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Speed king seeks new crown – in the spirit of ‘Blue Bird’

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[Don Wales at the wheel of 'Blue Bird' at Pendine.](#)

Robin Roberts (and WheelsWithinWales) was at Pendine on 21st July for the centenary celebration of Sir Malcolm Campbell's world speed record breaking run in 1925 - and found that there may be another speed record attempt to be made soon... using steam power!

Exactly a century after Sir Malcolm Campbell set a 150 mph World Land Speed Record at Pendine, grandson Don Wales revealed he eyes the 200 mph barrier in a steam-powered eco-racer.

100 years after Sir Malcolm's 350hp 'Bluebird' Sunbeam streaked across the sand to set the new world record on 21 July 1925, Don was in the driving seat for a staged photo-call pulled together by the National Motor Museum Trust, Beaulieu and supported by the Sunbeam Owners' Club.

The famous car has been recovered and renovated by the Trust and was started in front of about 200 spectators on the beach below the Museum of Land Speed.



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The static display was restricted by tidal, safety and MoD consent but once it crackled into life the famous record holder became the centre of attention once again.



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[Don Wales and the enthusiastic crowd on the Pendine beach.](#)

Don said, "I am immensely proud to be here to remember and celebrate my grandfather.

"I have to thank Beaulieu for bringing the car today after their restoration and continuing care for this legendary car."

He said it was disappointing that a commemorative run could not be undertaken as it was on the car's 90th anniversary on the beach but the public's regard for it and his grandfather's bravery are enduring.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Pendine was the centre of the world's Land Speed Record attempts with its seven miles of shifting sands and in 1926 Wrexham engineer John Parry-Thomas pushed it over 169 mph in his own 450 hp Babs racer and then above 171 mph before Sir Malcolm came back in his Napier Campbell and exceeded 174 mph in 1927.

Tragically, Parry-Thomas instantly died in March 1927 trying to regain the record when Babs overturned and was wrecked. The car was buried in sand-dunes behind the beach where it



remained for 42 years before excavation and full sympathetic restoration by Owen Wyn Owen from Capel Curig.

As Land Speed Record attempts were steadily raising the limit it was considered the Pendine Beach was becoming too short for them and attention turned to America's immense salt flats at Utah.



PENDINE

ON THE SANDS BETWEEN 1924 & 1927
THE WORLDS LAND SPEED RECORD
WAS BROKEN FIVE TIMES

1924	MALCOLM CAMPBELL	SUNBEAM	· 146.16 m.p.h.
1926	MALCOLM CAMPBELL	SUNBEAM	· 150.87 m.p.h.
1926	J.G.P. THOMAS	THOMAS (BABS)	· 169.30 m.p.h.
1926	J.G.P. THOMAS	THOMAS (BABS)	· 171.02 m.p.h.
1927	MALCOLM CAMPBELL	NAPIER CAMPBELL	· 174.88 m.p.h.

PARRY THOMAS WAS KILLED AT PENDINE ON MARCH 3rd. 1927
WHILST ATTEMPTING TO REGAIN THE RECORD. HIS FRIENDS
THEN BURIED HIS CAR IN THE SAND DUNES.



THE BEACH HOTEL WAS THE
HEADQUARTERS OF ALL THESE AND OTHER
GREAT RECORD ATTEMPTS. MANY FAMOUS
MEN WORKED ON THEIR MACHINES IN THE
HOTEL GARAGE AND IN THE YARD.

THIS TRIBUTE IS ERECTED TO
THEIR MEMORY BY BUCKLEYS BREWERY LTD.



It was in Edwards Airforce base, California in August 2009 that Don drove an innovative steam powered car to a new world record 148.31 mph and that cost the Inspiration project about £10 Million.

And it fired his family's desire to exceed 200 mph in a new steam car project which is, as yet, unnamed but is likely to cost an estimated £4M. Some funds have already been secured but the majority is still needed.

He hopes to see the new steam car running in a few years and believes this is the most practical power source for large vehicles without any harmful emissions.

A new age of steam could be on the horizon.



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Don Wales.



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Classic Sunbeams and their owners in attendance at Pendine for Blue Bird's world speed record centenary celebrations.

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