

Running Rigging and Reefing

1. All Lines Back

Given that out of my wife, my 4-year-old son and me, I was the only sailor, running the control lines aft to the cockpit was an obvious necessity. I had 6 lines to run back - the main halyard, the topping lift, the kicker, two reefing lines and the 'chute halyard.

1. I added 2 triple Barton deck organisers, one each on either side of the mast on the beam upon which the mast steps. They were placed at an angle so that the outboard block was further aft than the inboard block, to allow a clear entry for each line from the mast. They were screwed down with self-tappers and sealed with silicone.

2. I added a turning block for the topping lift near the foot of starboard side of the mast, using self-tappers

3. Using the bolt that secures the mast I added a double block for the slab reefing lines.

4. I rethreaded and lengthened the kicker so that working end came out of the bottom block.

5. Through the starboard deck organiser, I ran the main halyard (outermost block), the topping lift (middle block), and the kicker (innermost block). Through the port deck organiser I ran the 'chute halyard (outermost block), upper reefing line (middle block), and lower reefing line (inner block).

6. Back at the cockpit on the cabin roof, I fixed three cam cleats on either side, using self-tappers and silicone. These held very well, but being cheap Lazilas blocks they soon began to stick with sand caught in them. Unfortunately, they didn't have fairleads and so could be difficult to re-cleat in a rush. Also, they were too easy for my son to knock, and one occasion he brought the boom down on my head.

However, the answer came when I fitted my spray hood. The spray hood, superb as it is, didn't have a gap to run the control lines under, and so much to my chagrin I had to put 6 eyelets in it, on its first day. Because the eyelets were a couple of inches above the cabin roof the lines when under tension were pulling down on the holes, putting them under strain. Finally, when hauling up the mainsail, I tore the spray hood when I pulled the halyard off-centre (no fairlead on the cleat).

I bought a gorgeous lump of planed teak and made 2 platforms of 2" high each. They were about 8" by 10" to spread the load across the cabin roof. I replaced the two halyard cam cleats with Plastimo jammers and the other 4 cam cleats with larger Barton cam cleats with fairleads. Everything now works superbly - the jammers are simplicity themselves and much better at holding a great load, and the Barton cleats never suffer from sand and other foreign bodies (Ready Break, Thomas the Tank Engine, alphabet spaghetti). Of course the best bit is the teak.

I can now do almost everything from the cockpit. All I have to do now is figure out how to get the sail ties on and off the main lazy jacks next.

(Ed: there is a photo of part of a different installation at p 93)

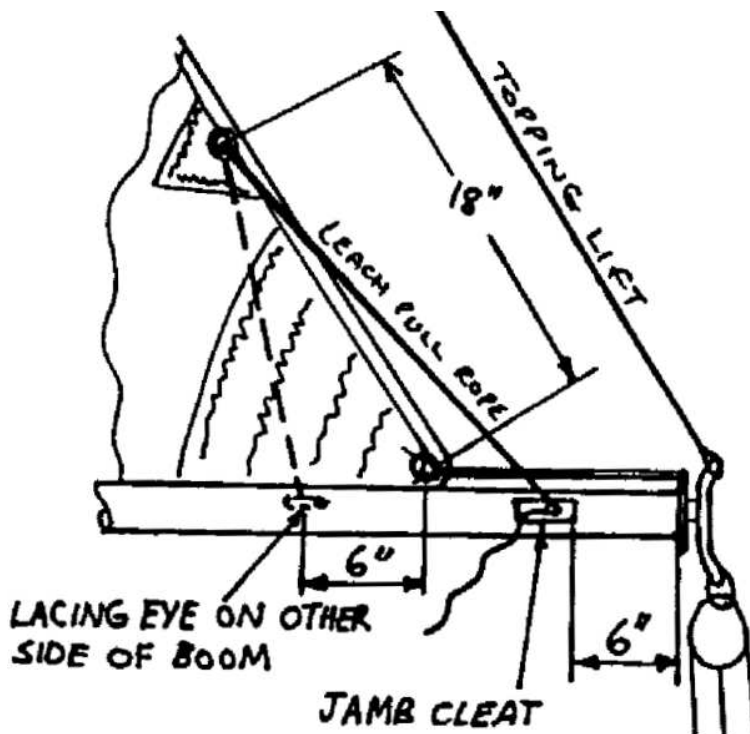
Tim Pinnel (2000)

2. When to Reef and Main Sail Roller Reefing Modification

One of the first things to learn about sailing a Sea Wych is that it is not an overgrown dinghy, it's a proper yacht. It may be a very small one, but it is still a yacht. To get the best out of sailing a Sea Wych, reef the sails to match the wind. It's kinder to your family; a Sea Wych goes faster upright as it was designed to sail, with less stress on sails and rigging.

