

Comet stories – Transports of Delight

Norah Jagers. *Perihelion* 128

Having bought Comet 426 (“Frayed Knot”) we realised that we needed an easy way of taking her to events. Our car had built-in rails on to which we fitted an extra-long set of Paddy Hopkirk bars and lifted the boat up onto them. On the nearside of the bars we built a set of wooden “stocks” into which the spars fitted. The sails went inside the car and the folding trolley fitted across the boot once the wheels had been removed. All very neat and efficient.

Once we started to travel around the circuit we realised that this wasn’t the only way to transport a Comet. The majority of sailors preferred to trail their Comet. Usually it was just one Comet per trailer, but sometimes a double trailer appeared. The first one which I remember seeing was at Shearwater when the (very young) Govier brothers arrived to compete. Several people subsequently arrived at events towing two Comets on one trailer, with the top one upside-down. The filling between them varied from lumps of foam to old cushions to a mattress.

Andrew was clear from the outset that helms could carry their Comet on top of the car with ease. Obviously, it needed more than one person to lift the boat up, until the Easi-Loader was designed, specifically for the Comet. Barrie and Margaret Hylton used to demonstrate that a Comet would fit on top of a Ford Fiesta. However, Will Taylor (?) took things to extremes when he put his boat on top of his old Mini. One sailor used to arrive with his Comet on top of his campervan. Usually boats are carried up-side down, but we have seen the occasional situation where the boat has been right-way up, looking very precarious.

As you will know, there are rules about tying loads down when transporting them on the roof of a vehicle and it’s important to make sure that boats are secured fore and aft. A young lad from Rudyard Lake was keen to compete at an Open meeting at Staunton Harold. His dad was driving and they were running late. As they came over the twisting causeway at Swarkestone, Dad had to brake hard on one of the bends. The car went left round the bend. The boat went straight on!

Comet Class Association

Chris Weston from Naseby drove to several events with his Comet, on the launching trolley, tied onto a flat-bed farm trailer. I think that the record for towing the highest number of Comets at one time is still held by Helen Leivers. It was at the time that Severn SC would take their whole Comet fleet to Championships, setting up camp under their club flag and generally having a great time. Helen had a bright red powerful sports car and loaded 6 Comets onto a trailer designed for canoes. I hasten to say that she only took the hulls – the spars were transported by their owners.

Mr. Evans used to carry his Comet inside his VW van, and Numero Uno has just been moved in such a way from Wales to Kingston-upon Thames. Josie Adams cracked the problem of having a camper-van and then needing to tow, rather than car-top. She and Keith bought a campervan with a door in the centre of the back. Her Comet, when turned onto one side, slid neatly in through the door, with the bow resting just above the hand-brake.

I wonder how long it will be before all electric cars will be powerful enough to tow or have a boat on the roof. Alan Browning used to tow with his Reliant Robin which always seemed such a light, delicate car and it looked the same shape as the boat!

Henry and I prefer to car-top, even though it takes longer to ensure that all the ties are done correctly than it would to pull the boat onto a road trailer. Neither of us likes towing or having to remember the differing speed limits. However you travel with your Comet, you're always welcome at events.

And, of course, you CAN arrive at some venues by water. Paul Hinde and Dave Harris did just that by sailing from Severn SC to Arden....

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