

2.22 Sailhead Flotation

In an effort to avoid an inversion when capsized it is worth having a pocket sewn into the top of the mainsail, into which an airbag can be fitted. Patterns for the recommended size of pocket, and details of suppliers of the airbags can be obtained from the Association Secretary. Blocks of polystyrene can also be used in the pocket of the sail, but they have been shown on occasions to be far less effective than the increased volume of air held in an airbag.

An alternative to the sailhead flotation are the 'flotation cushions' produced by the German company Secumar. They work on the same basis as automatic life jackets. Their advantage is that they remain at the masthead even if the sail is reefed or removed. The disadvantage is their cost which is 20–25% greater than sailhead flotation and their additional weight at the top of the mast.

2.23 Pumps and Bailers

A pump is a useful piece of equipment for the more serious cruiser, since you are often heading in one direction for a longer period of time, and if this happens to be to windward, quite a lot of water can be shipped over the foredeck in stronger wind conditions. Self-bailers are often no help in this situation, as you are unlikely to be going fast enough through the water for them to work.

The diaphragm type pumps are the most efficient, but a (cheaper) lift pump can be quite adequate, though it requires much more effort to work, and is more difficult to operate whilst sailing.

Ideally a pump should be mounted on each side of the boat, with the inlet pipe running to the opposite side of the boat. The pump needs to be mounted so that it can be operated whilst sailing to windward. This is usually around the front seat area, and as far out of the way of the jib sheets as possible. The most ideal place yet found for the pump is under the sidedeck, with the outlet tube being led to the back of the boat. In this position, the pump can be operated by either the helm or the crew, and is completely out of the way when not in use.

Self-bailers are always worth fitting, since they work well

when sailing at a reasonable speed off the wind, and will completely empty the boat of water. They are also an easier way of draining water from the boat when you have finished sailing than opening the drain plugs in the stern and the rear buoyancy tank. Care does need to be taken not to get sand or grit in them, however, since they may then leak, a particular nuisance if you happen to be sleeping in the boat.

P.14 Pump - Mounted under Gunwale



Whilst on the subject of removing water from the boat, it is worth carrying at least one, and preferably two, buckets for bailing out after a capsize. (They are also useful for having a pee in - everything should have at least two uses for cruising - it has been known for the fairer sex to sit on them with a map on their laps looking as though they are studying where to go!). Cruisers are not known as the 'bucket and chuck it' brigade for nothing!

2.24 Rowing and Paddling

It is worth including a pair of oars amongst the essential items of equipment when you sail. They should be as long as you can possibly store - either on the seats, or more usually on the floor on either side of the centreplate housing. The length of oar therefore recommended for a Mark II or SD is 2.45m (8ft), and 2.6m (8ft 6in) for a Mark I, IA, or Plus S. There are specialised suppliers for oars, and their addresses can be obtained from the Association Secretary, or the Cruising Secretary.