As a rough guide, in winds up to F3 (7 - 10 knots wind speed), a Sea Wych handles quite well with both genoa and mainsail fully hoisted and no reef. From F3 to F4 (11 - 16 knots), put 4 rolls in the mainsail, (or if the mainsail has slab reefing, down to the first line of reefs). At F5 (17 - 21 knots), reef the mainsail by a further 3 rolls (or second line of reefs) and reef the genoa by 3 or 4 rolls. At F6 (22 - 27 knots), a total of 9 rolls, or down to the 3rd row of reefing points in the mainsail, plus three more rolls in the genoa. Alternatively, dump the mainsail altogether and sail on reefed genoa only. Above F6, drop the mainsail. If it gets worse, progressively reef the genoa down until at F8/9 (38-47 knots), the sail foot is no more than 3 foot long. You will not be able to make progress to windward, so run or tack downwind at around 30 degrees off the direction of the wind to keep the wind on the stern quarter. Running with the wind on your quarter makes it possible to sail at an angle across waves, which is safer. The boat is also more controllable. Never run directly down wind unless it's unavoidable.

A Sea Wych can take a lot rougher sea than you can, so don't go sailing out to sea if the wind may get up to F6 or more. Brixham Coastguard once advised me to turn back when it was blowing F6+, reminding me that a Sea Wych is a very little ship; I turned back into port. There is always another day if you take care. On Marnie, I used the simple idea illustrated below to reduce the inevitable boom droop one gets with rolling the mainsail round the boom (first used by Mike Powles).



Using the topping lift to raise the end of the boom, pull on the leach pull rope till the leach eye is against the boom then jam the rope. Roller reef the sail. The leach pull rope will roll up with the sail, folding the big loose tuck of sail into the sail foot as the sail rolls up. Release the topping lift. The boom will stay level for up to 6 or 7 reefing rolls. I never got around to adding slab-reefing points to Marnie's mainsail.

Roy Sallabank (1997)

