



A tabernacle secures the foot of the mast and provides a pivot for mast lowering.

ensuring they're free to be undone quickly as and when necessary. The stages at which mast supports need to be slackened or undone will depend on the rig used on the particular boat. This varies greatly from one cruiser to another and the sequence needs to be carefully planned.

The mast step may be in the form of a 'tabernacle' on the deck, with a bolt or bolts through the mast. This holds the foot of the mast and provides a pivot for raising and lowering it. In some cases one of two bolts is removed before lowering.

Work out how and exactly where the mast will go as it comes down. It may need to be supported part of the way down while adjustments are made, depending on the shape of the decks and any obstructions. A mast crutch is needed to support the mast at the stern. Larger masts may need A-frames to help support them, to stop them from moving sideways and to control lowering more efficiently.

The usual way to control the mast is with the forestay. Attach a rope to the lower end of the forestay before undoing the fastening at deck level. This can then be used to control



Left: A crutch supports the lowered mast at the stern of this boat.

Right: A well-supported mast can form a ridge-pole for a tent-shaped cover.



Supports for the mast are provided on this boat's road trailer.

the gradual lowering of the mast as it pivots on the mast step fastenings.

After lowering, it's worth labelling where stays and other fittings should be replaced, using matching strips of coloured plastic tape. This will make it easier to match each fitting to its correct home and save much puzzled head-scratching when it comes to re-rigging later. Taking photographs of the rig before you lower the mast will provide similar help when you want to raise and re-rig the mast at a later date.

The mast can be removed completely to go into a purpose-built mast store, where it's supported at frequent intervals along its entire length. Alternatively it can be laid along the length of the boat, with mast crutches helping to support the ends. Leather or other cushioning material can be used on the crutches to avoid scratches and abrasions. Likewise, ensure both the mast and the boat are sufficiently protected from each other where the mast rests. A cover is often arranged over the mast in the manner of a tent, with the mast forming the ridgepole.



Mast repair

This wooden mast had chafed against the teak thwart that supports it. The damaged and rotted wood was sanded away and the bare wood coated with West Epoxy Resin 105 using standard 205 hardener and immediately built up with a stiff mixture of resin 105 plus high-density filler 404. This was then left to cure for 24 hours before sanding smooth and coating with Resin 105. The high-density filler gave a tough repair that will resist further abrasion where the stepped mast rests against the thwart.

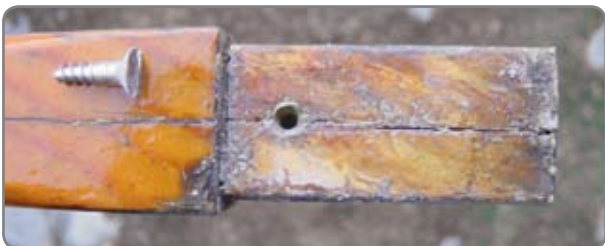
Wooden masts and spars

Wooden spars need to be checked for any chips in the varnish. Touch them up as soon as possible in order to prevent water absorption and discolouration. Varnish the spars before storing them away for the winter, but make sure that the varnish doesn't run into the 'sheaves' (pulleys embedded in the mast).

As indicated previously, epoxy resins are effective in repairing the parts of boats that are made of wood, including

spars. For example, screw holes may have enlarged and need to be treated with epoxy filler. Alternatively, if possible without causing other problems with fittings, fill the old holes and drill new holes in fresh timber.

The following examples of repairs to wooden spars were carried out by Tim Pettigrew during renovation of his Drascombe Lugger. The procedures show how epoxy resin can be used to repair the wooden parts of a boat.

Gaff repair

1 The split in the gaff was caused by a screw being driven into the wood without an adequate pilot hole being drilled first.



2 This end-view shows the deep split.



3 A wood saw was used to widen the split before filling it.

