

SUITABILITY FOR CRUISING

and for SINGLE-HANDING

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This paper discusses the suitability of the GP14 dinghy for cruising, predominantly day-cruising (which is the type of cruising for which it is most widely used), but it does also refer briefly to the possibilities of more extensive and more adventurous cruising.

The second section discusses masthead buoyancy, as a useful safety provision to substantially reduce the risk of inversion in the event of a capsize.

Finally, the third part then discusses single-handing in the boat.

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(This latter is merely a reference to information obtainable elsewhere)

Cruising

The GP14 was originally designed as a “Family Fourteen” that could be used for day sailing, that would have acceptable performance under sail and could also be rowed or used with an outboard motor, that should be reasonably forgiving and that could be used for family recreation, and that could be towed easily by a small car or alternatively could lie safely at a mooring. It was, I think, only somewhat later that the design turned out to be also an outstanding racing class.

The boat is probably at her best when sailed two-up, but she will comfortably sail three adults and can still carry a reasonable amount of cruising kit, and with care and in fair weather it is often possible to sail four-up - but at least one of the four will always have to be sitting either in the centre of the boat or to leeward, which if they are four adults is where the requirements of due care and of fair weather come in. Two adults plus two young children is of course a very different situation, and is what the boat was designed for, but the weight of a small child to leeward balanced by another one on the windward side is seldom a problem.

Alternatively she is a great single-hander, and this is discussed later.

Although in deference to anno domini I have now largely retired from actively sailing dinghies, in favour of yachts, I have in the past cruised extensively in my successive GP14s. My own use of the boat was primarily day cruising, with very occasional longer expeditions involving camping aboard or ashore. However a small minority of other owners have been much more adventurous in the latter department.

With sensible handling and good seamanship and correct reefing decisions the boat is an excellent seaboat and eminently capable of serious day cruising, and occasional more demanding cruises in settled suitable weather conditions. GP14s have crossed between Scotland and Northern Ireland; these include our current President, Curly Morris, and Simon Relph (later to become both National Champion and World Champion) plus 3 boats from Bolton SC, sailing from Portpatrick to Larne en route to taking part in a Championship at East Antrim Boat Club, in 1976, as a fund-raiser for the RNLi. There are also stories circulating (which are probably true) of occasional UK competitors wishing to sail in Championships in Dublin having in the past sailed over there from Holyhead in order to save the ferry fare!

There have also been a number of owners undertaking extended coast-hopping cruises over a period of several days, either camping aboard or getting overnight accommodation ashore. Perhaps I might here quote briefly from that splendid anthology which was compiled in the year 2000 to celebrate the golden jubilee of the class, *50 Years On The Water*:

There were several significant individual voyages in the early days. In 1959 a member sailed single-handed from Southend to Calais and followed this in 1962 with a trip from Dover to Ostend. In 1963 others sailed round the Isle of Man, while in the next two years young members from Lee-on-the-Solent sailed to Weymouth and Dungeness respectively. A crossing from Solent to Barfleur in 1966 shows just how ambitious these early cruisers were. Others have made crossings of the Irish Sea and a circumnavigation of the Isle of Mull. It is truly amazing what adventures have been undertaken in a GP.

Perhaps even more impressive is this quote from a letter by the late Searson Thompson, doyen of the Class, published in the Spring 2010 issue of *Mainsail*:

Group Captain Haylock (*who had commissioned the design*) and Jack Holt (*the designer*) thought it was too tender to be a rough weathery boat for the working man to build and sail at an affordable price. It wasn't until Roger Seal of New Quay, Wales, sailed it from Cardiff to New Quay via St. David's Head that several people became convinced that the 'floating coffin' was also a good sea boat.

I happen to know part of that passage, and I have read about the remainder. That is one very serious open water passage, and deserving of the utmost respect. Between Milford Haven and New Quay one has basically two choices: either you sail a good 12 miles offshore round the outside of the islands, while avoiding the Wild Goose Race (reported in the Admiralty Pilot as a potential ship killer in the wrong conditions), or you go through the utterly infamous Jack Sound - within literally just a few yards of the rocks, and with water that is thoroughly threatening if you get the timing even slightly wrong.