3. Slab Reefing

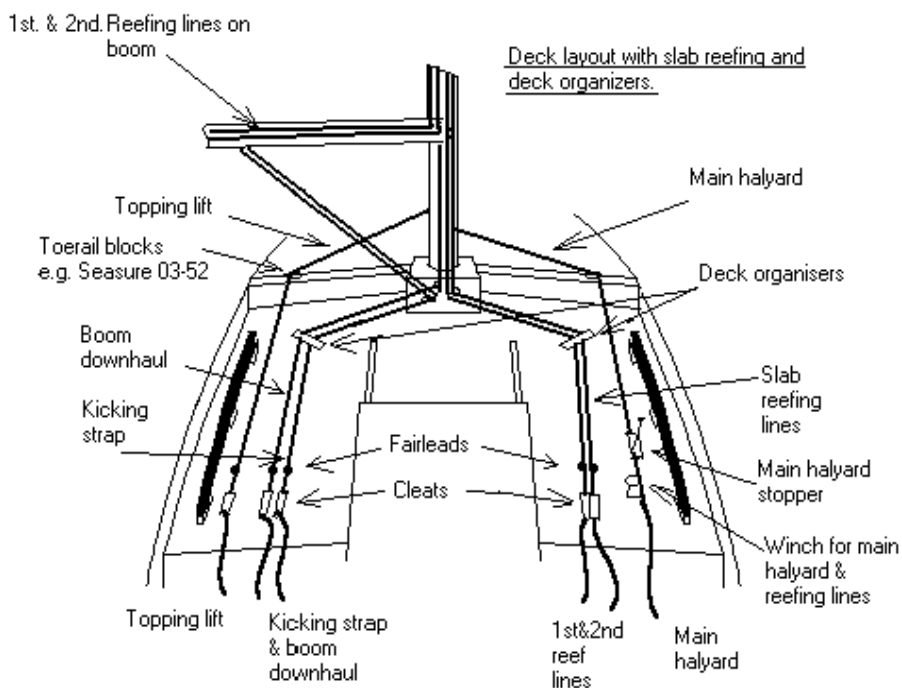
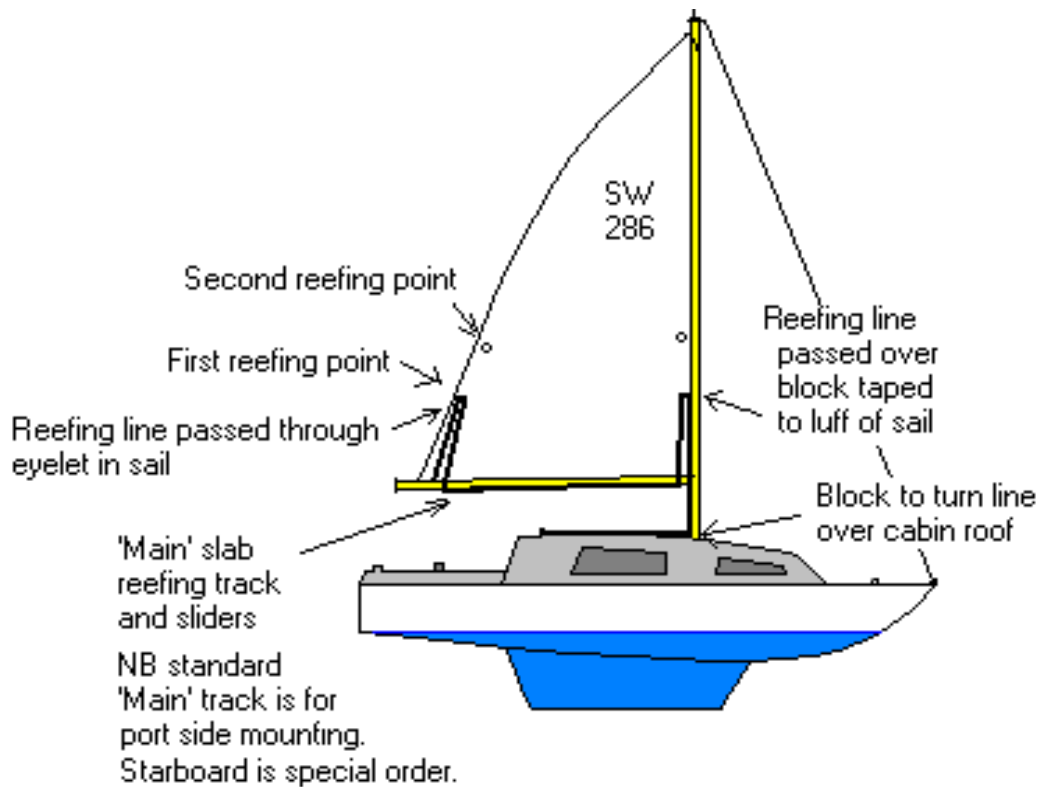
After building my Sea Wych in 1977, I quickly became dissatisfied with the roller reefing system on the mainsail. I never seemed to reef to a decent sail shape, and seemed to spend an age at the mast winding the sail in. I soon decided that I would change to slab reefing, and fitted a reefing hook to the boom for the luff, and reefing lines to the boom from the leach.

I had a couple of lines of reef points put into the mainsail and fitted luff slides to use instead of the luff rope in the mast track. This arrangement was much quicker to use and gave me a reefed sail shape which was good enough to let me sail more or less where I wanted to go, even to windward. I kept this arrangement for a good number of years, and continued it when I eventually had to have new sails made. However I increasingly disliked having to go forward to the mast to put in a reef, and decided to fit a system, which allowed me to do everything from the cockpit. Much safer, particularly as I sail single-handed much of the time. Although there now seems to be rope everywhere, the system works well enough, and I soon became used to which lines to pull or release.

