

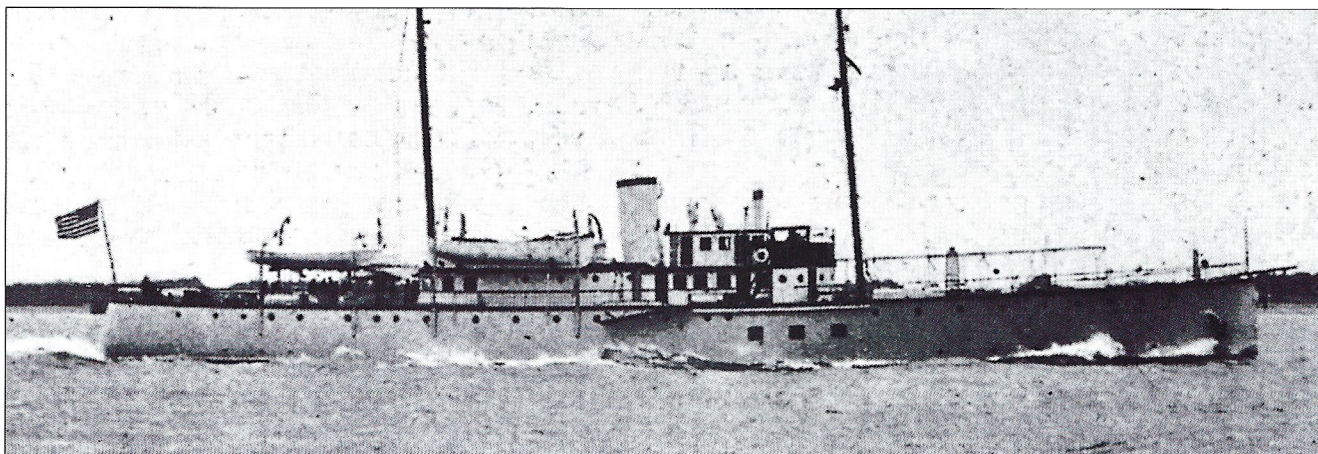


Coming of age

The Great War was over. The editor returned from his Red Cross duties in Mesopotamia, and the editorial department was moved from cramped quarters above the tramlines in London's Rosebery Avenue to a suite of panelled offices above a bank in Kingsway. Men were demobilised by the hundred thousand from army, navy and air force and went back to work. Lloyd-George's 'land fit for heroes' briefly prospered in a short-lived post-war boom.

Companies which had been working all hours on the war effort turned themselves to peacetime profitability only with difficulty, if at all. In the aviation industry, Thomas Sopwith famously wound up his aeroplane company when Government orders were cancelled overnight, after building nearly 20,000 aircraft in four years.

Thornycrofts were luckier. Already established pre-war as a leading raceboat and speedboat builder, they could not quite resist the temptation of presenting their Coastal Motor Boats to the peacetime market, which would have been rather like shoehorning a passenger seat into a fighter



War and peace: the luxurious 213ft former warship Ara was converted to leisure use by Camper & Nicholson.

aircraft and offering it as a tourer.

Developed late in the war and used with some success in daring night-time raids off the enemy-held coast, the CMB was an awesome beast. It came in three sizes, from 40ft to 70ft, the larger ones packing twin V-12 Thornycroft petrol engines of 375hp each and capable of 40 knots carrying two torpedoes. *The Motor Boat*, naturally, was enthusiastic, reporting from on board a 45ft leisure version in 1920 that it had made the trip from Grays in Essex to Westminster in about half an hour. "Needless to remark, it gave the steady-going stream of Thames traffic one of the surprises of its life." Fishermen up north were soon in for a similar shock, as the Scottish

Fisheries Board actually bought one, a 55-footer, "to track down trawlers engaged in illegal fishing".

Sanity slowly returned. Many boatyards eased themselves profitably back into peacetime work by converting redundant naval vessels into motor cruisers – notably the American-built 75ft and 80ft Elco motor launches, known simply as MLs. They were not pretty, but they were big, and with more than 500 to dispose of, the Navy kept the prices low.