Although we hear less about such cruises these days there are a number of possible reasons. One is that the outstanding success of the class as a racing dinghy, and the emphasis put on racing by the Class Association and by most clubs, has succeeded in wooing owners who might otherwise have undertaken ambitious cruises. However to be fair to the Class Association, I should couple that with the comment that for a substantial number of years now we have also taken an interest in cruising, that some of us (myself included) are very actively driving that forward, and the Association is totally supportive.

A second reason may be greater affluence in modern times; some of those who in the early days would perform have done their cruising in dinghies because nothing larger was affordable, and would have enjoyed the fine capabilities in that direction of the GP14, can now afford to do it in yachts. As one who over the years has owned both yachts and dinghies, but who initially chose to return to dinghies in retirement because of the lower costs and the smaller burden of upkeep, I am in no doubt that for the cruises described above my own choice would be a yacht for preference any day of the week, if available.

There is however an important caveat to that preference; the yacht must be either already at or readily moved to the intended point of departure. This is an aspect where dinghies score hands down; in my GP14 I can, if I so wish, cruise in Scotland, on the coast of Anglesey, in Milford Haven, in the West Country, in Essex, and in Poole Harbour on successive trips, and all for little more trouble or expense than that entailed in driving there. And on arrival at my destination, the boat can be fully rigged and launched and out sailing within about an hour. That is something that is not practicable with yachts other than trailer-sailers.

It would be nice to think that a third reason might be that such cruises are indeed still being undertaken, but that they do not today receive the same publicity because they are no longer thought to be so exceptional. Undoubtedly there are a minority of dedicated dinghy cruisers, regularly undertaking such trips, and in terms of capability the GP14 compares well for its size with other boats that such cruisers choose to use, and has its fair representation amongst them. Having said that, serious dinghy cruising at this level is very much a minority sport amongst dinghy sailors, and for very obvious reasons if a larger boat (such as the Wayfarer, or Swallow Boats' Bay Raider or Sea Raider) is affordable and if its weight can be handled when ashore then the bigger boat will have substantial cruising advantages on the water. But those advantages come at a considerable price in pounds, both sterling and avoirdupois.

The main focus of the Class Association's cruising activities is day cruising in company, always with a highly convivial social dimension to it as well as good sailing in attractive scenery.

Compared with other cruising dinghies, she compares very well with others in the same size bracket, and also has the benefit of a good racing potential and a vigorous Class Association. Even if an owner intends never to race, the fact that the boat has that intrinsic capability and that they are much in demand (partly through the efforts of the Class Association in promoting the boat) will greatly help to preserve the resale value of his investment.

As one might expect, when comparing with other cruising designs of different size the effect of size is a dominating consideration. Such fine cruising boats as the Wayfarer, many of the Drascombe range, and many of Swallow Boats' designs, have a number of advantages on the water, - but they are significantly larger, and heavier, and more expensive (in some cases massively so). Conversely, one small cruising dinghy that is quite remarkably good for its size is the Mirror 10, but by comparison with a GP14 she is desperately slow, and in some instances that can make all the difference between securely making against a foul tide or being relentlessly swept back. All boats are compromises, and all good designs differ primarily because they draw their compromise at different points, but the GP14 is one of the best general purpose dinghies around, and within that overall remit she is a very good day cruiser for her size.

There is of course a change of mindset needed for a yachtsman moving to dinghy sailing. The enquirer who prompted this paragraph seems to have that in common with myself, although in my case it was a matter of downsizing in retirement and returning to the type of sailing I had done for many years before I later spent twenty years sailing offshore cruising yachts. The capabilities of a good cruising dinghy, such as the GP14, overlap to some extent with those of a yacht, but each can take in her stride things that the other cannot sensibly even attempt. A good example of that arose on Anglesey in August 2006; from my base at Traeth Bychan I could see a far headland, the Great Orme, and it was blowing about force 4 – 5. The direct passage there (about 15 miles, across open sea) would have been a pleasant morning's or afternoon's sail in the vintage 5-ton gaff cutter that I used to own, or indeed in my present 20-ft gaff cutter trailer-sailer, whether single-handed or otherwise, but at age 63 even then I wasn't remotely tempted to even consider it single-handing in a GP14!

