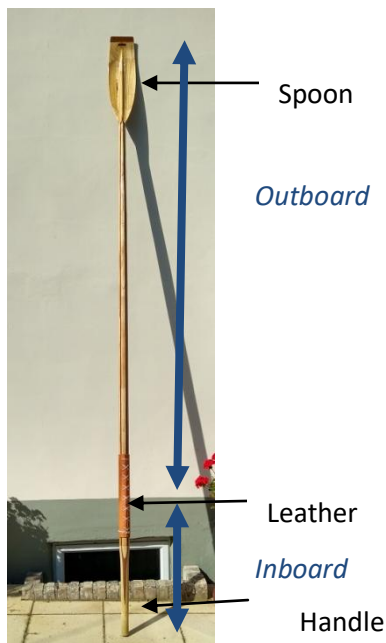
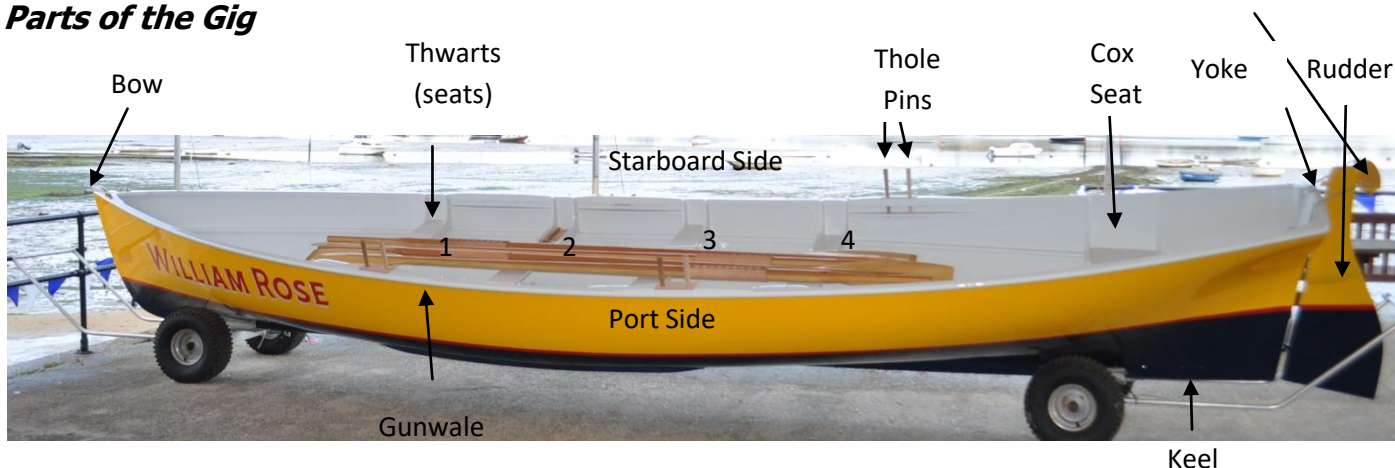


An Introduction to the Harker's Yard Gigs

We have two Harker's Yard Gigs at Manningtree. The Gigs are made by marine apprentices at the Pioneer Trust Harker's Yard in Brightlingsea. They are twenty four foot long and weigh in at two hundred and twenty kilos. William Rose is made of cold moulded mahogany ply, and our new Gig Hunter is made of GRP. They are slightly different inside due to the different methods of construction, but are of the same weight and hull shape. Class rules determine how the Gigs must be equipped to race (including the type of oars and no permitted modifications) to ensure that as far as possible all of the Gigs are essentially the same and none of them are intrinsically faster or slower.

Both are racing boats designed to be light and fast – they can be easily damaged and need to be treated with care!

Parts of the Gig



Oars (blades)

The Gigs are rowed by a crew of four, each with a single oar (or 'blade'). This is 'sweep' rowing, (or simply rowing - rather than 'sculling' with two oars).

The oars are thirteen feet long and made of wood. Although they are hollow to save weight they weigh around 4 kilos each and are tricky to handle at first. Each oar costs around £450 and they are not available 'off the peg' (and they can break!).

The leather protects the oar and when rowing the leathered part of the oar sits on the gunwale between the two thole pins which allow the oar to pivot.

The gig oars are 'macon' style – with symmetrical spoons. They also act as social distancing tools – holding an oar in the middle gives you two metres either side!

Thole Pins

Each rowing position in the Gig has two wooden THOLE pins. A leather pad protects the gunwale and the thole pins fit through holes in the leather pad into holes in the gunwale.

The darker pin is made of hard wood and the lighter pin is made of softwood. The darker pin goes at the BACK of the oar (nearest the bow – the pointy or 'sharp' end of the boat) and the lighter pin goes at the FRONT of the oar (nearest the stern the 'blunt end' – where the Cox sits). The lighter pin is designed to break if necessary to protect the oar.



Rowing terms

As with many activities rowing has its own language and there are some terms that it is helpful to have come across before you come out rowing on the water for the first time.

