



The Jones' Girl

By Sally Jones*

Fishing & Boating At Somerset Dam, In SEQ

A couple of months ago, we had the delightful pleasure of visiting a very popular destination for both fishing and boating, called Somerset Dam. It is situated only one hour west of Brisbane, in a most picturesque area called The Scenic Rim. It is also known as Lake Somerset and together with Wivenhoe Dam, is the major water source for Brisbane and its surrounding areas.

It was constructed in 1959 and was named after a local MLA, Henry Somerset. Like many other dams, the construction workers were housed close by in the current town of Somerset, now filled with its pubs, shops and cafes. The shoreline stretches some 237km and is a delight for boaters and walkers. The region is filled with rolling green hills, rivers and hidden valleys. Accompanied by beautiful birdlife and great fishing, it is a popular holiday spot, year round.

On this particular trip, we took

our caravan and stayed on one of the spacious powered sites at Lake Somerset Holiday Village. This park is massive! It is 45 hectares and is situated on the northern shores of the Lake. There is a range of accommodation, including waterfront cabins, powered van sites and unpowered sites anywhere within the designated regions of the park.

We have stayed here previously and certainly envied all those able to get out on the beautiful lake. So this time we came prepared. I introduced F&B readers to our Portabote ("PB") last month, and now it's time for its maiden holiday trip! With the PB on the roof rack, the Merc 8hp in the back of the wagon, and the associated paraphernalia that caravanners and boaters bring, we were finally ready to depart.

As we were staying Monday to Friday, it was very quiet, with only a handful of people around. Come the weekends though, beware: The ski boats and families from Brisbane hit this place in their droves. So if you particularly want peace and tranquillity, best plan to visit mid-week.

After settling the van in the first night, we were up nice and early for a run on the Lake. The wind

was calm and it looked like a sheet of glass. Wow, you couldn't hear a thing. Just the calls of joyful birds and the distant chorus of cows across the lake, over at Somerset Town.

It was a corker of a day!

We were staying approximately 200 metres from the main boat ramp at the Park. It was a downhill run, concrete all the way, so that was easy, but I did think at the time it mightn't be so easy coming back up.

Al attached a rope around the wheels, and with me steadying the front, we were loaded and ready to go. By "loaded", I am referring to the lunch box, water, fishing rods, tackle boxes, anchor, etc, etc! All the stuff you would normally take out for a day's boating and fishing. Plus we had 10 litres of extra fuel.

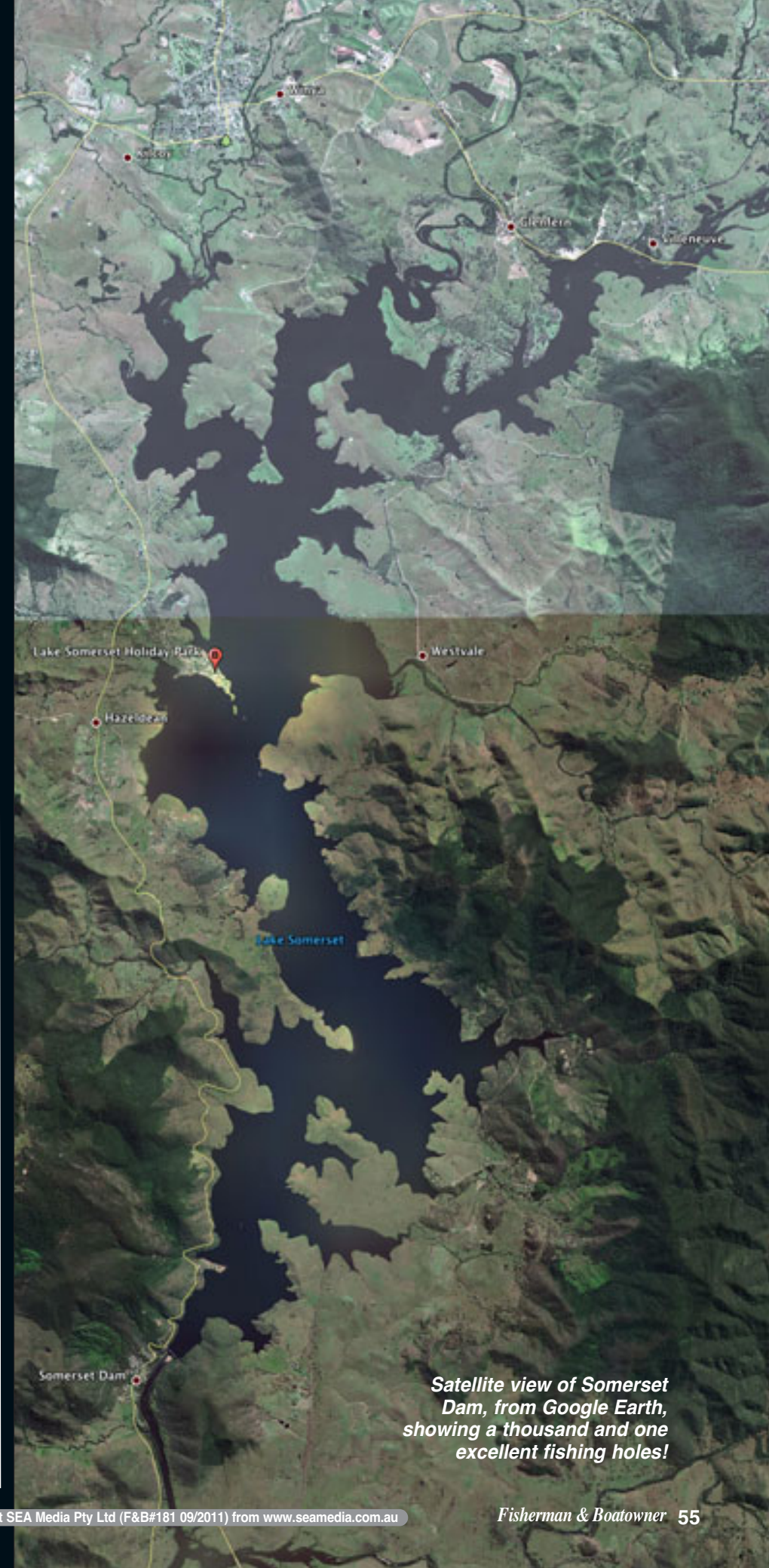
The great thing about the PB is that you don't need a trailer. So while everyone else is attaching their boat and backing down to the ramp, we are in the water in a matter of minutes. We left the wheels on, floated her up, then removed them and stored the wheels in the boat. Al gave her a run first, so I could take some pics from the shore. She looked good! Nice and stable, and tracking well.

