

Do we need a road trailer for our Scow?

I am a lucky chap as I have a wife who loves sailing, we have a Lymington River Scow and we live behind Marks and Spencers. For some, my first or second points may be the most important but, for this tale, the third is the one that comes into play.

When we retired back to Lymington 10 or so years ago, we treated ourselves to a new Scow. In our minds, we justified the expenditure because, back then, finding a second-hand Scow was impossible and we, well in all honesty Jane, planned to have many happy years sailing it and so convinced me 'we' might as well buy a new one. Taking our Scow to other waters never really entered our heads, John Claridge delivered the Scow to the dinghy park and so we rather put off buying a road trailer.

That is until the end of the first year's sailing. Suddenly it was the end of October, Monday evening racing and Wednesday Junior Sailing were but distant memories and Scow pottering on Tuesdays and Thursdays was over. The Scow had been well used but now it was time to bring her home and put her to bed for the winter. And so it came to pass that over breakfast, which is never my best time of day, I vaguely heard something about how we might get the dinghy home and whether we needed a road trailer. I acted deaf, not too difficult at my age, and played for time.

I suspect like many men I struggle to come up with something to buy for my wife's birthday. My thought process has been to try and make a list of what I think Jane needs, but experience has taught me that this isn't always the wisest approach and essentials like new vacuum cleaners do not always make the best presents. Jane's birthday falls in November and, following our breakfast conversation I reverted to type and decided what she needed – and so, of course, would like – would be a road trailer for the Scow. Wisely, though, I sounded out my brilliant idea with my daughters-in-law, who suggested to me that this might not be well received. However, during this exchange, having *en passant* reminded my sons that their mother's birthday was looming, everyone announced that they would come over for the day to share her birthday.

When I plucked up courage and mentioned to Jane that her birthday treat would be cooking lunch for both sons and their families, she brightly said that they would need some exercise before lunch and, as we didn't have a road trailer, they could pull the Scow home on its launching trolley – it's only a mile and a quarter. And so it came to pass that the day arrived, yellow jackets were donned, the 3 year old grandson was dumped in the dinghy and, accompanied by the one year old in his push chair and the puppy Labrador, we were off. And this is where living behind M&S has its drawbacks as it's quite a pull up Belmore Lane. But we made it and, as is sometimes the case when father and two sons are together, a competitive edge appeared – and the time taken was duly noted. We did enjoy lunch.

As you read this, some of you may well be ahead of me and thinking - so what happened in the Spring? Well, as luck would have it my birthday is in early April and so both sons and their families reappeared to share the day with me and Jane had the pleasure of cooking yet another enormous lunch and tea for the tribe. And, of course, we were whipped in to pull the dinghy back down the hill. We set a much faster time than in the autumn but gravity was on our side.

And so a family tradition has started. Twice a year the family appear to share our birthdays, eat fattened calf lunches and teas and, of course, to pull the dinghy on its launching trolley to or from the dinghy park depending on the season. As the grandchildren have grown in number and size, they have occasionally dressed as pirates and been towed to and fro as well. Thankfully the elder ones have reached the stage where they are too big to be in the dinghy - they are fast becoming teenagers and so losing the ability to speak properly, seem to live with headphones on and spend a lot of time lying on the sofa. So the elder generations continue to do the pulling only now it is with the two youngest grandchildren dressing up as pirates. Luckily, we still have the eye patches and swords and fortunately the Labrador has grown and can be harnessed up to help.

Over the years, we have been greeted with smiles and laughter as we filled the road past the Fisherman's Rest and Woodside Gardens, had lots of encouragement and even been asked if we were doing this for charity. One year, we passed John Claridge who offered us the use of his road trailer but we were having too much fun to stop. Pleasingly, our door-to-door times have remained pretty constant, but took a dip when we went to foam filled tyres, and the children keep coming back for more lunches. The only time we noticed just a twitch of family rebellion was when we bought the Cornish Shrimper. They made it very clear that we should invest in a road trailer for that!

It was with wry amusement, therefore, that Jane and I listened to the discussion on road trailers at the last LRSCA AGM, thought of our family and whispered to each other – do we need a road trailer for our Scow?

Jonathan Cook