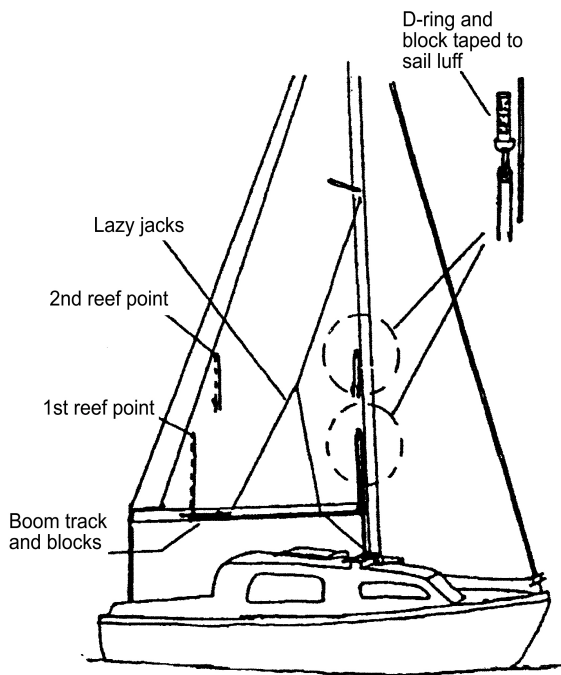
The sketches best show the arrangement I use. I have two reef panels; for each panel a single reefing line starts from a Barton reefing block on a slide on the side of the boom, which are reversible and suitable for either side of the boom. (Another manufacturer 'Main' makes a similar system. The 'Main' system is not reversible, and is normally made and stocked by chandlers to suit the port side of the boom. However it is available to order at no extra cost for the starboard side, which suits the standard Sea Wych arrangement of mainsail halyard exit on the starboard side). The reefing block can be adjusted along the boom to the best position for the leach to be tightened down at an angle, which avoids creases in the mainsail. The line goes from here up through the first reef cringle, down through the block, forward alongside the boom to a block fixed to the flange at the mast end of the boom, and up and through a block on a D-ring taped to the luff of the sail, and down to a block at deck level. From there it goes through a deck organiser to a cam cleat just on top of the cockpit bulkhead. The halyard and reefing lines are best together on the same side of the cockpit, so that the winch can be used on any of these lines.

A similar line is rove through the second reef cringle, and blocks on the boom and the luff alongside the first.

I have also brought the main halyard, kicking strap and boom downhaul lines back to a stopper (for the halyard only), and cam cleats either side of the companionway opening, and I have fitted a winch to finally tighten the halyard and reefing lines.



The first step when reefing is to take the weight of the boom on the topping lift in the usual way. Ease the main halyard so that the block taped to the sail luff ends up just above the boom. A mark made with a felt permanent marker pen on the halyard ensures that it is let off the right amount. With the halyard thus slacked away, the reefing line is hauled home and finally nipped up with the winch until the



(newly formed) foot of the sail is nicely stretched. Tighten up the luff with the main halyard, then let off the topping lift, and that is all there is to it. The bunt of the sail is held tidy by lazy jacks which I have also fitted as shown in the sketches. The whole reefing operation takes about 30 seconds, and all done from the cockpit.

To shake out a reef is equally simple. Tighten the topping lift, the reefing line is cast off, and the main halyard is hauled up, using the winch for final tightening, and finally release the topping lift... again all from the cockpit.

Since fitting this system, I use reefing as an early option, rather than leaving it to later, as it is so easy. My Sea Wych sails more upright, and therefore more effectively and comfortably. The better sail shape

improves the sailing to windward; I should have fitted it years ago! I have also fitted a tiller hold to keep the boat pointing to windward while I reef. (An autohelm would do this otherwise).

Although the original boom downhaul is still fitted, I have drilled the mast track to take extra split pins to limit the movement of the boom. One split pin is fitted above the original sail feed slot to stop the gooseneck fitting coming out of the sail feed slot, the one below the boom to stop the boom sliding down to deck level when the main halyard is released. (Later Mark 2 Sea Wyches fitted with sail sliders from new may already have these pins). The boom gooseneck slider could really now be fixed, tensioning the luff entirely with the main halyard.

With lazy jacks fitted, it is essential to head dead to wind when hoisting the sail, otherwise the sail headboard will blow off to one side, and jam. I have considered fixing the lazy jack pennants to the spreaders, to reduce the possibility of this happening, as my spreaders are held in position by wire rope grips, and cannot droop. Incidentally with lazy jacks, there is no need to tie-in the reef points to keep the sail tidy, another time saver, and a boon when handing (dropping) the main in breezy weather when single-handed.

Although there is nothing new about this method, some owners are put off the above reefing arrangements by the amount of rope and number of lines involved. However, it is a lot simpler than it sounds, and used in conjunction with the roller-reefing jib, there is no need for anyone to leave the cockpit when the wind rises, and the sea gets rough. It is a significant safety factor, and a source of comfort for many wives who hate seeing their husbands going forward up on deck in heavy weather. Working on a bouncing deck is never much fun, even when wearing a safety harness.

Tony Bromley (2001)