

SHRIMPER TRAILING - (the pro's & cons)

By Trevor Thomas, Shrimper 786 (*Gentle Breeze*) (1996)

The Shrimper is of course a wonderful boat, safe, seaworthy, and a joy to sail but many owners do not fully utilise one of the Shrimper's best features, the ability to be trailed to new cruising grounds.

Lots of Shrimpers are sold with trailers but after a few attempts of launching and recovering many decide to avoid the problems they encounter and simply leave the boat afloat all season. This is a sad state of affairs as sailing new and unexplored areas is surely one of the greatest joys of shoal draft craft such as the Shrimper.

I have trailed my Shrimper' Sea Shanty several thousands of miles on both 'break-back and 'combination' trailers, launched and recovered dozens of times on a wide variety of slips and have, (hopefully), encountered most of the pitfalls and problems. Invariably I launch and recover single handed so I had to devise a system that would work without the need for an extra pair of hands. I have described these systems later in this article and I hope some Shrimper owners who dislike or avoid trailing might find some of the solutions of some assistance.

One must first decide which trailer is most suited to the job, the 'break-back or the 'combination'. There is always much discussion between owners and I gladly enter the debate.

Break-Back Trailer

The Break-Back is the cheaper option and is also the more efficient of the two designs with regards to launching and recovery. It's one huge drawback is the need for constant attention to bearings and brakes. Salt water is highly corrosive and will quickly destroy the bearing surfaces and all the steel components of the brakes, so it is absolutely vital to keep the bearings greased and the brake mechanisms clean and lubricated.

Except for the steepest of slips it is necessary to allow the wheels, brakes and hubs to immerse in the water. Once this has happened some salt water will have found its way into the bearings and the brakes will have been completely soaked. The only fail-safe procedure at this point is to immediately remove the road wheels, complete with hubs, hose the brakes and back plates with fresh water and spray liberally with WD40, avoiding the brake linings. The bearings should be inspected for water ingress, any water droplets removed and fresh grease applied.

NOTE: The longer the saltwater is allowed to remain in the bearings and brakes the more likely that some form of major failure will occur.

There are two schools of thought about packing the hubs with grease. The first is to pack the hub so completely with grease that there is no room for water ingress. The second is to apply only enough grease to adequately lubricate the bearings. I favour the second option for two reasons:

- The heavily packed hub will leak, perhaps only a little, but enough to worry the

owner if trailing any distance on motorways.

- The second is that, having accepted that the hub has to be removed each time, it is a lot less messy if there is only a small quantity of grease to deal with.

The Combination Trailer

The combination trailer overcomes the immersion problem by simply never allowing the road wheels to make contact with the salt water. The peace of mind produced by eliminating the bearing/brake problem has to be experienced to be fully appreciated. Set against this huge 'plus', the combination, in its standard form, is much less efficient and more time consuming in its launch and recovery procedure. Short handed launches are also much more difficult with the combination trailer there are more hitching up and unhitching procedures and a fair amount of pushing and shoving is often required. Maintenance on the combination is minimal, being mainly limited to the occasional greasing of the launching trolley plain bearings.

I originally purchased my Shrimper with a break-back trailer and successfully traveled far and wide during the first two years. However, quite early on, perhaps on the third or fourth trip when returning from Plymouth, I nearly lost a trailer wheel on the M4. After a long delay and an expensive recovery operation (Note: The Shrimper trailer is too big to be included in the AA recovery scheme!), I vowed to strip and grease the bearings and attend to the brakes on each subsequent launch and recovery. I continued with this practice thereafter but, having once experienced a serious bearing failure, I found that I could not travel without the nagging worry that it could happen again despite my precautions. Eventually, after completing two seasons, I sold the break-back and purchased a combination trailer.

Having used both, I find it hard to recommend one trailer over the other. The break-back is cheaper, easier to launch from and recover onto, but demands constant maintenance. The combination trailer in standard form is more expensive, less efficient for launching and recovery, demands two people to operate, but has the major advantage of being virtually maintenance free and does not cause a moment's worry of bearing or brake problems while trailing.

I mentioned earlier that I launch and recover single handed. To do this I have adapted the combination trailer and have, in the process, made the launching and recovery operations much easier. With these modifications I believe I have significantly improved the original design.

