

Unlike usual boat tests which examine sailing performance and accommodation, these reports concentrate on the rigging, launching and recovery of boats described by their builders at least, as trailer sailers. Our object was to find out how well they lived up to their labels.

Once you conquer the fear factor involved when towing on the road, the actual trailing element of trailer sailing holds few problems. What really needs planning, and what I feel many boatbuilders should give a lot more thought to is what happens on the slipway.

One of the big problems, according to a leading boatbuilder, is that nobody wants to pay out real money for the trailer, and good ones don't come cheap!

There are basically four types to choose from: the conventional solid-spine unit with a few single or double rollers strategically placed to support the keel and bilge runners; the break-back trailer with a similar pattern of support rollers but with a hinged spine; the multi-roller type which has clusters of rollers mounted on swinging cradles that self-adjust to the shape of the hull as the boat is winched on or off; and the piggy-back type where the boat sits on a launch/recovery trolley which then fits onto a road trailer.

Solid spine trailers are usually the cheapest, and because they provide their main support directly under the keel, are particularly appropriate for more traditionally shaped craft with straight, shallow keels such like the Drascombes. For anything more than a dinghy, it's well worth investing in a winch and jockey wheel because you should never rely on muscle power – after a day's sail it's a scarce commodity. The main drawback with this type of trailer is that the boat rides relatively high – which often means that the hubs must be submerged to persuade the boat off into the water. It's also sometimes difficult to line up the keel with a relatively narrow set of rollers sunk in murky water. Docking poles can overcome this problem but an even more difficult situation can arise when the boat refuses to pull onto the trailer in a straight line – you locate the bow perfectly on the rear roller only to have it falling off the side by the time it's reached the front one. This can often be traced to the alignment of the rollers; if not exactly square to the fore-and-aft axis, they will automatically guide the boat to one side. Many a gel coat has been damaged in this way. This fault is often down to the trailer manufacturer; unless he does an accurate job, no amount of persuasion will overcome this annoying habit.

By hinging the spine of a break-back trailer, it becomes possible to launch and recover without pushing the whole rig into deep water. Accurate roller alignment is still important, of course, so is balance. Get too much weight behind the pivot point and releasing the latch may drop the stern with sufficient violence to not only damage the rudder or transom, but also injure anyone who gets in the way. However, get it right and a break-back trailer, though a little more expensive, takes a lot of the effort – and wet feet – out of launch and recovery.

The third type of trailer, of which Hallmark's Roller Coaster is an excellent example, combines the advantages of a break-back with far more positive location when recovering the boat from the water – and many more rollers to support the hull evenly when on the road. However, they cost more, tend to be heavier than more traditional designs and have to be carefully matched with the hull shape. On the other hand they can make very light work of getting in and out of the water.

On the whole, piggy-back trailers are used either for dinghies which are more easily launched from a trolley, or heavier boats with keels configurations that don't easily marry up with other trailers and, therefore, fall more into the 'trailable' rather than trailer-sailer' category – although there are notable exceptions.

But regardless of trailer type, slipway safety must be taken very seriously. If even a 16 footer breaks loose, it can do a great deal of damage to both itself and anyone finding themselves in its path. So a few basic rules: never stand behind a boat being towed up a slipway unless it's lashed securely to the trailer – I recently saw a 21 footer re-launch itself from a trailer when half-way up a concrete slipway; happily no one was in the way... Never unlatch or unhitch anything unless you know it's not going to fly up in your face – I know someone who got hit in the teeth by a launching trolley, complete with, 15 feet of Wayfarer, because it had been loaded onto its trailer slightly out of balance! Never park a car on a slippery slipway below the high water mark...I've seen the results of that too! But in spite of all the dangers, with a little care and forethought, especially on the part of the boat builder when recommending a suitable trailer, launch and recovery can be safe, simple and straightforward.



At just 16ft long and with a trailing weight of around a ton, the Winkle Brig is a true trailer sailer. She gives a choice of either high peaked gaff or traditional gaff and topsail rig and either way the spars are small and light enough for one person to manage; her long shallow keel keeps her under control when she leaves the trailer; she can be launched with both rudder and engine in place – although on a shallow slipway it could be prudent to unship the rudder – and amazingly, she can sleep two adults and two children in her surprisingly spacious cabin.

At first sight she appears to have rather a lot of running rigging to sort out. But a methodical approach, and a knowledge of where all the lines go, means that she really doesn't take very long to rig. I would choose the new high-peaked gaff rather than the gaff and topsail version, for trailer sailing because although it's perhaps a little less fun to sail, it also

means fewer components to get ready. Like the Drascombe Coaster, she was fitted with a roller headsail which, aboard a small boat with a bowsprit, is extremely worth while and certainly warrants the extra attention needed when stepping the mast. But it also saves time in the long run, because the headsail can be left, bent on the roller spar. A great deal of thought has obviously been directed towards making her easy to rig and safe to trail – even down to a set of gallews and a neat moulded support block that carries the mast securely to one side of the companionway so the cabin can conveniently be used for en route accommodation.

Like the Jaguar 21, she too had a Roller Coaster trailer which made launching a piece of cake. There was absolutely no need to wade into the water and it was hardly necessary to get the trailer tyres wet.