The mercurial nature of the post-war world was beautifully, if unconsciously, encapsulated in the issue of October 13 1922. On page 333, above a short item about a 100ft auxiliary schooner currently fitting out in Hull for a circumnavigation via Panama and the Pacific islands – "there will be accommodation available for three or four people should any of our readers wish to make the trip" – *The Motor Boat* noted the departure on her delivery voyage to New York of "the most luxurious yacht in the world": a 213-footer called *Ara*. A warship conversion by Camper & Nicholson, she was of note to the magazine by virtue of her twin 825hp Polar-Diesel engines, which made her "by far the largest motor yacht afloat" and gave a speed of 13 knots. "Aft of the dining saloon is a card room furnished in French walnut," the magazine remarked, while the pantry was served by "an electric lift from the galley, which is on the deck below." The owner was William K. Vanderbilt II.

Over the page, meanwhile, the editorial team was addressing an issue much closer to the hearts of its readership: "the smallest practicable cruiser".

MOTOR BOAT
Special Beginners' Number

THORNYCROFT
A run in a "Sea Hawk" 35 m.p.h. Speed Boat will enable you to experience the thrills and joys of Motor Boating—then remember we are Britain's biggest builders of all types of sea or river craft, also marine engines from 7½ to 140 b.h.p.



BLUE PRINTS and Specifications on application.

A Good Resolution!

Invest in a

'SILVERETTE' CRUISER

THE Silverette 30 ft. Cruiser is a trim little craft, graceful, comfortable, economical and entirely sea-worthy. It represents the finest value in a boat of this size. Complete with Sea-going Equipment, Electric Lighting, Outside Iron Keel, Upholstery, and Morris Self-starting Engine.

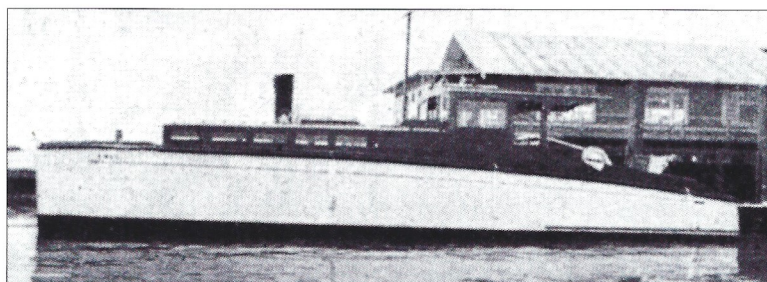
£650

afloat Rosneath.

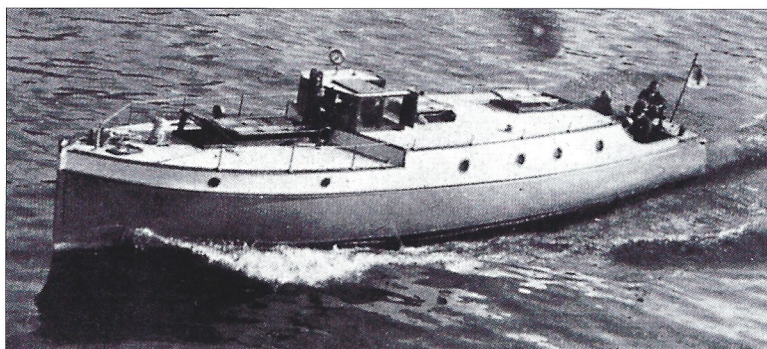
SILVER LTD., ROSNEATH, DUMBARTONSHIRE
Registered Office: 50, Wellington Street, Glasgow, C.2

At the Motorcar Exhibition in White City the previous year, to "fierce controversy", the Railshead Launch and Boat Co of Isleworth had exhibited a series of small cruising boats of just 22ft and 25ft in length.

