

# The Douglas Oarlock The Perfect Stroke

By Bill Graham

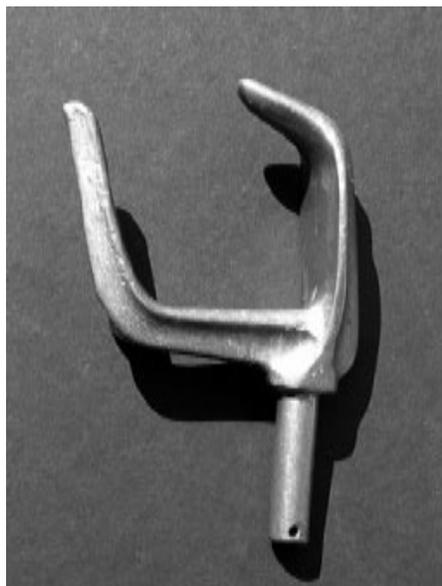
To get a perfect rowing stroke the oar can't have too much forward pitch or it will dive. If you have too much rearward pitch the oar won't lock on the water, either way the oar and boat performance suffer. For the oar to be its most efficient it should be held at a 6 degree pitch. The way to achieve this pitch is with flat forward bearing surface oarlocks and "D" shaped oars or oars with flat sided sleeves. Racing oars and oarlocks have always had controlled pitch for maximum performance. Occasionally rowers with more traditional boats have adopted the technology but it wasn't a pretty sight. Now we have a better solution, a 6 degree pitch, "424" manganese bronze oarlocks that will fit in standard inch oarlock sockets. The Douglas Oarlock was designed by boat designer, sculptor Doug Martin to produce perfect 6 degree pitch and to be beautiful.

## Oars

Traditional oars usually have two shaft shapes where they fit into the oarlock, round or D shaped. The D shaped oar can be used with no modification other than a plastic sleeve to protect the shafts of the



Spoon oars with Latanzo sleeves.



The Douglas Oarlock.

oar from wear and the addition of buttons to hold the oars at their proper extension.

Round oars of 1-3/4 inch diameter can be equipped with flat sided sleeves and buttons to achieve that flat stroking surface for 6 degree pitch.

For additional information contact Bill Graham at 978 356-3623.

## About the Author

I began my boating life as most people do, fishing with my Dad in a rented skiff. The idea appealed so much I talked him into buying our own skiff when I was about 10 years old. I learned how to sail while I was in college and a major escalation of my love for boating occurred. In the mid 70s while sailing out of Marblehead, MA I saw my first Alden Ocean shell. It looked so cool I jumped in my dingy to chase the boat and ask questions, but never caught him. I finally ended up building my first boat a "Kittery Skiff" which took a sliding seat unit. With a pair

of borrowed oars I rowed that 16 wherry off the coast of New England in places and at times I shouldn't have. Soon after building the Kittery I went to see Arthur Martin designer of the Alden Ocean Shell in Kittery Point Maine. We rowed together which resulted in my becoming a dealer for Alden Boats 24 years ago. I've taught over a thousand people to row sliding seat boats and still enjoy that the most.

When Alden stopped supporting the "Oarmaster 1" I bought up all the parts available and started building parts to keep these sliding seat, drop in units rowing. I recently obtained the rights to the "Douglas Oarlock" a wonderful bronze oarlock designed by Doug Martin. I think the Douglas will be a revolution for traditional fixed seat small boat rowers. It provides controlled oar placement at the perfect stroking angle. The are being cast here in New England at Norell Foundry in Franklin, New Hampshire and I sell them through my website Rowingsport.com. ■



Marcia Mullins rowing using Douglas oarlocks with Barkley Sound round-loomed oars and Dreher sleeves and buttons.



Douglas Oarlocks on a Whitehall. Photos by the author.

# Douglas Oarlocks A Review

By Bob Dunshee

My wife and I row a 17' Whitehall.

I prefer square oarlocks, the kind used on racing shells, which allow the loom of the oars to fall into just the right position on the stroke and recovery.

Marcia uses the usual horn shaped oarlocks and oars with round looms and leather sleeves.. She seems to prefer them. However, it's necessary to know that she adjusts very well to what many people would think of as an inconvenience. To me, for instance.

As nearly as I can tell, none of the racing shell oarlocks will fit on the gunnels of traditional boats: they are designed to fit on outriggers.

Several years ago, I bought a pair of "Douglas oarlocks" from Bill Graham at Rowing Sport in Maine. They were a design used with Alden rowing shells, but Alden seems to have switched to the style of oarlocks now used with outriggers. Bill, however, had a pair or two left.

This year, I bought Bill's last pair, but now he has acquired from Alden the molds for casting them and is selling them again. I don't think that they are available anywhere else. You can view them on his website: <http://www.douglasoarlock.rowingsport.com/>

These oarlocks will fit into standard 1/2" sockets which attach to gunnels.

Using square oarlocks is especially useful if one has a rower aboard who is not used to rowing: the blades are kept at the correct angle to the water, so the oars don't dive or rise out of the water on the stroke. A novice rower who has a good experience comes back to enjoy rowing again.

On the recovery, when feathering the blade, the forward edge is just slightly higher than the aft edge: if one wants to, one can plane the blade across the water without "catching a crab".

Because one of the "horns" of the oarlock has a slight hook, the oars will not pry out of the oarlocks as sometimes happens when one tries to "jam" or back stroke in order to stop the boat suddenly. Of course the oarlock should be secured

in the socket.

My one problem is not with the oarlocks: it's with the hard plastic sleeves that adapt round looms to square oarlocks: they are somewhat noisy.

I use "Dreher STS" sleeves and buttons sold by Durham Boat Company. The sleeves cost \$8.70 each and the buttons (which Durham calls collars) cost \$7.50 each.

If one used D shaped looms and leather sleeves, the sound would not be a problem. And it's not a severe problem—we are not engaged in smuggling rum at this time.

Perhaps someone will figure out a way to muffle the sound of plastic sleeves? ■