The standard combination trailer consists of a launching trailer and a road trailer. A winch is mounted on the launching trolley and this is used to, firstly, to winch the Shrimper on to the trolley and then to haul the trolley onto the trailer. The whole operation is clearly described in the Shrimper Rigging, Handling and Maintenance Notes supplied with each new boat by Cornish Crabbers. ([See Owner's Handbooks section](#)).

My system is to mount the winch on the road trailer. (see Diag. 1) For launching the complete unit is reversed down the slipway until the road wheels are a few feet from the

water. Taking advantage of the slipway angle the trolley, with Shrimper on board, is then allowed to roll gently off the road trailer using the winch in low gear in reverse as a brake. **Note: For this operation great care is required!!!** If allowed, the winch handle will take control and probably rip your arm off, so take a very firm grip of the winch handle with **BOTH HANDS** and take it **SLOWLY!** Remember you are dealing with over a ton of boat and the loadings are high, particularly when the trolley is on the short ramps from the road trailer to the ground. Once clear of the trailer the trolley can be allowed to immerse completely into deeper water until the Shrimper simply floats off. The trolley is then winched back on to the trailer ready for parking.

When recovering the operation is reversed, the trailer and trolley being reversed to the waters edge, the trolley is rolled off the trailer, using the winch in free wheel this time due to minimal loading and allowed to run down the slip into deeper water. It may need a push depending on the angle of the slip. The Shrimper is simply floated over the trolley (equipped with docking arms), tied on at the bow U-bolt and the trolley, now complete with Shrimper, is winched up the slip out of the water and straight onto the road trailer.

When recovering single handed I tie up the Shrimper dose to the slip, fetch the car and position the trailer as described above. I then re-board and manoeuvre the Shrimper over the trolley. The docking arms and a V shaped 'bow collector' hold the Shrimper approximately in position giving me time to climb down off the bow into the water to secure the boat to the trailer. The system works well even in quite windy conditions or in moderate tide flows. Five special pieces of kit are required;

- 1) Docking arms on the trolley, these have to be high enough to be seen when the trolley is deep enough to allow the Shrimper to be floated on. Brambers can supply these arms from stock. You will need two lengths of plastic drainpipe to temporarily extend them during recovery.
- 2) A jockey wheel ramp which allows the jockey wheel of the trolley to go up or down to or from the ground to the road trailer. Brambers can also supply this from stock.
- 3) A centralising 'V' device attached to the rear end of the trolley to ensure centralising of the Shrimper on the trolley as it settles while being winched out of the water. (See Diag. 4)
- 4) A 'V' attached at the former winch post of the trolley to 'collect' the bow of the Shrimper when floating on.
- 5) A pair of fisherman's waist high waders. A wonderful investment, worth every penny!

I have also invested in the luxury of an electric winch which although not essential does remove the need for any physical exertion.'

Having decided on which type of trailer to purchase, the other main problem is getting the mast up. The recommended system is at best hard work and at worst dangerous, particularly if attempted single-handed. To cut out all the hard work, the grunting and groaning and to turn the tables on the malevolent shrouds, stays and halyards, I have fabricated a strut system which, when used in conjunction with the trailer winch, enables the mast to be raised without effort.

The strut is a piece of old aluminium scaffold pole purchased from our local builders

yard for a few pence and cut to the length of the bowsprit less a few inches. Two snap shackles are attached to one end, the other end slides over the stem of a bracket or yoke which I had made up by our local blacksmith. This all fits over the tabernacle and secures on an extended tabernacle bolt. (Diag.2). The outer fore stay is attached to one snap shackle at the top of the strut and the winch hook to the other.

The winch strap is led from the winch over a slip-on roller positioned on the end of the bow-sprit. (Diag.3). I used some of the parts I had left over from the alterations to the trailer for these components but I imagine that the parts could be fabricated professionally very cheaply. Perhaps Bramber could be tempted to quote.

The winch is used on high or low ratio and the mast simply lifts up under complete control at all times and enables the user to untangle any snags that may appear at any stage of the operation. The slack on the jib halyard is taken up in easy stages and secured as a fail-safe preventer during raising.