Such miniature, seagoing cabin craft had hardly been seen before, and never in series production. *The Motor Boat* had by now had the chance to thoroughly review and sea-trial these boats, which bore names such as *Dapper Dan*, *Captain Cuttle* and *Puffin*, and with a touch of irony now felt that "a brief record of the experiences of some four or five of these 'floating homes for the new poor' will doubtless interest their proud possessors and will, perchance, finally influence would-be but sceptical owners of their practicability both as regards comfort and seaworthiness and moderate cost". The 'new poor' would still have to find between £350 and £450 – when a 30-footer, hitherto felt to be the smallest size practical for a cruising boat, could set you back some £800 – but the magazine felt that the



'Standard' cruisers, 1921. A US 40-footer from Wilmington Boat Works ...



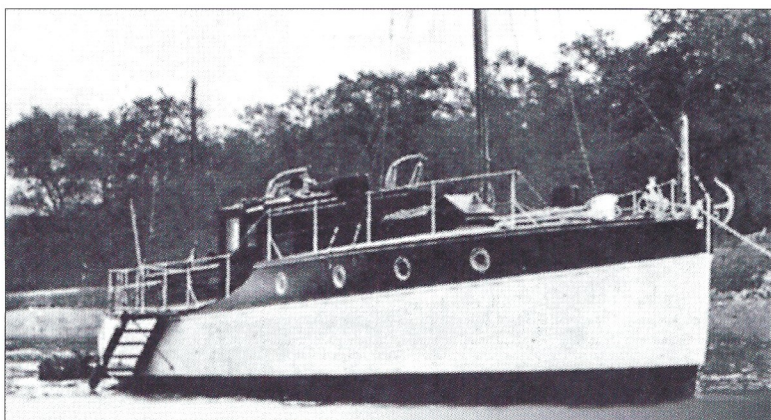
... and a home-grown Thornycroft 45.



Boats for all: a 22-footer from the Railshead Launch and Boat Co.



Making waves: Hubert Scott-Paine.



Available in three sizes, Silver's Brown Owl was one of the biggest production boats of the 1930s.

25-footer offered better value for money than its littler sister.

The Railshead Launch and Boat Co had realised that value was the watchword in the straitened post-war economy. In the era of wood, everything in a boat's construction, from the drawing of plans to the sawing of frames, was a bespoke, one-off task – unless you built in series. The idea was not new. At the 1920 Motor Boat Show, Thornycrofts had exhibited a 'standard' 45-footer, a capacious-looking fully-decked design, and by summer the following year *The Motor Boat* reported that the third of them, *Thyra*, was en route from Hampton to Greenock, having achieved 9.5 knots on sea trials from its 30hp paraffin motor.

In the US, the principle of the production line

had also started to take hold: the next week's magazine described "a 40ft stock model with pleasing features" – and a distinctly American slab-sidedness – built by Wilmington Boat Works of Los Angeles.

By the end of the 1920s the idea, if not yet the practice, of production-line boatbuilding was firmly established in the UK. The magazine noted in late 1929 that "standardisation is a term capable of more than one interpretation and there are many boats built in this country which, strictly speaking, have little truthful claims to being standard models, because it is neither possible to buy such boats from stock, nor are they laid down several at a time."

Nevertheless, in its round-up of 'standard motor craft', *The Motor Boat* was able to list a good number of makes and models which did more or less fit the bill, including those from the ebullient Hubert Scott-Paine's up-and-coming British Power Boat Company. Fresh out of the seaplane business with a personal fortune and a patriotic mission to revitalise British boatbuilding, Scott-Paine had ambitious plans to make his Hythe yard the most modern in the country, and he was as good as his word. True production-line techniques were employed to combat the cost advantages of American imports like Chris-Craft, sold by Arthur Bray Ltd, and the 50mph Gar Wood runabouts brought in by aviation pioneer Claude Grahame-White.

