

Tips from Phipps

by Brian Phipps



Trolleys and trailers!!!

Like it or not, trailers and trolleys are as much part of our sailing kit as our wetsuit and sails. Without them doing their bit, the enjoyment of sailing is tempered and sometimes frustrated.

Getting our pride and joy (Sprint 15) to a venue and into the water needs a bit of trailer and trolley attention.

Trolley check

- 1) Check the condition of the tyres. Over the years rubber will perish so cracks in the walls cause slow punctures or a sudden blow out.
- 2) Check the air valve is not leaking. When adding air always spray some lubricant into the valve area and use a dust cap to prevent dirt / salt water getting into the valve seating.
- 3) If your wheels are tubeless consider fitting an inner tube to extend the life of the wheel unit, especially big wheel tyres.
- 4) Trolley cups should have a soft but firm padding where the hull sits, preferably non-water absorbent. If you need to replace old trolley padding make sure the original surface is clean dry with the old adhesive removed before applying new adhesive and padding.
- 5) Trolley axels and clamps? If you are using a stub axle trolley cup, check the cup to stub axle fixing. If it is loose, do something about it as it will not get better. Normally this means cutting into the bottom of the trolley cups padding to gain access to the inside of the cup. Rivets may have been used originally but you cannot beat a good s/s nut and bolt with some washers. If your trolley cup is clamped in position as used on most big wheel trolleys, consider drilling an 8mm hole in the axle shaft so the clamping screw locates in the axle to prevent rotation and sliding.
- 6) Bearings and inserts? Having a plastic roller bearing is great to reduce friction but they do need to be held in position. On the big wheel trolleys this is done by a bearing clamp pushed up against the wheel hub shoulder. Check it does just that before the roller bearing can slide out of position and start breaking up.
- 7) Extension handle or not? A piece of rope to stop your trolley from sliding off your lovingly polished hulls is a good idea but it can help to have a 'T' handle off the main axle making it easier to position the trolley and provides a handle to pull the trolley rather than the boat.

Road Trailers.

- 1) Wheel bearings and suspension unit. The worst scenario is a failure on the motorway. Take some time to jack each wheel off the ground so it can be rotated. Check for wheel wobble and listen to the bearing. If you identify play or bearing rumble, take action to adjust, grease or replace. Suspension units are designed to take maximum loads, up to 750kg for non-braked trailers. That's the all up weight trailer and the load. If you carry more than the max load for your trailer your suspension unit will bottom out, possibly bend the axle and causing your tyres to wear badly and quickly or other nasty things.
- 2) Tyres and wheel nuts. No different than on your car, check side walls for cracking and tread for legality etc. Make sure they are inflated correctly and carry a suitable wheel nut spanner should you need it. They may not be the same size as your car wheel nuts. Trailers spend a lot of time doing nothing but that does not mean the rubbery bits do not get affected! Carry a spare wheel? Of course! -and a spare set of bearings!
- 3) Tow hitch and safety wire. Younger drivers can only tow up to 750kg unless they pass a special towing test. Us older drivers do not have to worry about that but the safety factors still hold good. Check the safety wire is in good order and gets used, the hitch operates as it should. A bit of oil around the system works wonders.
- 4) Jockey wheels and brake systems. There are an awful lot of lower jockey wheel units left on roads around the country where it has unwound its self during the drive and dropped off. Bad in itself but even worse if it causes damage to someone else. Go the extra mile and tie your jockey wheel up or make sure it is well cramped and wound up fully. Brake systems on braked trailers need to work and need to be adjusted periodically. You can do it but if you do not have the time take it to a specialist. Use the trailer handbrake for short term parking, use chocks and leave the handbrake off to prevent the brakes from seizing up locked on. If that does happen rock the trailer forward and backwards while tapping the wheel hub with a hammer or similar to try and release the internal brake shoes.
- 5) Lights and lighting. Of course they have to work!! But also your lighting board outside lights have to illuminate to the width of the load. If you look at all new trailer and lorry builds you will see lights on a rubber stalks that indicate the max width of the lorry or trailer to oncoming and following vehicles. The days of a small 4ft lighting



board on a 7ft wide boat are gone and, whilst you may get away with it today, if you were involved in an accident it could get tricky, especially abroad. The Sprint 15 is 7ft wide so you really need a 7 ft lighting board with forward facing white lights. In the next few years the government plan to introduce a MOT programme for trailers and the ease of making your own trailer is being phased out. Trailers will need a conformity plate.

- 6) Boat protection and strapping. If your car gets dirty on the road just think what your boat gets being towed behind. If you love your hulls protect them with a set of good fitting hull covers that do not flap about or wrap your hulls in cling film! While you are at it check your mast support system to reduce mast flexing as much as possible and keep the dirt off it with a mast sock. When it comes to tying your boat down, it goes without saying that you should pull over and check it after a few miles when things have settled in. If you are using ratchet straps make sure the ratchets work well with a bit of oiling and take care to make the strap firm but not crushing!! Padding on the hull bearing points spreads the load area. Position of the boat on the trailer will determine the nose hitch weight along with loading of your trailer box. Negative nose weight is dangerous as is too much nose hitch weight. A good starting point is the nose hitch weight should be such that you can, with a bit of effort, lift the hitch by hand and put it on the tow hitch ball.
- 7) Spares and repairs. Prevention is better than cure, but being prepared is also good when you are on the road. Spare wheel, wheel bearing, wheel spanner and jack is a good start. A trailer plug connection card with the colours and the connection numbers could be useful if your plug wires get dislodged. Check your road contract includes a trailer and any restriction on length or size.

Whilst Windsport are not trailer experts, we see a lot of trailers, use a lot of trailers and trailer a lot of miles both UK and abroad. Many of the parts you may need, inner tubes, clamps, covers, wheels and tyres, lighting board, etc. are on the Windsport Catparts website- www.catparts.windsport.co.uk -for when you need to invest or replace those few things!



Pics, from left Driving with a tyre like this is asking for trouble If your big wheel tyre looks like this, buy an inner tube from Windsport Big wheel trolley bearing clamp not firmly against the hub

