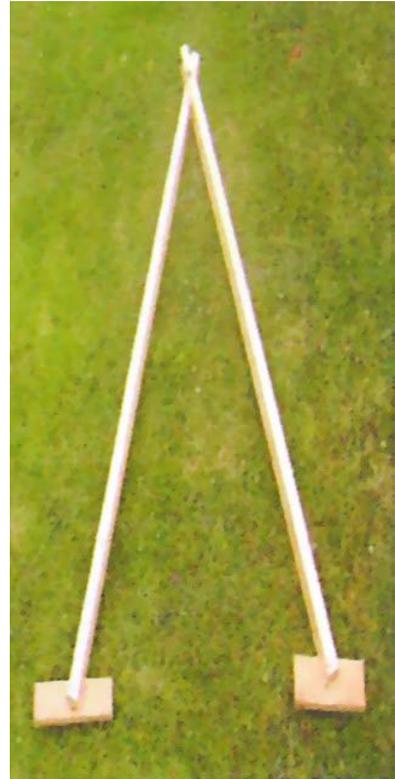


Raising & Lowering Mast - Another Boat Speaks Out

by Barry Mellor, Shrimper 849 (*Clementine*) (Winter 2004)

My name is *Clementine* (849), and I have read with interest the 'cri de coeur' from my close friend *Bumble Chugger* (124), and her reference to another good friend *Kittiwake* (520). My owner is just as peripatetic, and insists on taking me with him when he goes off to France, The Netherlands, Cornwall, Devon, Wales, the East Coast etc. At his age, he really ought to know better.

He hasn't mastered the art of shooting bridges under sail (he hasn't yet taken me on the River Thames like my other two friends). However, he does raise and lower the mast frequently, nearly always single-handed. So he has devised a system which is simple, works well and above all is quick. For raising/lowering my mast, he has rigged a 15m length of 8mm braid-on-braid rope from the collar at the top of my mast to a snatch-block on the end of the bowsprit, and then back through a clutch to a winch on my coachroof. With the aid of this winch and an A-frame (see picture right), positioned on the coach roof in line with the tabernacle with the halyard running over it, the mast then goes up and down very easily. He hasn't tried this system without a winch, but guesses that a handy-billie might do just as well. The forestay can also be led back to the cockpit via a block at the top of the mast, so there is no need to detach it from the bowsprit.



Once my mast is down and positioned for travelling, he sets it well above the cabin top by means of wooden blocks (he calls these blocks the "Pillars of Hercules" - see the pictures on the right). The 'Pillars', and the weight of the mast taken on the 'Pillars', are secured in the tabernacle with the through bolt. These blocks, together with a tall mast crutch at the back of the cockpit, enable him to position my mast well above the hatch, giving him easy access my cabin (e.g. to make tea, or to use me as a caravan when travelling - he is always making tea - I don't know what's wrong with him).



I often speculate with my friends *Bumble* and *Kittiwake*, and indeed with other friends in the fleet, how much longer these foolish old men will continue all this pushing and shoving, and I regret to say they show no signs yet of retiring gracefully!