Recovery was just as easy with no acrobatics and for that matter, not much effort. She simply rose up onto the trailer rollers, perfectly centred first time, and gradually crept her way forward under the pull of the well-gearred winch. I'm not sure whether one could become sufficiently slick at launching and recovering her to attempt the whole operation in a day, but the builder has certainly done his part in creating a complete, purpose-designed package. ●



**WINKLE BRIG**

LOA .....	16ft 0in
Beam .....	6ft 8in
Draft .....	1ft 2in/2ft 6in
Displacement .....	1,430 lb
Trailing weight .....	2,200 lb
Sail area .....	177 sq ft
Price (inc VAT)	
- boat .....	£9,358
- trailer .....	£1,188
Builder: .....	Eric Bergqvist
	Ferry Boatyard, Fiddlers Ferry
	Yacht Haven, Penketh, Cheshire,
	WA5 2UJ. Tel: (0925)727519.

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Although virtually the same length as the Winkle Brig, the Longshore 16 is a completely different type of craft in almost every respect. Her double-ended hull has slender Nordic line and a long shallow keel to give lateral resistance with no daggerboards of centreplates to worry about. But she still draws only 1ft 6 inches so, in theory at least, she's shallow enough for launching directly from a road trailer. From a distance, she looks like an open boat but, in fact, has a two-berth cabin with a very simple interior. She also has a very small cockpit well which is really only big enough for the helmsman, so when sailing, the crew can either squat in the companionway or sit on the foredeck. Her rig is an extremely simple boomless standing lug mainsail with a stemhead jib. The wooden mast is supported in its tabernacle by a single forestay and two shrouds.

This means she can be rigged in minutes by one person. We launched her from a sandy beach using a solid-spine trailer with rollers under her keel and four large pads supporting her bilges. The whole rig had to be pushed into knee-deep water before she could be pushed off and the trailer retrieved from below the waves. Once afloat, she remained docile and easily managed.

The reverse procedure was just as easy, again, involving a good deal of wading but because her long keel held her steady, she located in her rollers and support pads first time – it was one of those rare examples of trailer boating with absolutely no stress. She might be best described as an intimate boat and although she may not appeal to everyone, her simplicity certainly puts her into the true trailer-sailer bracket suitable for daysailing. ●



**LONGSHORE 16**

LOA ..... 16ft 5in  
 Beam ..... 6ft 2in  
 Draft ..... 1ft 6in  
 displacement ..... 1,100 lb  
 Trailing weight ..... 1,540 lb  
 Sail area ..... 101 sq ft  
 Price (inc VAT)  
 - boat ..... £6,756  
 - trailer ..... £1,400  
 Builder: .... Longshore Int. Ltd.  
 5, Greenwood Close, Bury,  
 Ramsey, Huntingdon, Cambs.  
 PE17 1NZ Tel: (0487) 814416.



The Jaguar 21 is a fast family cruiser with a full, four-berth cabin, a 550 lb lifting keel, a total displacement of 1,984 lb and a high-aspect ratio bermudan rig. She just about straddles that rather obscure line between trailer sailer and trailable yacht – the difference being that the trailer sailer can be sensibly launched, sailed and recovered over the period of a day, or perhaps a weekend, whilst a trailable yacht really demands too much effort rigging and launching, to make it a practical proposition to do both launch and recovery on the same day.

Out trial launch and recovery really underlined the potential difficulties but also demonstrated how much a well designed trailer contributes to the overall success of trailer sailing. The first task was to step the mast. Jaguar offer an 'A' frame but on this occasion had not got one available, so we raised the mast using the spinnaker pole as a lever, steadying it with a pair of guys attached to the lower shroud plated. This needed two people but was relatively successful on the way up – I had little doubt that the 'A' frame would have made it easier. A close eye had to be kept on all four shrouds and backstay to ensure we were not winching against twisted-over rigging screws.

The Hallmark Roller Coaster trailer supported the hull extremely well but as delivered, needed a little adjustment – when the boat was half way off, some of

the rear rollers fouled the frame making it very difficult to budge her the last few feet into the water. This illustrated the importance of preparation and the value of a few practice runs. Nevertheless, I got the impression that with the trailer properly adjusted, getting the Jaguar 21 into the water would be perfectly straightforward. She can be launched with her vertical lift-up rudder in place – board 'up' – and the engine well should provide sufficient prop protection to launch with the outboard *in situ*.

The Roller Coaster made recovery very easy, centring the hull perfectly on the trailer with hardly any need to get the wheels wet. However, the Jaguar's flat bottom and complete lack of a fixed keel could pose problems for other types of trailer.

Although she demanded a little too much effort to launch and recover for a day's sail, she certainly has the makings of a practical trailer cruiser for longer trips. ●

**JAGUAR 21**

LOA ..... 21ft 4in  
 Beam ..... 8ft 2in  
 Draft ..... 0ft 10in  
 Displacement ..... 2,550 lb  
 Trailing weight ..... 3,430 lb  
 Sail area ..... 200 sq ft  
 Price (inc VAT)  
 - boat (weekender) ... £8,950  
 - trailer ..... £1,880  
 Builder: Jaguar Yacht Builders  
 Unit 2, Mulberry Road, Canvey  
 Island, Essex SS8 0PR.  
 Tel: (0268) 696094.

