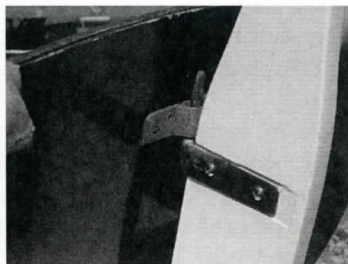


Tech Tip - A Dinghy Dolly

by Bill Whitney

I needed wheels to move my rather hefty Newman dinghy from the storage area to the floating boat ramp. Instead of fixed wheels I decided that a simple, removable wheeled fixture that floats would be the best approach. The design goals were these: support the dinghy, be easily removable, not corrode, move smoothly over packed gravel and wood surfaces, and store easily either in the dinghy or ashore. Rolling easily requires large wide wheels. So the first stop was to Lowes and Home Depot to find what they may have in largest plastic wheels that would support the weight and have enough of a footprint to move over the gravel surface at the boat yard and not sink. Lowes had the best selection. There I found a pair of 8" diameter, 1" wide plastic wheels with 3/8" axle holes that would do the job. At first I thought it may take four wheels, two on each side, but with the gravel surface two wheels provided enough surface area to support the weight. Somewhere in the past I saw a dinghy that had the wheels on hinged bracket permanently mounted on the centerline of the transom. The centerline mounting I liked, but not the hinged mount. Having sailed a lot of dinghies with removable rudders the idea of mounting the wheels like a rudder with pintles and gudgeons struck me as an idea that might work and attaching a pair of gudgeons to the transom wouldn't alter the dinghy's good looks. In the scrap pile I found a 24" X 3" X 3/4" piece of hard pine that was longer than the transom was high and set to work. The pictures below show the results.



I wanted to be able to mount the wheels so they would function with the dinghy right side up or inverted which is her winter storage position. The pintle/gudgeon configuration works well but I found that a horizontal cross brace was needed to keep the wheels from turning if you had to push the boat backwards. The axle is a piece of 3/8" bronze rod that has bronze pins and washers holding the wheels in position. The wheel assembly floats upright and stores nicely in the bottom of the dinghy. When the dinghy hits the water all you need to do is wiggle the wheel assembly and push down. There has never been an outboard motor on the boat (I prefer rowing!) but think that the upper gudgeon would not interfere with one. This design works well for me and doesn't detract from the classic lines of the dinghy. It's hard to pin down a cost for the assembly since most of the pieces were left over from past projects, but my best guess would be less than \$50.