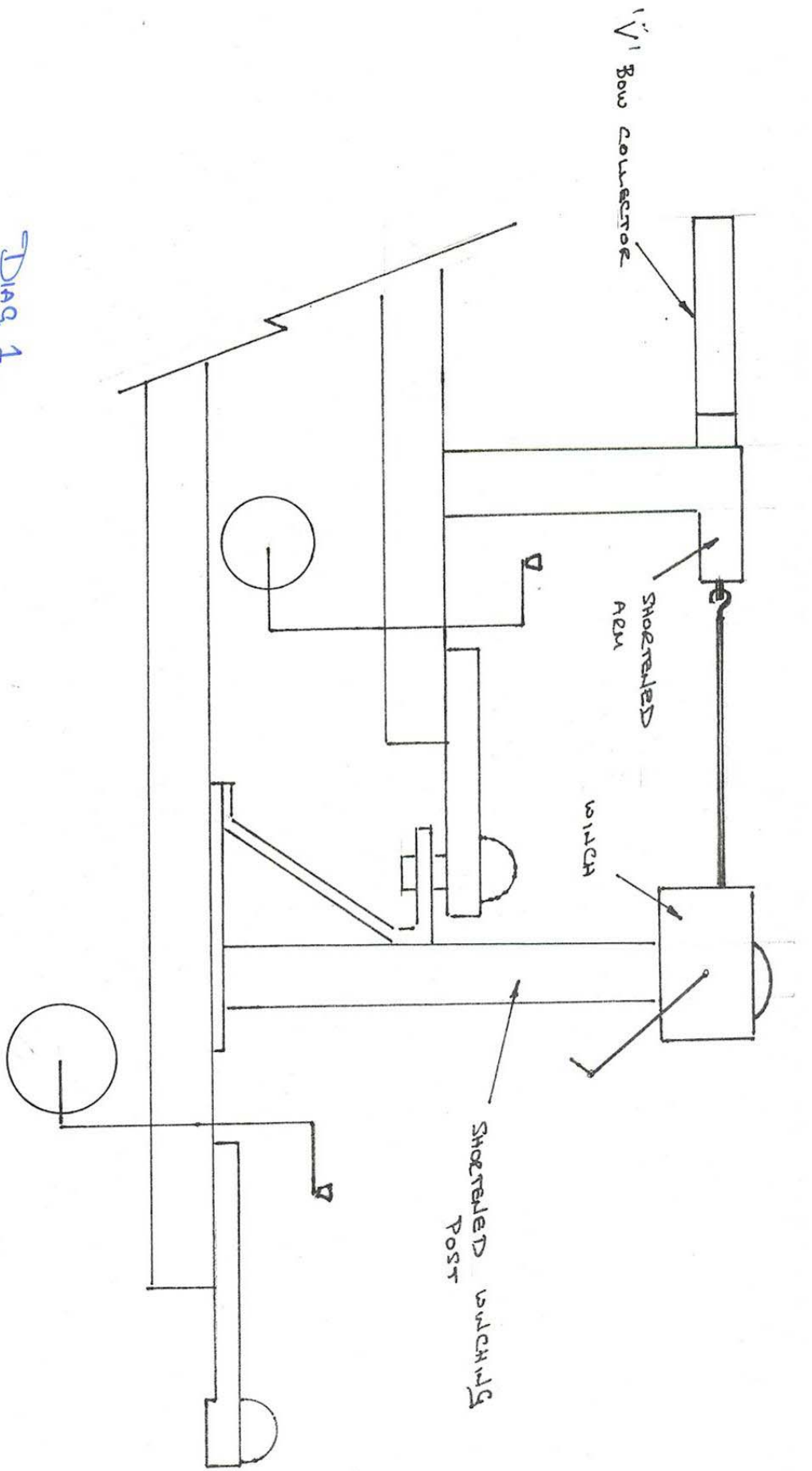
Above all else a successful launch or recovery depends on good preparation. It is important to think ahead and try to spot the problems before they arrive. It is worth making a check list and sticking to it. It is too late to complain when the Shrimper and/or trolley and/or trailer and/or skipper or crew is damaged. Launching and recovery become easier with practice. It takes me about an hour and fifteen minutes from arrival to be floating in the water with mast up and everything about ready to go. A little less, about an hour when recovering, all lashed down and ready for the road.