Chris-Craft

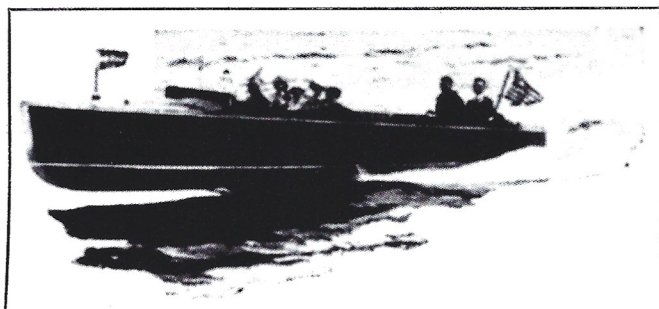
THE WORLD'S GREATEST (ALL MAHOGANY) SPEED BOAT

Built by

The World's Largest Builders of Motor Boats

(The 56 acre factory is now producing 10 boats per day)

11 Beautiful
Models,
Lavishly Equipped
from
£590



22 ft.
8 Passenger
to
30 ft.
12 Passenger

A standard 26 ft. Model averaged over 34 miles per hour in first Atlantis Trophy Race of 30 sea miles.

OVER

50,000

passengers (in 12 weeks) have been safely carried and thrilled with the remarkable performance of this superb production,

99%

of the Speed Boats running for hire at British Coastal Resorts are

Chris-Craft

They are universally chosen for this gruelling work owing to their never-failing **RELIABILITY, SEAWORTHINESS** and **LOW RUNNING COSTS.**

There is no better Speed-Boat Value.

*Why not write for interesting literature and
name of your local Agent ?*

ARTHUR BRAY,

Sole Representative Gt. Britain and Ireland,

114, BAKER STREET, LONDON, W.1.

MILES AN HOUR

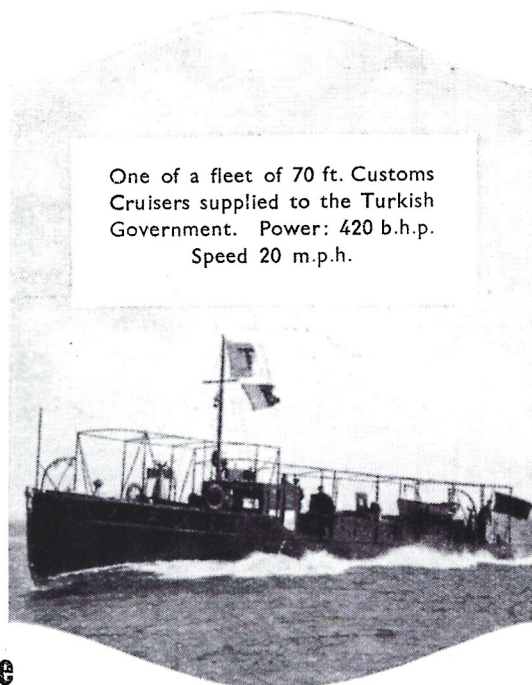
Since 1871, when the 60 ft. launch "Miranda" achieved the then unprecedented speed of 18 miles an hour, Thornycroft high-speed boats have been pre-eminent. They range from a 25 ft. 30-m.p.h. tender to the fastest torpedo boat destroyer in the world and include the famous 55 ft. 45-m.p.h. Coastal Motor Boats and all types of launches, cruisers and patrol vessels. Furthermore, each is designed for practical service and is not a purely racing craft capable of use only in sheltered waters. We shall be pleased to submit proposals for boats to meet any special requirements.

THORNYCROFT

HIGH-SPEED CRAFT

for Pleasure, Commercial or Naval Service

JOHN I. THORNYCROFT & CO., LIMITED, Thornycroft House, LONDON, S.W.1



One of a fleet of 70 ft. Customs Cruisers supplied to the Turkish Government. Power: 420 b.h.p. Speed 20 m.p.h.

