characteristics of the mizzen are highlighted in this mode, and the steering remains well balanced.

5. In most circumstances the effect of the mizzen is beneficial, but on its own the sheeted sail will bring the boat head to wind and keep it there, in irons.

6. When going about it is good practice to let go the mizzen sheet until the bow has passed through the wind.

7. When running before the wind the mizzen tends to make the boat ‘nervous’ and can cause an involuntary jibe, while contributing little to forward speed. On a long run it is best to furl the mizzen, which should only be carried out by a crew member not the helm.

8. Another feature of the rig that newcomers to the Longboat must remember is the Mizzen spar, named the Bumpkin which adds considerably to the boat’s overall length. This must be taken into account when leaving the jetty or passing and turning close to other boats.

9. The bumpkin should be shipped inboard when alongside, to make room available for others.
Recovery

1. Furl jib.
2. Lower main, un-doing downhaul, beads and halyard. Immediately thread loose halyard end through hole in thwart and secure with stopping knot. Fold and roll main around gaff, secure with string. Do NOT remove parral bead strings or gaff lacing, leave them and the downhaul attached to the sail
3. Furl mizzen around mast, secure with string. Do NOT remove or slacken the lacing. Un-step mast and remove flag and staff.
4. Take bumpkin in.
5. Pull up rudder and lay in bottom of boat, taking great care. If a crew member has sufficient physical strength, shipping and un-shipping the rudder is best done by one person, but if two are required they must work as a team with a clear understanding of what each is doing. As with any team, there must be a leader.
6. Pull up centreboard keel and secure line. A second crew member putting pressure on the lever helps to ensure that the keel is fully housed.
7. With all crew ashore, walk the boat to the slipway and run the bow hard aground. Crew on jetty hold the boat parallel to the jetty with mooring ropes and boathook.
8. Drive the trailer slowly and centred up to the boat, stopping when the articulated rollers just contact the bows. Secure the winch strap to the bow ring. Winch the boat up the rollers and onto the trailer. This method is safe and will not cause damage, but is only to be used in sheltered conditions. If waves are breaking on the slipway, keep the boat afloat with one crewmember entering the water to hold the bow square and to clip on the winch strap.
9. Stow mooring lines and fenders and return trailer and boat to the boat park.
10. Un-hitch tractor, apply towball lock and chock wheels. If sails are wet, store unfurled and hanging in shed. Remove bung and leave aft locker cover open.
11. Fit boom supports and booms and deploy covers. Start fixing covers with the mast collar first. Use boathook to help passing the straps under the boat. Stow the boathook on hooks, starb’d aft. Ratchet up straps to ensure cover is taut.
12. Adjust and wind out the jockey wheel to ensure stern down, dry storage.