

This was about 1972. So he was about... 20, I suppose, a bit more than that. He'd made model boats for a long time. Lots of them were exquisite. they tended to be Norfolk wherries or Thames barges, that sort of thing, which had a great interest, and then normally very beautiful things. um , tiny wooden cleats for the rigging and the sails dyed in tea, and painted beautifully. But this one was an MTB a motor torpedo boat. And...it was massive, and it was matt grey and very ugly as far as I was concerned. But the great thing about it was, it was the first one that had a motor. The lake at the end of the water gardens behind... the old Co-op, the Primark end now I suppose. was used for sailing model boats. I think on a Sunday morning. The water was always filmed with oil. Horribly polluted. But people had fun. And I think it was this MTB's maiden voyage. I'm not sure about that. Well, my brother went to give it a go and see how it worked. and there was a lot of people there, and again they had small, exquisite fishing boats, with tiny fragile rails, that pattered along at half a mile an hour. and they were remote controlled. But my brother was a young man, and it turned out that his MTB went very fast indeed. Perhaps 20 times as fast as all the rest. And you could turn very sharp corners, and the wake was really quite considerable. And the little fishing boats were being tumbled about in the wake of this thing, and I think, I seem to remember saying to him "be careful of that boat". But he wanted to drive fast, which the whole point of a motor torpedo boat, was it went fast. And of course, inevitably, he didn't turn the corner quite fast enough. He rammed this exquisite little fishing boat, and sank it. I think his boat sank too, I can't remember that. I remember standing there with the boat just sinking into the middle of a foot of oily water, and another foot I'm sure of mud, and not knowing how on earth we were going to get it back. But the man with the fishing boat was an elderly man. And he was lovely. He just put on some waders, and waded out, and picked the boats up. On the whole he seemed rather pleased to have an excuse to potter about with some water, clean it up and mend the railings. So I don't know if my brother ever dared go back to the water gardens lake, but I certainly know that I never did.