On the other hand, the GP can get you into the upper reaches of estuaries that are much too shallow to take a yacht, and she is much more easily transported by road to different cruising venues as the mood takes, and the burden of upkeep is nothing like so onerous as that of a yacht.



*A vintage photo of GP14 no. 4 sailing lightly reefed,
with standard jib, and three-up.
And (of course, for that period) cotton sails.
Date could be any time from 1951 onwards.*



*The writer's modern GP14 "A Capella",
sailing with deep first reef in blustery conditions
in Holy Island Sound, Northumberland,
in 2020*



A really good reefing system is essential. In my book it is essential to be able to reef at sea, quickly and easily as well as safely and reliably.

Acceptable options for the mainsail are either the original type of square-gooseneck roller reefing (with a decent length of cylindrical shank on the gooseneck extending beyond the square section) or a really well-designed modern slab or jiffy reefing system. The latter system is the modern one, and is far easier (and safer) to operate at sea, and produces a much better and more efficient set to the sail; all reefing lines should be permanently rigged, and led to jam cleats near the mast.

Unless you choose to sail with just the standard jib (the original sail plan, much smaller than the modern genoa), headsail roller reefing is also essential. You need reefing rather than just furling gear, i.e. using a luff spar. Rob Helyar supplies excellent reefing systems for both sails; 01993-702608 or robhelyar@hotmail.com. Other options for the genoa include the Bartels and the Aeroluffspars systems, or (second-hand, now discontinued by the manufacturer) the Holt Mini-reef system.

For further and more detailed information see the separate article on Reefing Systems, published on the Class Association website.

There is a wide variety of mainsheet configurations in the class, including transom sheeting systems, centre sheeting systems, and (probably most popular of all amongst the racing fleet) a hybrid system involving a transom bridle to a sheet going to the boom end, and thence along the boom and down to the centre of the boat. It is likely that you will much prefer one particular type, although it is your personal preference which that type is, so just be aware that the mainsheet configuration is now entirely optional and that your personal optimum configuration for cruising may not be same as the best arrangement for racing. One of the several reasons why I prefer transom sheeting, which many owners now regard as outdated, is that when gybing in a following sea it allows me to face aft and watch the seas, and then grab the two parts of the sheet so as to whip the boom across exactly on the crest of my chosen wave - so for my new boat I specified a full width transom sheet horse.

When used with the very greatest caution, a mainsheet jamcleat can often be helpful. Having said that, the classic dictum is that **one never, ever, cleats a mainsheet in a dinghy** (or in any unballasted boat); and two of my only three capsizes ever when cruising both occurred because when I got hit by vicious gusts I couldn't free the sheet from the cleat quickly enough

A very useful technique when you want to stop the motion of the boat is to heave-to. Very useful while you coil and stow the anchor warp after getting your anchor up after a lunch stop, for example, or while you do your pilotage / navigation, or take photos, etc., etc.

Finally, remember that when cruising there should be no need to take the sort of risks that are both acceptable and necessary when racing, and a capsize when you are a long way from help and when you have all your kit (or the wife and young kids) aboard is far more serious than when you are racing round the cans and with a safety boat in close attendance. So sail cautiously; aim not to sit out anything like so hard in a blow, but reef instead, and that will give you a considerable safety margin for the unexpected gust, or for that matter the unexpected hole in the wind.

Masthead Buoyancy

With a metal mast, if the boat capsizes the hollow aluminium spar will fill with water, and the weight of the metal then tends to cause the spar to sink, and if it does so the boat inverts. An active and competent helmsman and crew will normally arrest this process and get her up again long before this happens, but in seriously extreme conditions even highly competent and experienced sailors may still find that the boat has a tendency to invert.

