

# Vivacity 650

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by: Paul Gyurgyak

## Row, Row, Row, Your Boat

Have you ever been out for an evening sail or come into a sheltered harbour and the wind has died completely. The sea is mirror calm and the last 100 yards might as well be a mile if you try and sail it. You are not concerned though because with one pull on the engine the mooring is reached with ease. But what if it doesn't start and you are slowly drifting the wrong way or you don't want to disturb the peace with the sound of an engine.

I have spent many a summers evening drifting around my local estuary wandering what I would do. Apart from making sure I was up tide of my mooring when the wind died, not a lot and because I leave my dinghy on my mooring that was no help either. I am also a minimalist sailor and nearly always sail to and from my mooring avoiding engine use as much as possible, so watching the rowing gigs on the river was an obvious inspiration.

I could row!



This immediately raised a whole raft of questions.

Is the boat too heavy to row?  
How long do the oars need to be?  
Where do I stow them?  
Where do I sit?

And so my mind raced on with a hundred questions needing answers.

The obvious place to sit was on the step with my back to the hatch but the height was too low. A quick retrieve of the toolbox and that was the position sorted with me sat on it on the step. To estimate the length of oar needed I used my telescopic boat hook and pretend rowed with it resting on the gunwales so the end dipping in the water. The resulting length was 10 foot. Wow, 10ft wooden oars, how heavy will they be and where do I stow them? More inspiration from the gigs, as some of them used carbon shaft blades, led me to



think they do not necessarily have to be made of wood. However a quick goggle at the price of these things soon ruled them out. I also still had a stowage issue.

Where could I get a carbon shaft 10ft long and preferably 2 piece?

Being a former windsurfer lead to the mast solution. I bought 2 second hand windsurf masts from Ebay and cut them down. For the actual blade I used 18mm UPVC cladding. This will come as no surprise to readers of my last project where I lined the interior of my boat with it. I



shaped the blade and then spooned it with hot water from a kettle. Initially I bolted it to the end of the shaft but this looked awkward. So I cut slots with a dremel and inserted it in the end with one bolt holding it. This works brilliantly and does not split the mast. The masts are 2 piece so come apart and stow inside the internal lockers onboard. To stop them coming apart when rowing I just wrap a bit of tape around the joint.



If you've read this far I can now hear you cry Rowlocks!

Exactly and because I did not fancy drilling my boat to bits at this early stage of the project I looked for an alternative to conventional rowlocks. Lashing them with rope was my chosen solution. I used one



rope to the stern rail and the other with a tail wrapped on the winch. The knot is just a round turn and bowline so it can easily be undone and slid up and down the shaft to get the oar length correct. The tail on the winch ensures the lines stay tight. To protect the gunwale is yet another piece of UPVC held with tape. This is all easily removed when not needed

So back to the first question "Is the boat too heavy to row?" The answer is no.

It is no light weight, and you are not going to beat Oxford or Cambridge down the Thames, but I can reach and maintain 2 knots for well over a mile. I have also rowed into a force 3 with no problems and

you can also spin it on the spot for marina parking.

Fellow yachtsmen, who have seen me rowing, are understandably sceptical and seem to miss the point. They all say "what about when it's windy?" To which I reply "Well then I sail!"

Regards

Paul Gyurgyak  
Owner of Vivacity 650 "Black Pearl"

