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Pond Trials, Finished Model

This document was written by Paul Naylor and is published here for FMES online viewing, and was written during 2025.

Sundowner – 28



I am writing this article after returning from a trip to the boating lake at Eastrop Park boating lake where I also met some pleasant chaps from Basingstoke Model Boat Club (<http://www.basingstokembc.co.uk/>) who meet there every Wednesday and Sunday. I am pleased to say that the trip was very successful and I was able to try the boat out for a couple of hours. This was after one of the chaps lent me a pair of 'slings' to get the boat into the water, after he saw me looking at the boat in its cradle wondering how to get it from there into the water without falling in. I have a memo to make two such slings for future trips! He also lent me them to get it out too at the end, which I imagine would have presented me with a greater risk of an early bath.

The first test was to make sure that the radio worked at range (at least within the distances around the lake): it did, and the beauty of modern RC systems is that you don't need to worry about interference from or to other boats under similar control, so no messing around with frequencies or crystals like in 'my day'.

Sundowner was the largest boat on the lake on the day and would present a threat to others so I had to be careful as I learned it's responses and stopping and turning behaviour (see later).

My wife came too and she took photos using her phone for me to include here. It is not easy to take pictures with boats on the move, and herewith apologies for blurring, lack of sharpness etc. Not that I could have done better, but I could not have taken these myself as I had to watch what it was doing nearly all the time.

The selection of pictures gives the flavour of the day. I had visions of a cropped image to compare to real photos but this was not going to be! The boat was going at a variety of speeds, comments on this later...



Part of learning to control it was, of course, avoiding other boats, and early on I saw I was steering it on



a likely collision course with a yacht. I remembered in time that he would have little ability to get out of the way (there was little wind), so I had put the boat into reverse to stop quickly as it has so much momentum that it will not drift to a stop easily (and it doesn't steer well without power, like most craft). I avoided embarrassment and worse, but lost all power, fortunately near the bank and it drifted in quite quickly. A look inside showed that everything was still working except that, whilst I had remembered to add 'thrust blocks' to the prop shaft for forwards, I did not for reverse, and the commercial motor/shaft coupling (the red bit in the photo) got pulled off its splines leaving no drive. From then on, I had to remember not to use reverse (and made a note to add a suitable collar as a stop on the shaft, now completed whilst I remembered). Watching the effect of different speeds was interesting. The motor has plenty

of power (need it have been so large?) and will 'overdrive' the hull. This is a displacement hull with a maximum speed dictated by the hull size and adding power does not make it much faster, only changes its attitude. This is unlike a planing hull that will absorb power and add to speed easily (which is why all high-speed craft use planing hull designs



and can do huge speeds with enough power). I had in my mind a picture of the real Sundowner at speed and was seeking to mimic this. Here is such a photo for interest. You can see the bow wave and the trough about a half the way along the hull: this is probably about the optimum speed.



This next photo of the model shows a higher speed than hitherto, and



you can see the much larger bow wave, but it looks a little like the real Sundowner in the photo.

So where does this leave me and my thoughts about the project outcome?

I am pleased with the model and it satisfies me that I ended up with the boat that generally I envisioned at the outset. It also all worked to plan (apart from a missing 'reverse thrust block'!).

The boat is quite large and heavy, so running it needs concentration, probably accompanied by some apprehension from other model boaters on the water at the same time!

It turns well, does not heel in turns much and is quite responsive to the helm and speed. The propeller that I made works fine and does everything I wanted of it, however inefficient it actually is.

Interestingly, the boat, when stationary floats level, and it stays this way at modest speed, it seems to adopt a slight nose down attitude with too much power, whereas I would have expected it to take an increasing slope upwards as it tries to climb its bow wave. Presumably this implies either a loss of buoyancy at the bow with speed, or maybe more likely, an increase in lift at the stern.

I managed to get it to the lake, on the water, ran it and got it home again without breaking or 'modifying' anything... but it was close and it is not the easiest thing to transport.

Well, that's that... if you got this far reading the articles, great, I hope it helped you to 'have a go' if you were considering it, or encourages you to write up your next project for the interest of others!

What next? Well, immediately it is to get back to the restoration I am doing on my large locomotive, 'Old Rube', that I have started describing for FMES website visitors, but I have regained the bug for model boats and am casting around for something else to make. Something faster, smaller, unusual, attractive...



'Sundowner' in it's pride of place at home, by courtesy of the wife (provided I dust it)!



Final footnote: As you can see on the photos, I am still waiting for the Dunkirk Jack flag. One came, but was the wrong size...