I am one such to whom it has happened; only once in some 45 years, but once is enough, thank you! In the autumn of 2005 I had an inversion after a capsize, in force 7 gusting 8 and shallow water (with the attendant risk of the masthead getting stuck in the bottom). In my efforts to get the masthead off the bottom I was half-way along the mast when my crew managed to bring the boat upright, so I was then several feet from the hull, and she immediately blew downwind faster than I could swim. This turned an otherwise mundane capsize into a major emergency, and amongst other lessons arising from that experience I now regard masthead buoyancy as an important safety provision.

With the exception of the very first metal masts, by IYE, sealing the metal tube is not viable, not least because of the internal halliards, so for safety I have taken to routinely carrying a masthead float to reduce the risk of inversion if one does get badly caught out and capsize. In passing, those very first metal masts were in fact sealed, but all too often they leaked and allowed water in, which then became such a problem that Class Rules were soon amended to allow a drain hole to be drilled in the bottom of the mast! Rumour has it that one member (Toby Taylor, if I remember correctly) has experimented with filling the metal mast with table tennis balls, but I have no further information on this.

However don't overlook the virtues of the original wooden mast, since it is intrinsically buoyant. These are still available; they occasionally come onto the market second-hand, and Collars have confirmed that they can still make them to order, and indeed advise that they do still make the occasional one (typically a few per year) on request. When I priced them around 2010 the cost was only about £60 more than that of a metal mast, and that extra cost (for a brand new mast) is comparable with adding a proprietary flotation unit to a new metal mast, and the buoyancy may well be sufficient. However it needs a wider mast gate than the metal mast, and if you wish to be able to use either mast interchangeably you will need hard padding cheeks between mast and gate when using the metal mast.

You would probably also find that with a Series 2 boat this would take her out of class, since I am not aware that there is any provision for the wider gate in the Series 2 design. That is a potentially serious matter, because of its effect on the eventual resale value of the boat.

One option for flotation is a unit that combines the function of float and radar reflector (the Echomax Inflatable), see later paragraph.

My historic very early boat has a wooden mast, so that mast shouldn't need a float as well.

Crewsaver do a purpose-designed inflatable 9-litre mast float, which at about £50 may be thought moderately expensive, but it is a well designed product.

You may however wish to carry the float on only some occasions, when weather conditions are more arduous. Additionally, experience has shown that if the float is left aloft all season it becomes porous by the end of only the first season, whereas if it is put aloft only when actually sailing it can last for a great many seasons; my first one lasted just the one season, left aloft permanently, while its successor is still going strong after more than a dozen seasons, having been lowered each time the boat was put to bed.

I therefore have devised an external halliard permanently mounted which can be used to hoist the float when required - and both float and halliard are readily taken off the mast for racing.

I rigged the system so that I use a carbine hook at the top to clip onto a ring seized to the halliard, and at the bottom a second carbine hook clips on to a second ring that runs as a traveller up the standing part. The latter also passes through a fairlead just below the bottom of the float when hoisted (so that the carbine hook is pulled downwards), and the complete arrangement is then kept very close to the mast. The photos show the arrangement laid out on the ground.



Note that the ring to which the top is clipped is on the right hand part of the halliard in the picture (middle photo), whereas the traveller ring to which the bottom is clipped is on the left hand part (both outer photos), and it is the latter that runs through the fairlead just below the bottom of the float. Together with the position of the lower fairlead, which acts also as a stop, this ensures that the two carbine hooks are pulled in opposite directions, so there is no slack and the float is kept close to the mast. Note also that although the photos show the float secured to nylon rings, which is all I could obtain immediately when I set up the system on my Series 1 boat, when I replicated it on the Series 2 boat I used stainless steel; I would always recommend stainless steel for this application, as it is the stronger material.

