

Little things that make a Dabber different

One of the delights of a Drascombe is the way they can be modified in just little ways that make them easier or more fun to use. Most of my modifications are aimed at making single handed sailing easier and at making it quicker to get it into the water. I store it mast down on a trailer, so every second counts in getting it all bolted back together for a day's sailing. So what have I done to it? Not a lot, but a little makes a difference.



Fig. 1 Rudder retention line

tubular cleat on the other side of the rudder. Pull it tight and the rudder will plough into the mud, but stay on the pintles. Uncleat the line and the rudder just lifts off.

Then the tiller often bumps the top of the engine, which can be a nuisance. I used two large headed counter sunk bronze screws, One is driven up flush into the underside of the tiller, just in front of the slot where the rudder head fits in. The other screws into the step on the rudder which stops the tiller swinging right on down. These two screws meet head to head, when the tiller is down. By unscrewing the lower one, it rises up and holds the tiller at whatever angle you want. Allows for very subtle adjustments and has worked for nearly 15 years.



Fig. 2 Tiller angle control screw

To take it from the back, simply because that is where I made my first changes, around the rudder. One of the benefits of a Dabber over the larger Drascombe is that it has a simple, transom hung rudder. No getting it stuck or bent. But it does have a tendency to slide quietly up the pintles in shallow water, detach itself from the boat and drag behind on the main sheet. Disconcerting at the least. I fixed a short line which is hooked onto one side of the rudder, goes under the top gudgeon pin and then into a little

There are always a lot of “things” floating around in my boat, and I found a really useful addition was a taught line inside the gunwales, running more or less the length of the cockpit on each side. Fenders are tied to them, towels hooked round them to dry, thermos flasks slipped behind them to hold them upright etc. etc. I’m even thinking of getting some cockpit cushions, and the back should just slip up behind the line to stop them blowing away. They are also useful points for tying things to when trailering the boat around. The lines are tightened up using a lanyard at one end. They have been there for years.



Fig. 3 Gunwale line

The rope horse for the main sheet is one of my hates. It tangles round the engine. I always get the end of the sheet the wrong side of it. It never seems to be *quite right*. I got rid of it. The sheet now runs to a fiddle block on top of the tiller. So long as the

block is over the pintles, it doesn’t exert any turning force on the rudder. The set of the main sail seems as fine as ever. I have fitted a rope strop to the clew of the main,

so that the block there is some distance from the sail and doesn’t thrash about quite so madly when tacking.



Fig. 5 Main sheet arrangement

I have made some changes to the mizzen sheet and the tiller control lines, but they are untried at sea yet, so no further comment on them...

Sheeting in the foresail single handed is a nuisance with the standard arrangement, although it is fine with a crew. I have fitted a belaying pin as a “sheet turner”

(there must be a correct term) on the centreboard case, and a clam cleat at the back of the case. The sheet now falls to hand easily, but doesn’t get in the way of the conventional sheeting cam cleats if you want to use them. I have fitted a wider top on the centreboard case to give a comfortable seat for rowing and a little table for eating. The belaying pin should just pull out to make it more useable, but it has swollen and jammed in tight.



Fig. 4 Jib sheets and “table”



Fig. 6 Mast support "thwart"

My mast support thwart was quite badly cracked after all of these years. I made a new one out of old mahogany. I didn't know exactly how wide it should be, so I made it full width, with the intention of then cutting it down to size. It looked so good full width that I have left it that way. It finally gives me a place where the anchor can be stowed, but is easy to hand and not in the way. The notch on the back allows the yard to be brought right

down to the floorboards for a very secure "harbour stow". The two halyard bags take the anchor line (there are only three metres of chain) and the main halyard. The boat hook jams nicely underneath.

An R clip through the bow casting holds the anchor line in place. It needed a bit of subtle reshaping to clip in neatly (I clamped it in a vice and hit it really hard with a big hammer. My unsubtle work uses a two handed axe...). Interestingly an R clip costs about £2.50 from a yacht chandlers. I bought two from a trailer centre for 74p. I also get all of my bungee cord from there for about quarter of the price at a chandlers.

Rigging up the mast for launching always takes a bit of time, although probably not as much as undoing a mast-up style cover. To speed it up I have fitted a two part tackle to the forestay, which clips into the bow casting with a captive shackle. The loose end comes to a small stainless steel cleat on the inside of the port gunwale. I have also fitted a length of plastic piping around the forestay. It is unsightly, but does allow the jib to slide around it much more easily. The knot at the clew keeps fouling the stay otherwise. Like many Dabber sailors I have fitted roller furling to the jib, which is an absolute god-send. If you haven't got jib furling, just get it, it should be standard.



Fig. 7 R clip in the bow casting. The chain is spliced directly to octoplate anchorline, which allows it to run out below the clip. The cleating of the forestay tackle can be seen on the port gunwale.



There are lots of other little changes, most of which don't make any noticeable difference, but they are fun to do and the boats is hugely forgiving of stupid ideas. But the few changes shown here have really helped make the Dabber even more fun to sail. Now I just have to try them out at sea...

Fig. 8 Forestay tackle and tubing.



Fig. 9 All ready to sail and 90 miles from the sea!

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Dabber Seahorse at Poole Harbour
(when I can get there!)