



## More Thoughts On Fuel Usage

**R**ecently I wrote a bit about stretching the fuel budget for our boating and fishing, in which I suggested that using a 4-stroke outboard motor and operating at low or displacement speeds could reduce the fuel bill by up to seventy per cent.

This seems to be a great saving, and having sufficient power to get up and plane when required, such as running through a barred entrance is a great compromise.

However most people don't have as much time to spare as us pensioners, so I guess that travelling slow is not the best option for some.

I also reckoned that operating (say) an 8.0m planing hull with a couple of 200 hp outboards on the back will become too expensive for the majority of punters, and some other ideas need to be considered.

The safety of operating a boat in the smaller sizes is a lot to do with the competence of the skipper, and I suggest that a smaller boat in the 4.5 to 5.5 m class will do most of the things that a bigger boat would do, albeit with much less fishing and accommodation room.

A 5.0m boat fitted with a

# Ebb & Flow

with Neil Dunstan

small (say) 15 hp . 4-stroke outboard could return around ten nautical miles per litre, which is quite affordable even at \$8 per litre - as has been suggested could happen in the future.

I was very interested in the comments of the editor in F&B #144 where he was discussing the performance of the magazine's latest project boat, the 6.7m Quintrex which is fitted with a diesel sterndrive. His current thoughts were that it was probably not worth the extra cost of installing the diesel engine, unless the operator had a commercial-type operation, racking up five or six hundred hours per year compared to the average private operator's 80 or 100 hours, even though the diesel (and the Quinnie, for that matter) is the latest design and technology.

I have thought that the smaller boat, small motor or maybe even a full displacement boat might be the way to go, but I would still like to have at least one bunk as I like to go out for a couple of days and sleep overnight on the boat.

This would require a small cabin, and take up a lot of the room, but I have previously had a small cabin on a fifteen foot plywood boat which still had enough room at the back corners to fish two of us reasonably well.

I well remember some of our local mackerel fishermen who used small alloy displacement dinghies around 4.3 metres fitted with a single cylinder Yanmar diesel shaft drive and they operated well out to sea, safely. One guy said

to me that it was so economical, he reckoned he could 'go around the world for sixpence'.

Interestingly I looked at a number of manufacturers and plans suppliers and they don't have anything like this, so I guess if I went this way, I would have to build it myself. Maybe going back to the days of home built plywood would be a bit of fun - and I hear on the F&B grapevine, that not one but several 'plywood' projects are in the offing doing just that.

One other idea may be to still use a small boat, say 4.5 to 5.5m, and fit it with a couple of the largest electric outboards. This would also be fairly slow but with a decent bank of batteries, maybe of the latest lithium ion type which have a far greater energy density ie more power in a smaller package. These are what we use in mobile phones, and they are being developed in larger sizes for automotive use.

These batteries could be charged up at home from the 240 volt house supply at very low cost and topped up during the day with a decent solar cell array on the boat.

For the majority of the short duration trips undertaken by people with limited time this may be an option, but I would still like to have a small 3.5 hp outboard as a safeguard in case the battery power ran out before getting back to the ramp. This would also be very good for the environment, as the amount of pollution would be negligible.

I guess we will have to come up with plenty of

ideas like this if we are going to afford to enjoy the best recreation possible: fishing and boating.

**Footnote:** The other day I was down at the ramp preparing to launch my Quintrex 4.5m tinny for a quick run out to some local reefs to try and catch a spanish mackerel which are just starting to appear in close.

Another ute backed down the ramp and a fairly old guy got out, preparing to launch his rather elderly Clark fourteen foot tinny. I offered to give him a hand to get into the water, which he accepted, so we got him into the water and setup to go.

As he was going out for the same reason that I was, we got to talking a bit and it turned out that he was eighty two years old, and still got out as often as the weather would allow.

He mostly went out by himself, and I had a look at his much loved old Clark, which he had tricked up with a centre console, lots of storage spaces, ice boxes and various seating arrangements. It was fitted with a new Mercury 50hp 4-stroke, and was a nice little rig. The only problem I could see with it was that the old Clarks were mighty hard riding and wet, but were eminently seaworthy.

He said that he could still manage on his own, even though he had had four operations for bowel cancer - but he wasn't going to stop going out in his boat until they carried him out in a box.

I guess that is how most of us feel, and hope we can do as well.

**F&B**