Two details that are not obvious, one of which I discovered by trial and error: first, if you use 3-strand rope rather than braided you can of course splice the ends together with a short splice, but I found that despite my best efforts to ensure there was no twist in the halliard I was unable to avoid introducing twist in the course of making the splice. After three attempts, and eventually living with a halliard with permanent twist for three seasons, I am now about to replace the 3-strand with braided rope and just join the ends with a racking seizing (followed by a simple seizing on top). Second, particularly if you rely on seizing rather than splicing, consider placing the fixed ring so that the join is at the bottom when the float is hoisted, and thus takes no strain when the halliard is hauled taut and cleated.

Another option to consider, depending on where you intend to sail, is to combine masthead buoyancy with a really good radar reflector. Echomax do some of the best radar reflectors, and the range includes at least two inflatable ones. Price around £100 (in 2020). The ball-shaped one has an enormous 20 m² radar cross section, while the cylindrical one has an even more impressive radar cross section of 25 m²: web addresses follow at the end of this paragraph. I was introduced to this by a Wayfarer sailor who uses one in this way (David Maynard, of Dinghy Cruising Association), and the manufacturer has confirmed to me that they see no reason why it should not be used in this dual role; they tell me that it is adequately durable provided one can ensure that the envelope is not punctured, and they suggest that it might be worth wrapping it in a thin layer of foam rubber to protect it. They state that there will be a small mast shadow of about 10/15 degrees, but overall that is still vastly better than the almost nil radar return from a GP with no reflector.

http://www.echomax.co.uk/Echomax_Products.htm.

<https://www.force4.co.uk/item/Echomax/Inflatable-SOLAS-Radar-Reflector-Round/DUS>

<https://www.force4.co.uk/item/Echomax/Inflatable-Radar-Reflector-Cylinder/DV2>

Single-handing

Although the boat is probably at her best when sailed two-up, she is also a great single-hander, but with the proviso that you then have only half the normal crew weight available, so expect to shorten sail early. To put some data to this, in August 2006 (at age 63) I spent about three weeks sailing from Anglesey, first in my new GP14 on extended sea trials and then my older one (while the new one was back with the builder for detailed “tweaking”). I happened to be single-handed throughout this period, and winds were force 4-5 on most days. There were few days when it wasn’t possible to sail, albeit well reefed, and on several days I had her planing fairly hard even when heavily reefed. However I confess that even at that age - and I am now 15 years older - I found that sort of wind a bit much for single-handing; I was quite content to sail for only an hour or two at a time, because sailing on my own in those winds and with no rescue cover I was feeling just a little vulnerable, and towards the end of the holiday I was beginning to think how nice it would be to be able to go for a sail sometime without always having to reef!

Having said that, the club’s racing fleet were out there with their normal complement of crew, and there were a fair number of capsizes (albeit that they were racing), whereas I was single-handing a two-man boat, and successfully avoiding any capsizes, so I don’t feel too badly about my caution!

Over the next ten years I sailed the new boat very extensively single-handed, in a wide variety of wind conditions. It was only at about age 75 that I largely retired from dinghy sailing in favour of the yacht, and passed on my much loved GP14 to my godson as an advance against his future inheritance. And my only two capsizes in those ten years were both when I was fully crewed!

The following things help enormously:

A really good reefing system is even more essential (if that is possible) for single-handing. See the notes above, and the specialist article on Reefing Systems published on the Class Association website.

Some single-handers like to have continuous sheets for both headsail and spinnaker, (but personally I do so for the spinnaker but not the headsail). Take the continuous sheet across the boat and up through the fairleads, then one good method of attachment for the spinnaker or for a standard jib is to tie the sheet to the clew/s of the sail with bowlines.

With a genoa you won’t have enough length to accommodate a bowline between clew and fairlead when sheeted right in, but if the sheet diameter is carefully matched to the clew cringle you could pass each sheet through the cringle, each from its own side. Then once the two sheets emerge either side of the sail tie the end of each sheet round the standing part of the other with an overhand knot, thus forming a fisherman’s knot with the sail in the middle of it.

If you prefer separate sheets when fully crewed, you can either have a separate dedicated continuous sheet for single-handing or you can simply use the separate sheets but tie the inboard ends together.

