

Car Topping.

The following article describes the rationale of cartopping, and, two simple methods of loading the swift dory (aka Herreshoff rowboat) on and off station wagons, hatchbacks, and sedans. It also describes a simple dolly to enable the dory to be moved around unaided.



Delivering dories to Tasmania on the ferry.

For long trips the inverted dory prevents water logging in heavy rain. The border patrol lady carefully checked the dories for foreign plant matter (seaweed) because we were “importing” them to cute little old Tasmania.

Rationale:

The happiest time of my life was the two years after 1975 were spent living on my trimaran Unbound on Sydney harbour. This was after a circumnavigation and I could enjoy life, with all the security of being in my home country. Moorings were easy to get and Unbound could be antifouled on the nearest sand bank. When a neighbour complained to the maritime authority that people shouldn't be able to live on their yachts he was told; “It's alright for you rich people on the hill, some of those people can't afford to live anywhere else.”



"Unbound"

Those days are gone. The harbour is filled up and moorings are being replaced by expensive marinas. So the public has resorted to trailer boats; not a bad solution if they are kept in the quarter acre block. Not so; now they are beginning to fill up the streets of the city. Some of them are ugly and take up precious parking space.

The next phase of this evolution is the healthy and environmentally friendly proliferation of canoes and rowing craft in the water. These are small enough to be stored in the properties and even in the roof of an apartment garage .My preference has always been for recreational rowing craft and consequently I build and use the "Swift Dory". Why? Well I have always loved the rowing action that uses the major muscles of the torso and generally obviates the back problems that I experienced as a younger man. As well they are sea worthy and carry a load of three adults, or mum and dad and a several kids, quite comfortably. They are also easier to board and alight from wharves, land or yachts.

However I cannot argue that a rowing craft is lighter than a canoe. The Swift Dory weighs 32kg; while many canoes are so light a single person can pick them off a roof rack easily. A Google search indicates that canoes can be heavier than 32kg, but it should be possible to acquire a single man canoe under 20kg. A blogger sums it up as follows; "...buy a kayak or a light weight canoe, rowboats will not be able to be carried by one person."

The dory dolly:

There's the challenge, for a single person to move a rowboat down to the water. The first problem was to enable a single person to move the boat around. The photograph shows the "dory dolly" designed and built to achieve this.



The lightweight "Dory Dolly".

Notice the lanyard attached to a pin through the dory's fin to secure the dolly. Much of the time the pin is unnecessary.



Wallaby inspection. (photo by David Champtaloup)

Not a good idea to store upright as torrential rain can add a ton and stress the dolly.

The dolly is made of 12mm (1/2") ply, golf buggy wheels and 12mm ss axle. It carries more than half the weight. A slit in the base slides over the fin on the hull. A pin through the fin keeps the dolly in place as the dory is rolled over.



The dolly allows the weight to counterbalance.

Mounting onto the vehicle: (for boats less than 40kg. or 90lbs.)

1. Station wagons and hatchbacks are the easiest to adapt. It is necessary first to have a roof rack at the front of the roof and also at the back. Some cars do not allow for easy fitting at the back, but a track can be pop riveted in place for this and is a worthwhile addition. Any decent roof rack shop should be able to do this, but can also be done at home with the right equipment. For roof racks that bow upwards, kayak carriers will ensure that the boat does not slide off sideways as the boat is slid on.



The rear roof rack is shown fitted to the tracks which are pop riveted to the roof. The kayak carriers on top are fitted with the slippery plastic (rubber is another option) to guide and allow the dory to slide on.

Note: Many hatchbacks and sedans now have an aerial in the middle of the roof to obstruct the carrier. The aerial can in most cases be unscrewed from the fitting and removed.



Lifting half the boat on.



Preparing to slide on.



Sliding into place.



The fin is used to help the boat track*better, attach the dolly and here it is being used as a purchase to drag the boat off. The rest is a reverse of the mounting process.



Attaching the dolly.

Mounting onto sedans

Before I bit the bullet and pop riveted a track for a rack at the rear, I made the device shown below, from 20mm. (3/4") ply. It seemed less trouble to do this than drive to the roof rack shop and find out what would work.



Extension arm, shown upside down, and prop.

Three points of attachment:

1. A bolt attached by saddles at the end of the fork, goes under the rack.
2. A vertical bolt at the crutch inserts into a hole drilled in the rack.
3. The pin at the top of the prop inserts into a hole at the end of the extension arm.

Devices using the same principle are readily available at roof rack shops.



Propping the extension arm.



One end of the dory is lifted onto the roof rack extension.



The other end is lifted onto the rear roof rack.



Lifting onto the rear roof rack.



Front of dory is swung across and the dory is pushed into place.



Strapped on and ready to go.



For small cars or where the roof racks are close together the dory must be stayed with ropes to stop it twisting in the wind.

Well, that's that. Easy, now I and hopefully many others can utilise these methods to get on the water and beautify it with slim healthy bodies, healthy positive minds and sleek and noiseless rowing craft. Don't forget the benefit to the hip pocket. No mooring fees, no trailer registration fees, no boat registration fees, no antifouling and slipping expense, and, probably fewer medical expenses. See you out there.

Okay, okay here's the truth. There's this pom (English gentleman) who's been beating me from time to time in the annual race around Dangar Is. and we can't have that. Since I don't live on the island anymore I have bought a rowing machine called Jazzfit (only the Chinese would come up with such a name). On a cold foggy depressing morning three five minute rows on the machine do wonders at lifting the spirit with the side benefit of improving fitness. So now the rowing machine can be augmented with a pleasant row to the island for a cup of coffee and a bit of a yarn. And if I need a bit of solitude there are plenty of lovely creeks and walks on the river.

*The Herreshoff rowboat (Swift Dory) was designed without the fin probably with the intention of allowing it to row through very shallow water. I have found that without the fin the boat yaws as soon as rowing is interrupted. It tracks better with the fin and behaves better with side winds and serendipitously, enables dolly attachment and purchase for manoeuvring the boat on the roof racks. The draft is still quite shallow.



Rowing can be very tiring.