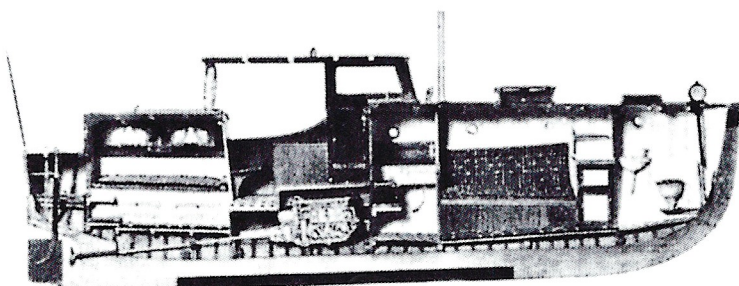
After less than two years in business British Power Boats were offering a range of four stock boats, starting with a 16ft hydroplane designed for an RMYC racing class, while a 23ft hull was available both as a 35mph runabout priced at £630, and as a miniature express cruiser, complete with saloon and galley, for £1,250.

Within a few years the range had expanded to include the 37ft 6in Sea Monarch fast cruiser – a leisure version of the famous seaplane tenders supplied to the Royal Air Force, capable of 26

knots – and the 40ft Sea Lord.

At this time the RAF had seconded 'Aircraftsman Shaw' to Scott-Paine's yard to oversee the acceptance trials of its boats, as Ralph Horne, serving on *The Motor Boat* at the time, was later to recall: "Some of my most rewarding chats were with Shaw ('Lawrence of Arabia') and Scott-Paine, at the latter's yard in Hythe. Shaw was a stickler for truth, whilst 'Scotty' had no such inhibitions, being an acknowledged showman of the boatbuilding industry.

"The fast tenders were excellent craft but some merited criticism. When S.P. came to show me round, invariably with Shaw in attendance, an opening gambit was likely to be the direction of my attention to some usually small mistake that had been made in the layout. 'Now you see that,' he would say, pointing to the fault. 'Most people would say we had made a mistake.' Then he would list imaginary benefits resulting from what had been done, while Shaw would turn to me and say, 'You realise he is covering up?' at which point Scotty, who had a sincere appreciation for Shaw,



Solid Silverette: a 'standard' boat from the Silver yard.

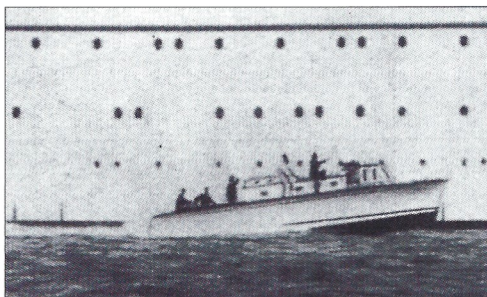
Cruising - a return to normality

After the strictures of the Great War, when boat owners were largely forbidden to venture further than a mile from their home ports, *The Motor Boat* was able once again to publish accounts from its readers of their cruising adventures. Some were entertaining, some informative, some dull, but with engines more reliable and cruising motor boats more plentiful, there seemed to be no shortage of material.

The *Mookerjee*, an 'auxiliary ketch', or motor sailer, ventured from the Crouch to the Channel Islands in the summer of 1924 with her owner, W. Brazell Wright, and Cuttle, a paid hand. They called in at the French consul in Southampton, who told them that "no passports or other formalities were necessary", and although the weather was grim and the tides daunting, they braved a boiling Alderney race to explore both St Helier and St Peter Port – "for small craft, much to be preferred to St Helier". Short of time, the owner took the steamer to St Malo and stayed in a seafront hotel for a few days. "Eighty-three francs to the pound sounds very alluring, but somehow at these big hotels it does not seem to work – at any rate, not to the advantage of the visitor."

Raymond Catell ("author of *Under Sail Through Red Devon*") contributed a cruising guide to the South Devon harbours in 1938, well illustrated with photographs, including one of The Bag, at Salcombe, utterly empty of boats. It would still serve today. The Dart, he wrote, was too well-known to warrant much description, and Salcombe "has been a deservedly appreciated meeting place for most yachtsmen in the South West for generations".