One problem with continuous sheets is slightly more clutter in the boat, and more line to trip over or to get snagged on something, but the big plus point is that the sheet is always within reach of the windward side; it can never be out of reach down on the lee side just when you need to adjust it (and especially if you need to ease it in a gust) and at the same time you need to be sitting out moderately hard.

In passing, whatever method you use for attaching genoa (or jib) sheets to the sail you should avoid heavy and hard objects like shackles. You only need a shackle at the clew of a flogging sail to hit someone once in the eye to do serious injury. Like many dinghy sailors and yachtsmen I have experimented over the years with a variety of lighter and softer systems, but for non-continuous sheets I am very pleased with the simplest of all - indeed so simple that I would not have trusted it to work had I not had the assurance of the builder, an experienced racing type, who used it when first rigging my new boat and assured me that it would indeed work. A dozen or more seasons later I can confirm that it does work reliably, and I have now standardised on this system.

Just pass the sheet through the cringle, middle it, tie an overhand knot, and pull it tight. No need for seizings to hold it; if the diameter of the rope suits the cringle it won't slip.



*Simple overhand knot inside the cringle is sufficient to secure sheets
(in this example it is pulled out to one side for the photo).
Also shows loop of light line for hooking in jibstick or spinnaker pole.*

An alternative is a larkshank formed around the cringle, as described in the Beginner's Guide To Rigging The GP14, available in the Members' Area of the Class Association website.

Tiller lines to temporarily hold the tiller while you are doing other things in the boat are very useful, and they are probably essential if you want to set a spinnaker single-handed. This enables one to realistically set oneself the challenge, and enjoy meeting it, of being able to do everything single-handed which one would normally do fully crewed, at least in suitable weather conditions, and do it in style. That includes, most importantly, the ability to reef at sea, but in light conditions it is entirely viable to fly a spinnaker and a hugely enjoyable challenge to do so. And I personally have also regularly enjoyed being able, in sailing a GP out from an anchorage, to let the boat gently sail herself on a beat or a reach while I stand in the forepart of the cockpit and make a neat job of coiling and stowing the anchor warp.

On all my previous boats I have had a pair of lines secured to the under side of the deck, one each side of the cockpit, which I have tied to the tiller as required; a clove hitch or (better) a slip hitch can be slipped on in a couple of seconds, and can be slipped off almost instantly. However on my new boat I tried for the first time a single length of shock cord straight across the cockpit in way of the tiller at its forward end and just below tiller height, which is clipped into place whenever I am single-handing; indeed I often these days don't bother to remove when I am not, as even when fully crewed I occasionally find it useful. To hold the tiller I just lift the shockcord over the end of the tiller and allow it to rest on the top of the tiller, where it holds by friction. I now think that this is a far better system, and over a dozen or more seasons it has performed excellently. See photos.



Tiller shockcord, up (above) and down (below)
Note boat semi-stripped for road trailing



I have been specifically asked about self-tacking jibs. I am not aware of anyone using one on a GP14, and I cannot myself see how one could do so without immense problems. So far as I am aware, all such systems require a boom for the headsail, and I don't see how this could be managed without the associated hardware being at least semi-permanent. This would both deface the foredeck and take the boat out of class; even if you don't intend ever to race, the latter is a disincentive, because it may quite seriously damage her eventual resale value. It would also limit you to a substantially smaller headsail so that the boom could clear the mast as it tacked.

Despite my having sailed extensively single-handed, I have never felt the need for a self-tacking jib. I do, though, try to prepare my tacks in advance, by ensuring that the current (i.e. old) working sheet is readily to hand, so that it can be released as I put the tiller down, and I throw the new sheet across the boat in advance of the tack so that it is there in immediate readiness for when I pick it up. (Note that I personally choose not to use continuous sheets for the genoa.)

