

A 'Significant Centenary'.

In 1908, the Model Engineer announced that it would be holding its first ever 'model motor boat regatta' on 25th July at Wembley. The report that followed the event also mentioned that one competitor had asked if he "could run his boat in a circle, it being tethered by a light line to a central post, fixed in the water".

2008 then, will be the centenary of the first organised speedboat competition and the first recorded running of a hydroplane on a tether, and I am planning to commemorate these events with a series of articles throughout the year on my website www.onthewire.co.uk. Before I am drowned out with cries of 'nothing to do with us', it must be remembered that most of the competitors were superb engineers in their own right, as everything had to be built and machined from scratch, including the motors, which is still the case for the British classes. Equally many were members of local model engineering clubs and societies, and often the hydroplanes would run, both free and tethered, as a section of the club, using their own, or other local facilities. Clubs and venues flourished from Bristol and Swindon in the South West out to Kings Lynn in the East, Victoria and the numerous clubs in London through the Midlands, such as Bournville and Stoke, Altrincham, Birkenhead and Maghull in the North West, Heaton and South Shields in the North East and right into Scotland.

Through the good offices of NAME and the member clubs and societies, I am trying to gather any photos, information, records, relics or reminiscences that might still exist with individuals or in club archives relating to tethered hydroplanes and competitions over the last 100 years. Any material would be very much appreciated, but information regarding any boats and engines that still survive, would be especially exciting. NAME, of course, has custody of 'Evil Spirit', Fred Westmoreland's record breaking flash steam hydroplane.

This venture is in no way commercial, as can be seen by visiting my website. My sole intention is to retrieve and record material before it is lost for all time and there exists the very real possibility that your members could help greatly with this quest. Committed model engineers never throw anything away, so there may well be a significant amount of material still lurking in lofts, sheds and on shelves. It may also be possible that any 'survivors' could be displayed, or even given an outing at some stage during next season.

Thank you for any help that members might be able to offer. Any costs involved will be covered and any material will be fully acknowledged in the subsequent articles.
Lyn Blowers (Mrs)

I can be contacted via the website admin@onthewire.co.uk or by phone on 01502 712570