Commander Lightoller of *Titanic* fame sent in an account of a boisterous, late-season cruise in his 58ft *Sundowner* from Burnham-on-Crouch to Belgium and Holland. At Middelburg, he warned, "you can buy anything from a pin to an anchor, the price exactly in proportion to the cut of your jib. In a shirt and slacks you will get things at half the price that you will be charged in regulation rig." Also: "don't try to navigate the Schelde on an old chart as I did."

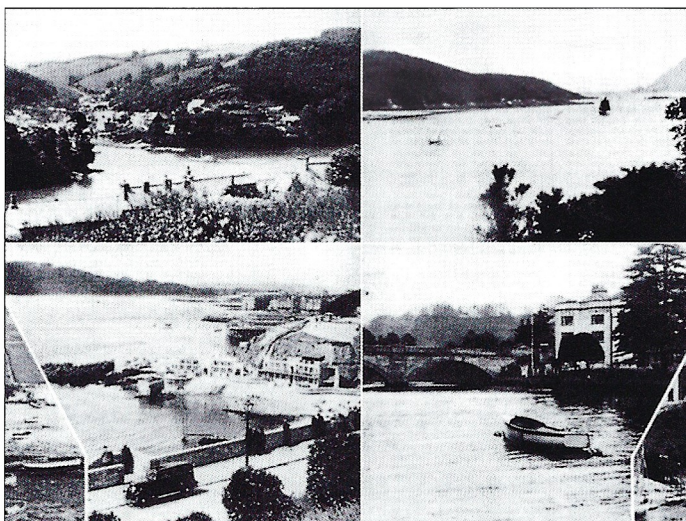


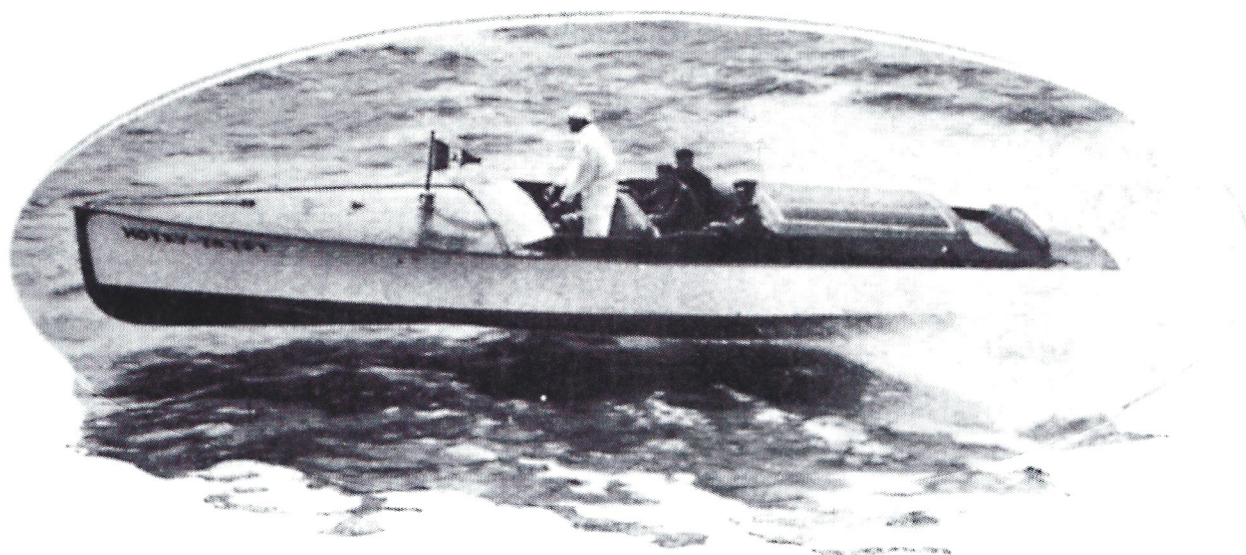
Southampton to Itchenor at 22 knots: a BPB Sea Monarch.

An innocuous account of a trip between Southampton and Itchenor appeared over two pages in September 1933. It was noteworthy solely for the fact that it was undertaken at 25mph in a British Power Boats 'Sea Monarch' – and so stands as evidence of Hubert Scott-Paine's talent for generating positive publicity.