I then tack the boat slightly less rapidly than in a racing tack, but smartly enough to have no risk of being caught in stays. Having released the genoa sheet as I put the tiller down, thereafter on a boat with on-deck sheeting I just ignore the genoa while the boat goes round. However on a boat with through-deck sheeting, because of the sometimes greater friction, I do actually make a point of clearing the old sheet as I tack. I handle the tiller and move my weight across, and depending on the conditions I either cleat the main or I handle the mainsheet exactly as I would if fully crewed. Only once I am round on the other tack (and the main is adjusted if necessary) do I then sheet in the genoa.

Not that I let it flap for more than a second or two, but I don't attempt to do too many tasks simultaneously, and sheeting in the genoa is normally the last one to be completed.

One point that is worth some effort in fine tuning the boat is ensuring that the genoa sheets will pay out really freely and easily. Even very slight friction on the old sheet at or near the fairleads will be magnified enormously when it bends sharply round the shroud, and that in turn will again be magnified enormously when the sheet bends around the front of the mast. The end result can actually make it almost impossible to sheet the sail in on the new tack without first "overhauling" the old sheet to release it and get it out from whatever is obstructing it and get it to run free.

This is not a matter of friction of the working sheet as you pull it in under high load; this is seldom a problem. Rather, it is that you need as near zero friction as possible for the non-working sheet when it is under almost nil load, which is a very different brief. Choice of the type of fairleads is crucial here, and although some owners use blocks rather than fairleads - or turning blocks as well as fairleads - I personally feel that blocks do not meet this brief at all well. A good, large, wide open fairlead is required. You may also want to use the minimum diameter sheet that you can hold comfortably, and perhaps experiment with different types as well as diameters of rope; something fairly soft, that bends very very easily.

Update: I am very impressed with the three block system seen on Ian Sinclair's boat (combined with through-deck sheeting), and I did intend to try it on my own boat, as a means of minimising friction, although I never actually got round to installing the system. Here, each successive block is used at its optimum orientation in order to bring the genoa sheet through the deck and eventually to the jam cleat; three blocks are needed because of the complexity of the angles, and the changes of height, in three dimensions. The first block (in a vertical plane) accepts the lead from the genoa, and leads it forward; the third block (in a horizontal plane) accepts the sheet (which by now is running aft horizontally), and leads it to the fairlead; and the one in between is a turning block between the two directions of the sheet lead, and its plane needs to be aligned to the positions of the other two blocks.

Having discussed tacking, perhaps it is useful to also briefly mention gybing. My technique when single-handing is essentially the same as when fully crewed: I prefer transom sheeting, and I like to face aft in a gybe and choose my moment to suit both the waves and the wind. This is a big difference from the racing situation; there is rarely if ever a need to place the gybe as close as possible to a specific geographical point, whether a racing mark or anything else, and instead you have great freedom to place it to suit what the wind and sea are doing.

I face aft, standing or crouching, with legs astride the tiller, point the boat exactly dead downwind, and choose my wave (or my “smooth”, depending on the sea state). At the optimum moment I grab the two parts of the mainsheet, duck down (so that my head clears the boom!), and smartly pull the boom across. This works best with transom sheeting, and not at all with true centre sheeting; it will work for the popular hybrid split-tail sheeting system, but very much less efficiently because of the cushioning effect of the sheet rendering through the blocks as you pull it in.

The headsail and the spinnaker (if you are flying one) will come to no harm left as they are for the time being, and can wait until after you have gybed the main.

If you have any other good ideas, and particularly ones which you have tried out and found to work well, we would be delighted to hear of them. Please forward them to cruising@gp14.org.

Sleeping Aboard

This is indeed possible, albeit more than a little cramped, but the writer (who has done it occasionally) envisages that at best it will never be more than a minority requirement, so rather than add to the file size of this document readers are referred elsewhere. An article on this by the present writer appeared in the Summer 2007 issue of *Mainsail*, and it is available by email on request from cruising@gp14.org.

Those who are seriously interested in camping aboard the boat may be interested also in joining the Dinghy Cruising Association, who can also offer a great deal of advice.

<https://www.dinghycruising.org.uk>



“A Capella”, with tent, 2006 and 2008