

## PARREL BEADS

### LUGGER & DERIVATIVES

Your set of Parrel Beads comprises 4 strings:

- ◆ 1 with 3 beads.
- ◆ 3 with 4 beads each.
- ◆ If you have selected the evolutionary set, one of the 4 bead strings has a whipped eye & toggle plus a screw.
- ◆ If you have also opted for QR luff parrels, these will have a whipped eye with tail & toggle

### THE STORY OF THE PARREL BEADS

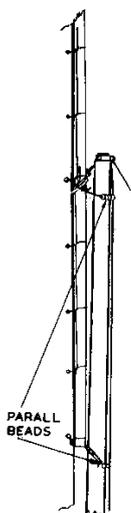
If you are stricken with Anoraksia Drascomba, you will find this page fascinating. At the other extreme, it could cure insomnia. In between, you may find it helpful in managing your sails.

The parrel bead is sometimes referred to as a parral bead or even a parallel bead, depending on which old sea-dog introduced you to them, but they all describe a set of beads threaded onto a rope used to allow a sail or yard to be attached to a mast & slide up & down.

They were traditionally of wood & varnished ash on bigger boats. Varnishing small beads is fiddly, so was rarely done, leaving them prone to attract mildew, soften & split. We have ours made especially for us in black synthetic, which is durable, clean & long lasting.

#### ***Standard Parrels***

In the Drascombe context, a standard set for the gunter yawls is 4 strings, one of three beads & three of four beads, all on plain line.



*Fig. 1* Yard can slide up and down mast, retained by paralls.





The 3 bead string goes through the gaff jaws. It is tied eccentrically with one long tail & one short one. Tie the short tail permanently onto the Port tang of the jaw. Tuck the loose end down the polythene tube protector (if you have them). In use, thread the free end through the Starboard tang & tie off with two half hitches or any other exotic bend that takes your fancy.



Its function is to stop the lower end of the yard escaping off the mast. In combination, the length & angle of the gaff jaws & the length of the parrel bead string need to be enough to allow the yard to drop down to the horizontal & maybe even a bit beyond.



On early Drascombes, the luff of the mainsail was laced to the mast but this had great potential for a horrible muddle around the gaff jaws when lowered, usually manifesting itself when attempting to raise the sail again. So, after a while, that lace was dispensed with & two more strings of parrel beads added using the nearest convenient eye in the sail luff approximately 1/3 & 2/3 down the luff. The function of the parrels is to keep a straight luff, not to keep the luff tight to the mast. If they are over-tightened, they

become more difficult to slide & the luff may become distorted below the gaff jaws. Finish the string through the sail with a bowline, making a convenient eye to hitch the other end to with a couple of half hitches. The bowline will also keep the bead string captive preventing it from jumping ship.

They are traditionally tied on the Starboard side because most people are right handed so, remembering the old adage of 'one hand for yourself & one for the boat', they hung onto the boat with their left hand & used the more dexterous right hand to tie knots & stuff. This isn't entirely logical so don't feel constrained by it.



The third string of 4 beads is an optional one with pros & cons, requiring a Skipper's decision. It is tied on round yard & mast just below the halyard attachment point. (Put it through a loop of your sail lace marline hitch to keep it located on the yard. There is no lacing in the picture!)

If it is used:

- ◆ The yard slides vertically up & down the mast, without falling back on the crew's head.
- ◆ When reefing down, the yard can be lowered by the depth of the reef & left to hang on the parrel beads.
- ◆ When the sail is dropped, a mizzen sized element is left to be snuffed manually in order to remove all sail drive.

If it is not used:

- ◆ The yard & all the sail can be dropped below the gunwhale level on the open boats or down to where it can be manhandled from the cockpit on cabin boats.
- ◆ It can drop below the horizontal, before it is fully down, causing the jaws to jam on the mast.
- ◆ When a reef is put in, it is necessary to re-reeve the main halyard further up the yard (by the depth of the reef) to get it to set half decently.

### ***Quick Release Parrels***

The adage I referred to earlier of 'one hand for yourself & one for the boat' is a sound philosophy. So too is the aim to make operations quick & simple. Trying to undo tight knots in small string with cold hands can be awkward, turning into a nightmare if it also requires standing up in a pitching boat, possibly on a cabin roof, & needing both hands for the work, leaving no hand for yourself! Quick & simple also reduces rigging & de-rigging time, important to the regular trailer-sailor. This has been the grail that has driven my parrel bead thinking to QR.



Way back in 1999, I created my first QR string for the yard halyard attachment point using Paddington Bear technology – the toggle & eye from his Duffel Coat. The wooden toggle gave way to the rope end ball but the principle & performance remains wondrous! Using this it is possible to attach or release them in mere seconds &, most importantly, detach it with one hand. Thus it also overcomes the downsides of using a parrel string at this location (debated above). It is screwed to the back face of the yard, so remains captive & easily controlled.



After a while, I pondered how to add this facility to the luff strings.

Initially, I could do this by making the parrel string direct into the sail luff but this wasn't really practical as a mail-order accessory.

Then a couple of years ago, after looking at a fishing magazine, I hit on the idea of leaving a tail on the eye so that it could be fed through the sail eyelet but would not retract unless the Skipper wanted it to. The QR luff string was born!

That left the gaff jaw string unresolved. I pondered & experimented with all sorts of ideas like a jamming cleat on the jaws, a droptail pin end to the string, etc. but none had the elegant simplicity that a Drascombe deserves.



Just before Christmas 2010 I had my 'light bulb moment'. Problem solved: a whipped crown with tail. Pass it through the hole in the gaff jaw & the tail will prevent it escaping, just like the QR luff string.

It needs a larger hole than existing jaws can accommodate but all future gaff jaw production will have this facility.

The jaws in the picture also have polythene protector tubes on them, which is more friendly to the varnish on the spars.