Further afield that year, Conor O'Brien announced the discovery of a new cruising gem – "Iviza, chief of the Pithyusian Isles, within sight of Spain and the Balearics, and only 48 hours by train and steamer from London" – while Betty Klitgaard reported from Jutland and the Limfjord aboard *Talofa*. She and her husband, a blind opera singer she referred to, incessantly, as 'The Troubadour' were liveaboards, who paid their way by singing. Nowadays you'd probably be arrested.

West Country views, 1938. Clockwise from top left: Noss Mayo, Salcombe, Totnes, Plymouth.





Foreign competition:
a 50mph Gar Wood
runabout.

would immediately create a diversion.” Horne thought Lawrence ‘a grand chap’, whose nickname for him was ‘Mr Motor Boat’.

At the same time as the British Power Boat Co was making its mark, another legendary yard, at the opposite end of the country, was also making inroads into production boatbuilding. James A. Silver of Rosneath, near Glasgow, had been in business since 1910, but under the control of the great designer John Bain had been producing ‘standard’ boats since the ‘Maple Leaf’ series of 1919–21. By the time of *The Motor Boat*’s review of 1929 the big story was the Brown Owl class,

available in 42ft, 47ft and 52ft versions and fitted on production lines with twin engines, electric lighting and all mod cons.

While the largest of these tipped the scales at nearly £3,500 in 1934 – equivalent to about £198,000 today – it was the ‘Silverette’ that pulled the yard through the Depression. A budget-priced, miniature cruiser with an electric-start Morris engine, it was designed to tempt car drivers onto the water, and with four berths in 30ft provided comfortable family coastal and estuary cruising for just £650 (about £37,000 in today’s money). A twin-engined 36-footer followed, still priced at under £1,000.

Such prices were not untypical by the cash-strapped 1930s. While few yards could seriously entertain the idea of series-producing 40- or 50-footers, pocket cruisers like the Silverette were emerging from yards all over the country. James Taylor & Bates, at Chertsey Bridge on the Thames, could offer a comparable 30-footer for £750, while Salters of Oxford’s similarly-sized Morris-engined cruiser, also in mahogany, was a mere £500. The famous James Miller & Sons yard at St Monance had a Kelvin-engined pitch pine launch in its catalogue priced at just £415, and Smith Bros of Albert Street, Goole had a pitch pine 30ft cruiser called the ‘Ideal’ for £460.

Thornycrofts, meanwhile, had adapted well to the post-war boatbuilding business and had given

A cunning plan

“The American *Motor Boat*, I see, publishes a champion ‘hard luck’ story about the hurricane that played such havoc with the New England yachts in September. A careful owner, scenting something really unusual in the wind, summoned help and brought his boat ashore from its mooring. After a terrific struggle the craft was dragged up the beach and parked on the owner’s lawn. This being done, the owner and his helpers went indoors to celebrate the conclusion of their arduous task in the usual manner. While they were thus engaged, a tree blew down and smashed the boat to bits. The fuel tank rolled through a cellar window onto a lighted water heater and started a fire, which burnt the house down.”

From *The Motor Boat*, November 18 1938.

up trying to shift 'civilianised' Coastal Motor Boats to an unsuspecting public. Their eight-berth 40ft (12.19m) motor yacht was keenly priced at £1,600 in 1934, and although a modestly-powered displacement cruiser, it was produced alongside a 55hp, 25ft (7.62m) runabout – proving that the company had not lost sight of its fast-boat roots.