Terms	What it means
Port	The left hand side of the Gig as seen from the Cox seat looking towards the Bow (front of the boat). Port Markers are red – rowers face backwards and so will find port on their right hand side (red is right)
Starboard	The right hand side of the Gig as seen from the Cox seat looking towards the Bow. Port Markers are green – rowers facing backwards will find port on their left hand side.
Stroke (rower)	Rower nearest the Cox who sets the pace for the crew
Bow (rower)	Rower furthest away from the Cox
Stroke Pair	Rowers in seats 4 and 3 (nearest the Cox)
Bow Pair	Rowers in seat 2 and 1 (furthest from the Cox)
Stroke Side	The two rowers in Stroke (number 4) and Number 2 (rowers on the Starboard side of the Gig)
Bow Side	The two rowers in Bow (number 1) and Number 3 (rowers on the Port side of the boat)
Catch	The part of the stroke where the oar enters the water
Finish	The part of the stroke where the oar comes out of the water
Recovery	The non-work part of the stroke moving from finish to catch
Outside Hand	The hand placed at the end of the oar handle
Inside Hand	The hand placed nearest the spoon of the oar
Stroke Rate	The number of rowing strokes taken by a crew in a minute
Fenders	Inflatable squishy cylinders attached to the thwarts (fixed seats) hung over the side of the Gig to prevent damage – these are taken inside the Gig once underway. There is also a fender on the bow of the boat to protect the Gig when coming into contact with a hard surface or another boat.
Stern	The back of the boat – behind the Cox – colloquially the 'Blunt end' – also known as aft – as in 'let go aft'
Bow	The front of the boat – behind the rowers – colloquially the 'Sharp end' – also known as forward - 'forad' – as in 'let go forad'.
Bow Rope/Stern Rope	Ropes fixed to the inside of the Bow and Stern – used to manage the launch and recovery of the Gig and to moor up (attach the Gig on the water to two points on the shore).
Foot stretchers	A moveable piece of wood across the bottom of the Gig in each rowing position for rowers' heels – enables rowers to 'push' through their legs with each stroke.

Rowing Calls

The Coxswain (Cox) is in charge of the boat and the crew. They are the only one who can see where they are going, spot hazards and steer the boat. The Cox is also responsible for race strategy when racing. Gigs are 24 foot long and almost as wide with the oars deployed. They can only be steered, either by oars or rudder, when moving, and they have no brakes. The Cox will give a number of commands to control the boat and the rowers – they may vary slightly but the commands below are ones to be aware of. The crew's job is as the engine of the boat – listen and do as asked when asked!

Terms	What it means
Are you ready to row?	Checking that all members of the crew are ready to listen to the next command (and not putting on gloves or sorting out footrests!) Cox may ask for each member of the crew to affirm by number - 1 (2,3,4) ready
Come Forward	Crew come forward at the catch position with blades just above the water – 'ready to row'
Go! Or 'Row'	The signal for the crew to start rowing – all in to the water together at 90 degrees. The person in the number 4 seat (nearest the Cox) is the stroke and sets the rate – the rest of the crew follow the stroke.
Easy Easy There	The signal for the crew to stop rowing – usually preceded by a warning – for example ' <i>next stroke ea-sy</i> ' or ' <i>in three, in two, in one, ea-sy</i> '
Stroke Rate	The number of rowing strokes taken by a crew in a minute
Take it up	Increase the stroke rate – may be ' <i>take it up 2 pips</i> '
Take it down	Decrease the stroke rate – may be ' <i>take it down 2 pips</i> '
Up Oars	Place the handle of the oar on the floor of the Gig between your feet with the blade in the air
Get your oar in!	A rather more urgent version of up oars – command to bring an oar or oars into the Gig as quick as possible however possible – usually to avoid breaking oars due to an unavoidable obstruction.
Back it Down	To reverse the rowing stroke – belly to knees – to move the Gig backwards. This can be done without turning the blade of the oar round. Often used before the start of a race to avoid reaching the line too soon, or when coming in to land to slow the Gig down is needed. May also be used to help turn the Gig – as in stroke side back it down – bow side row on.
Row On	A command to row forward
Take us Round	A call at turning a mark. The Cox will usually have kept the crew informed about the distance to the mark and whether bowside or strokeside will be needed to row to turn the Gig.
Dig In	Also a call at the turn, Cox may ask either number 3 or 2 to 'dig in', blade in the water and held in place using body weight to provide a pivot point to turn the gig more quickly.
All Together	Usually used after a turn to indicate that the rowers who had stopped rowing for the turn need to start again.
Fend Off	Command to 'fend off' to prevent damage to the Gig, often when coming alongside a pontoon or quay.
Fenders in Fenders out	Command ' <i>fenders in</i> ' or ' <i>fenders out</i> ' may be qualified with Port or Starboard
Hold Water	Row to keep the Gig in the same position – usually before the start of a race with tide or wind pushing the Gig on to or away from the start line.
Hold it Up	Means Stop the Boat NOW (emergency stop)! All oars enter the water at 45 degree and turn to 90 degrees with the weight of each crew member bracing their oar (don't worry – you will practice this!)
Let go	Person holding bow or stern line to let it go – frees the Gig to begin rowing – usually qualified with 'let go forward' or 'let go aft'