It is vital to fit an anti-snake device to the trailer and the more nose weight the better if the car can stand it. A four wheel drive vehicle is very helpful especially on the 'slippier' slips. It is worth having proper load straps and even colour coded ties for the various lashings with each piece the correct length for the specified job. The quick release luggage type straps save lots of time and hold things very securely. If you can make the job easy, you will be more prepared to trail your Shrimper.

During 1994 I trailed on three separate occasions from my home in Hertfordshire to Cornwall, many times to my 'home waters' on the Solent, once to Oban in Scotland and once to Ipswich. It was a great season and I thoroughly enjoyed seeing all the different areas. Next season I am planning on Cornwall (again! - it is nice down there) , South Wales including the rivers of the Pembrokeshire National Park, the tidal Thames, possibly Rye in Sussex (if a slightly ambitious plan to make the passage to Boulogne comes to fruition) and possibly Scotland for Shrimper week.

If you have been a reluctant trailer sailor, have a rethink, the effort is very worthwhile and it really is not so difficult once the basics are mastered. Of course it helps if you can incorporate a few labour saving devices into your system!

See you on the road!

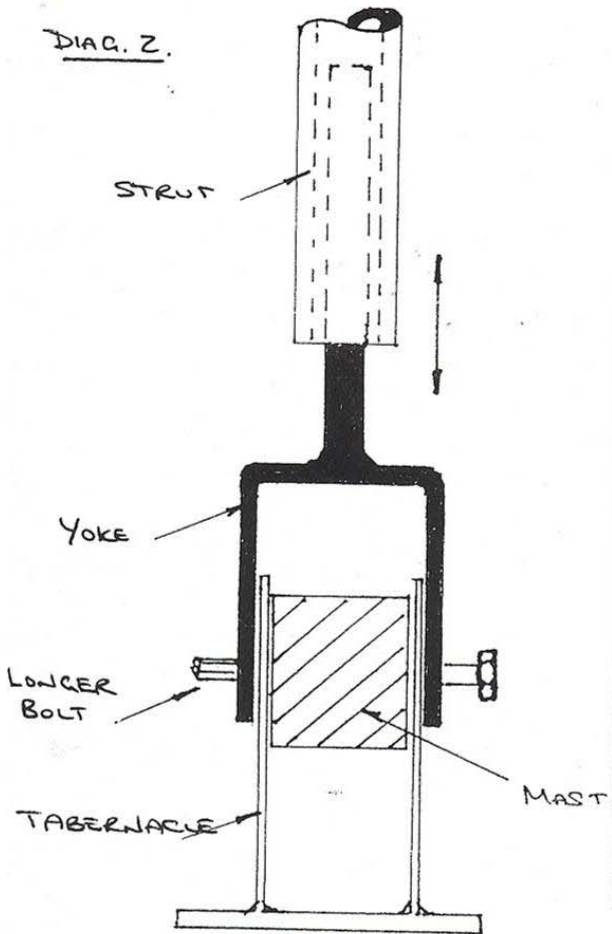


Diag. 1

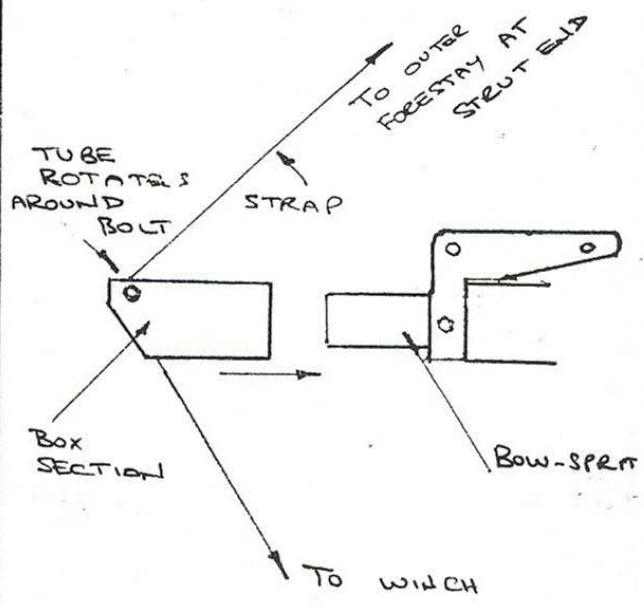
REVISED ARRANGEMENT SHRIPPER BINDING

COMBINATION MK II ?

DIAG. 2.



DIAG. 3



DIAG. 4.

