

Although boat trailers are still the object of much derision and ire for most trailer boatowners, the fact is today's boat trailers are a long, long way ahead of where we were just a decade ago, let alone two or three decades taking us back to the 1970s and 1980s.

I was thinking about this the other day when I had the opportunity of studying some photographs of an old trailer that I'd actually owned in the early 1980s. There it was in a paddock, pretty much the same as I sold it, all those years ago.

Although its condition was pretty sad, what really stood out like a beacon was just how old fashioned it now appears to be, with technical features and fittings we wouldn't even contemplate today.

It was one of the very early multi-roller trailers, and the rollers were made from that appalling "poly-something" material that used to crumble with a good whack or pressure on them from the boat's hull. There were no waterproof lights. No walkway. The winchpost set-up was frightful, and it made me stop and think how we've come to take a lot of these features for granted in the modern trailer. It also made me wonder about the three or four important breakthroughs or inventions that we had from that era that we now take for granted.

So, in no particular order (as they say!) . . .

Number 1: Waterproof Lights

I think waterproof, submersible trailer lights would be one of the most obvious breakthroughs we had, because it was almost impossible to



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The 4 Best Things We Invented !

keep trailer lights working in the good old days, and this caused all sorts of hassles with the good people in blue.

Try as we did, the only way you could keep them working was to literally pull them apart on the afternoon that you were heading back home, sitting there next to the launch ramp with a fine phillips head screwdriver, replacing the bulb, slooshing the wiring with WD40 and reassembling the whole thing - with your fingers tightly crossed.

We usually found out they weren't working, with a flashing blue light coming alongside just as we were

leaving town.

When the first of the American "upside down vacuum lights arrived" (remember them?) we thought we were in heaven – and that was the tipping point. Hella then released their Kiwi-built sealed lights, and the revolution began. That particular nightmare started to fade, and over the following five or six years, was virtually eliminated.

Number 2: Walkways

The walkway down the centre of the trailer is not original and has been around since Noah put the ramp up the side of the Ark. But where we mostly made it out of a painter's old oregon timber plank U-bolted onto the gal steel bearers (which was quite effective, I might add), these days all the trailer manufacturers can supply boat trailers with really good walkways of galvanised mesh (or aluminium security screen type mesh for the ally trailers,) and this too has been a considerable breakthrough in handling the boats around the launchramps.

This particularly applies for the considerable percentage of people who don't like submersing their wheel bearings (still) and prefer to keep the boat trailer wheels pretty much out of the water and/or only allow the water to come up to just under the hubs and wheel bearings.

Obviously this is more a small boat



thing than a big boat technique, but I've always respected the pensioner-pragmatism involved here: Replacing wheel bearings is pretty expensive, and in small craft, largely completely unnecessary.

Especially if you have a good walkway and you can simply walk down the trailer and hook up the boat with the winch wire.

Sadly, far too many boats are STILL sold today without this necessary feature, and given that it costs bugger all to make or install, it's a pity more new boatowners don't stand up and demand it be fitted.

Number 3: Good Ratchet Tie-downs

My business partner Ruth Cunningham pointed out recently



that in my recent mention of (rope) trucker's hitches and tie-downs, I didn't make a point she feels very strongly about, and one I have to agree needs to be pointed out.

“ There were no waterproof lights. No walkway. The winchpost set-up was frightful, and it made me stop and think how we've come to take a lot of these features for granted in the modern trailer. . . ”

Ruth's point is that there are lever trailer tie-downs that are (basically) crap, and then there are really good stainless steel lever tie-downs that are worth buying and paying a bit extra because they will last for years longer than the crappy ones. And more to the point, the good quality lever or ratchet tie-downs are easy to use and release.

We've had a long history trying all sorts of trailer tie-downs and keep coming back to this particular style, over and over again - and that's after a never ending stream of tie-downs that are proffered by distributors who claim to have seen the light and purchased really good quality stock.

It takes but a few minutes to try and work the lever ratchet system to establish what's good and what's not - and we urge readers to take care to buy more than just the cheapest tie-down you can find at the

supermarket, remembering the old adage that "the poor pay twice".

So #3 in the good inventions department would certainly be today's good quality tie-downs because set up correctly with webbing covers, they can be fixed to cross the boat and down each side of the trailer in just a few minutes, and definitely make for a safer, more stable trailer package.

Number 4: Good Turnbuckles

Curiously, one of the very good advances in recent years has been the increased use of galvanised turnbuckles to secure the front of the boat - as well as tie-downs over the transom to secure it by the stern.

These came about because quite a few accidents were recorded where trailerboats were involved in shunts, or rear-end type collisions and launched the boat forward over the winch post and onto the tow vehicle.

Some of the incidents involved snapping the stern or transom tie-downs completely in half - usually at the buckle or ratchet clip - or the hooks being pulled off the trailer by the forces involved in the boat travelling down the freeway one minute at 60kph, and then stopping in one split second . . . obviously propelling the boat forward with enormous force.

After the writer witnessed one of these shunts on a freeway one

Jeep Launches New Turbo Diesel Grand Cherokee A new 3.0-litre turbo, direct-injection V6 diesel engine has been developed for the all-new Jeep Grand Cherokee. Built by VM Motori and developed together with Fiat Powertrain, a company of Fiat S.p.a., the new 3.0-litre turbo diesel engine produces 177 kW at 4,000 rpm with 550 Nm of torque at 1,800-2,800 rpm. This translates to 10 percent more power and eight percent more torque than the engine it replaces. Even with its improved performance, fuel economy for the new 3.0-litre turbo diesel engine is 8.3 L/100km on the combined cycle, an improvement of 19 percent over the previous diesel engine. The new Jeep has a 3.5 tonne towing capacity.



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afternoon (*there but for the grace of God go I . . . !*) it was a salutary reminder of the energies involved on the highway when we haul boats. From that day forth, the writer has redoubled his efforts to make sure the boat has been secured fore and aft to prevent such a cataclysmic event occurring.

The best way of doing this is to chain the stem to the trailer in as near to vertical rake as can be achieved, and then taking that in a triangular section back to the winch post and (returning) back across to the bow eye. On one of these arms of the triangle thus created, a very good technique that is quick and strong, is to use a galvanised turnbuckle – and it's best used straight down from the bow eye to the trailer.

Now please don't write in to tell me that these galvanised turnbuckles are as weak as dandelions, because I know that already.

Where possible, we buy stainless



steel, rated turnbuckles, but these do involve a bit of extra work at the launchramp, because there is no way you can leave them on the trailer – they simply disappear for reasons I'll let you work out!

Nobody seems to bother pinching the galvanised turnbuckles, but those pretty shiny stainless steel ones

certainly attract the light fingered brigade like looters in London.

But yes, the rated, properly engineered stainless turnbuckles are best, but for boats up to (say) about 2 tonnes, I'm happy with a properly secured, galvanised turnbuckle that is locked down and really tight.

I'm not an engineer but I do know it's the snatch load that snaps turnbuckles, so it seems to me the clue is not to let it have any movement (or snatch) at all.

That does involve doing them up with the shifter or spanner properly, but hell, if you're heading off for your fishing holidays, this is just another of the dozen or more jobs you've got to do around the boat and trailer, to get ready for the big trip.

It reminds me our great World Champ race driver Jack Brabham used to comment "*You can't win unless you finish . . .*" and in the same vein, we can't go fishing unless we get there, so I always reckon getting the trailer properly sorted before we head out, is more important than getting the fishing tackle sorted.

Well, nearly . . .

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