Then it was my turn to join him. I hopped in and we were away. First impressions were that stability was great and I felt quite safe. We have added clip in "tinnie seats" which have backs on them for comfort. These also fold away for storage and are a good investment for any small boat. We also added a portable Humminbird sounder, which clamps onto the side. Being a folding boat, you can't leave a transducer attached to the bottom of the hull, so this innovation is excellent. It simply runs on batteries and is dead easy to operate. It even has the water temperature, which is useful.

After driving around and testing the capabilities of the PB, we decided to anchor. The little Cooper anchor makes light work of this and doesn't pinch your fingers when you retrieve it. Since I was the one doing the anchoring, it's my sort of anchor! It holds fast and is lightweight to carry. After baiting up the two lines with worms (available at the kiosk), we got our first strike. It was a small catfish. They are funny looking things, with their cat-like whiskers and an eel-like tale.

After moving a few more times and now using lures, another strike. This time it was a small perch. They were getting better . . . Nice looking fish, but not for us to keep. In between fishing and cruising, it was soon time for lunch.

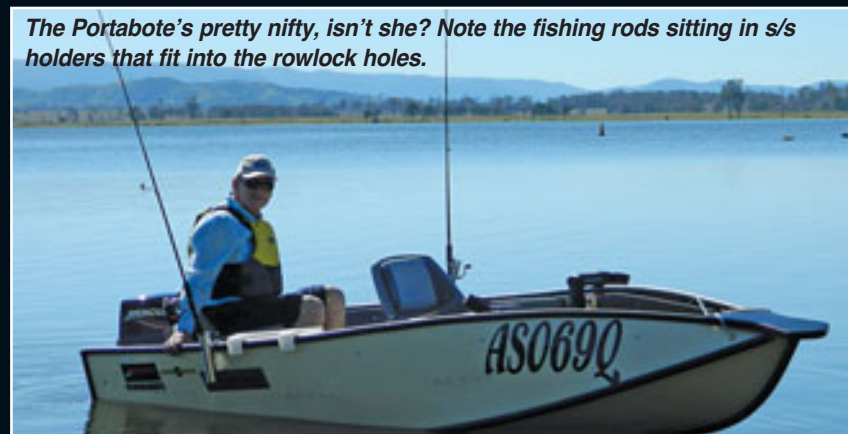
It was really delightful sitting there with no one around, a gentle breeze and the sun shining down. Brahminy Kites flew overhead, checking out our meal. Swallows



Satellite view of Somerset Dam, from Google Earth, showing a thousand and one excellent fishing holes!



Sal ready to go. Note the wheels on the side of the PB. They are quickly removed and stored in the boat.



The Portabote's pretty nifty, isn't she? Note the fishing rods sitting in s/s holders that fit into the rowlock holes.



My first fish at the Dam - a catfish!