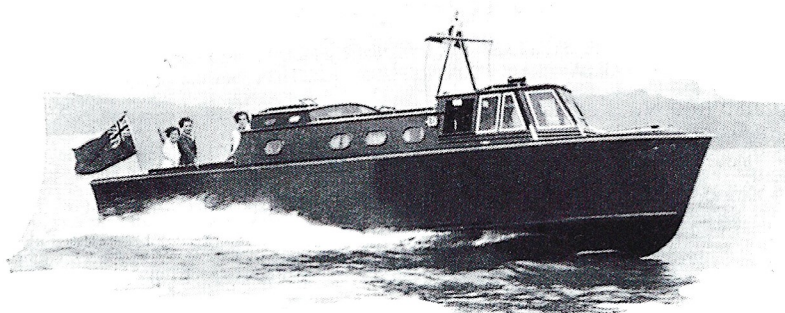
Thornycrofts were also one of the few boatbuilders still able to power their products with their own engines. Sir John E. Thornycroft, the son of the founder, was among those luminaries asked by A.P. Chalkley, the editor, to contribute a piece to *The Motor Boat's* 25th anniversary issue in July 1929: "The dominant feature of the developments which have taken place in boats and motors during the past 25 years has been the general acceptance of petrol as fuel," he wrote. In the early days people had been worried about the fire risks of petrol – while, he noted wryly: "for some reason they thought that an engine using kerosene started by a lamp-heated vaporizer was safer."

He went on: "The enormous increase in the number of motorists who are now accustomed to petrol engines owing to the use of cars has resulted in a new generation of motor boat owners."

In same article the engineer Harry Parsons observed that the advent of the new, small, high-revving diesel engine was sure to make an important contribution, while acknowledging that the paraffin engine would continue to hold the field for the foreseeable future in low-speed motor boats. Petrol, of course, was still "supreme for speed work."

Chalkley, who was not just editor but a respected engines man in his own right, noted in his editorial to this anniversary issue that "not only is the design of the present-day marine motor much ahead of that of 25 years ago, but progress in metallurgy, far greater than the average layman is aware, has eased the manufacturers' work to a very notable extent, and has enabled them to develop engines with a power-to-weight ratio quite inconceivable 25 years ago."

He looked forward to a time when motor boats, "comparable in comfort, ease in handling and general suitability for touring, are turned out



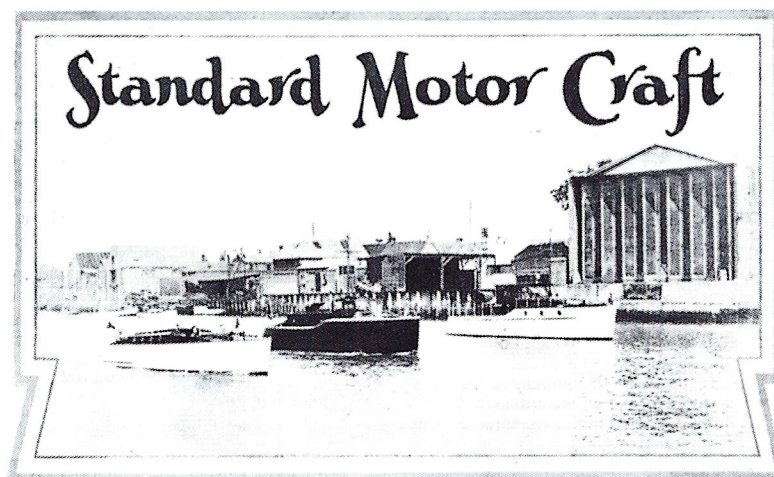
A BPB Sea Monarch cruiser, based on the company's RAF seaplane tender design.

in large numbers as standard, or partially standardised productions; for there is a large public waiting to take up motor boating."

That was in the issue of July 12, 1929. The Wall Street crash came in October, and the world's already battered and bruised economies sank further into slump and unemployment that would not lift fully until the re-armament of World War 2.

But ironically, Chalkley was right. He could see how the boatbuilders were already reacting to the straitened economic conditions, and by the 'public' he meant neither the Vanderbilts nor the Jarrow marchers, but his readers – the new middle class. For them, even in the 1930s, standardisation meant affordable, inboard-engined family cruisers.

The industry responded, and the motor cruiser came of age – a most unlikely child of the Depression.



Particulars of the More Important Stock Craft on the British Market, Excluding Outboard Boats