



The (Boat) Jinkers Of Port Germein, SA

Recently, one of F&B's subscribers sent in his subscription renewal with a happy greeting and a couple of photographs that left us scratching our heads as to what was going on in Port Germein, near Port Pirie, at the top of the Spencer Gulf, west of Adelaide, SA.

Further investigation with the reader, Jeff Porter, revealed a fascinating glimpse of true Australian ingenuity in overcoming a considerable physical handicap for the local boating and fishing enthusiasts.

In a nutshell, their problem is that with up to 2m tides, an extremely flat Gulf seabed, the edge of the water from where they would normally think of



launching their boats, could well be 1.5km from the water when the tide goes out. And there's nothing quite so depressing as having to harness the wife and kids to drag your Whittley Cruiser 1.5 kays across the sand flats after a day's fishing. . . .

But then, they couldn't just use an ordinary trailer and 4WD either, as there is so far to go that by the time there is sufficient depth of water to launch the boat, the 4WD or tractor is up to its starter motor in salt water. And that water can get quite rough.

Sometime ago, one of the locals decided enough was enough, and he invented the first of what became known as the Port Germein "Jetty Jinkers", specialist tow 'vehicles' specifically designed to travel right out on the sand flats up to 1.5km in distance, towing the conventional boat and boat trailer behind them.

Once in situ, way down beside the longest wooden jetty in Australia, they launch the boat, leaving the jinker and the boat trailer in the water, to pick up when they return from the fishing trip.

On return, the boat is driven/floated back on the submerged, or nearly submerged trailer, the skipper clambers back up onto the jinker – and the

whole thing is driven back to shore – and onto home.

According to Jeff Porter, it is now all highly organised.

"To give you some idea as to the depth change Peter, you can launch your boat 200m from shore and retrieve the same day, out 1200m from launch! Or ideally, launch in 1.0m of water as the tide comes in and retrieve it in 1.0m of water as the tide goes out – and that means you get a 6 hour break to go fishing in the middle!"

These unique jinkers are actually registered in SA as homemade tractors, so they are all above board and quite legal. They must be fitted with all roadworthy mechanics, and are all basically built the same in a general sense, but are totally different in specifics and individual characteristics.

There are long ones, short ones, and some not as tall as others. In all, they reckon there's currently about 10 in the township.

All drive through manual or auto transmissions to a top differential which is locked for two reasons.

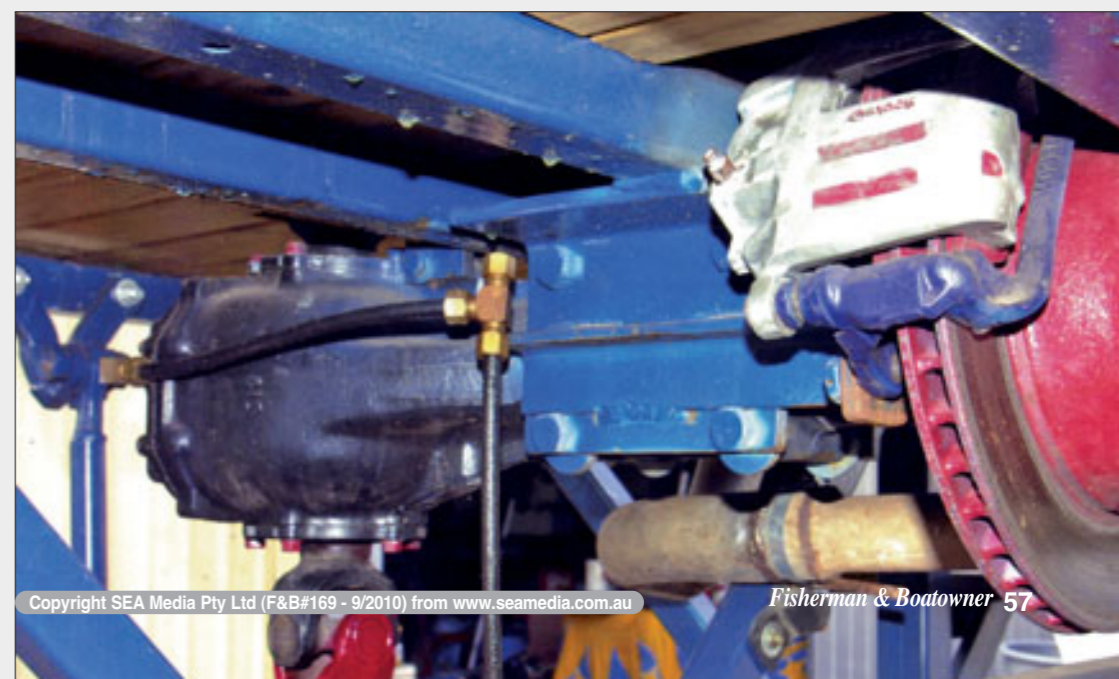
This reduces the drive train to a 4/2/1 ratio to the bottom differential, and

Allows the top output shaft to accommodate the brake set-up.

Shown in these photographs is Jeff Porter's own (blue) jinker (powered by an '83 Falcon) which is different to some of the others because he has the brake on the drive shaft before the differential.

Readers with a mechanical bent will be intrigued; once they acknowledge that the engine is high up on the platform ahead of the driver, everything else then becomes quite logical.

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Continued From P-59

Jeff Porter is (otherwise!) the owner/manager of the Port Germein general store and LPO, and he extends an invitation to any F&B reader to call in and say g'day. He points out that Port Germein is "the crabbing capital of SA" so there are some really good reasons to call in and make it part of your great trek around Australia.

Certainly, it would be worth going there just to have a look at the Port Germein 'Jetty Jinkers'.

Our sincere thanks to Jeff for his efforts in putting all these beautiful pics and commentary together for F&B readers – much appreciated!



For interest, the 1.5km (approx) Port Germein jetty is the longest WOODEN jetty in the Southern hemisphere.

