



# The Donald Campbell Bluebird Phenomenon..

## Introducing Sir Donald Campbell

The son of Sir Malcolm Campbell, Donald was born on March 23rd 1921. Donald's early attempts at records began with the World Water Speed Record. He used the boat Bluebird K4 for his early forays, but despite some valiant efforts, he struggled with the boat his father had used.

Donald Suffered a 170mph crash in 1951 which prompted him to develop a completely new boat which became known as the K7. This was to prove a formidable boat which saw Donald Campbell set 7 World Water Speed Records between 1955 and 1964. The first record was set at Ullswater with a speed of 202mph. This was raised to 216mph in 1958 and then 276mph at Lake Dumbleyoung in 1964. Donald's attention also involved cars, and while attempting a record run in Utah during 1960, he crashed heavily resulting in a long convalescence. It was at this time that people questioned his abilities. In 1964, Donald put all questions to rest setting a new World Land Speed Record of 403mph at Lake Eyre. Unsuccessfully attempting the "Unique Double" at Lake Bonney, Campbell moved on to Lake Dumbleyoung and successfully recorded a 276.3mph World Water Speed Record thus achieving the unique and incredible second World Water Speed Record. Donald became the first and only (to this day) person to hold both Water and Land Speed Records at the same time. Three years later on January 4th 1967 while attempting to break the unheard of 300mph speed barrier on water, Donald crashed at Conistan Water. After achieving a speed of 297 mph on the first leg, Donald Campbell set off on the second leg not waiting for the wake to settle. Exceeding the speed of 300mph, the nose of the Bluebird lifted out of the water, the boat somersaulted and disintegrated on impacting with the water surface. The Great Donald Campbell was killed instantly.

**In 1964, world renowned Donald Campbell and his dedicated team attempted to break the World Water Speed Record reaching speeds of up to 216mph on Lake bonney.**

On September 19th, 1964, the decision was made that Lake Bonney situated at Barmera South Australia would be the site for the World Water Speed Record attempt. The size and situation of the fresh water lake was considered to be ideal to achieve Campbell's goal of the "Unique Double" after having broken the Land Speed Record on Lake Eyre the same year. Eager for success, Sir Donald Campbell and his dedicated team arrived in Barmera which was alive in preparation. Barmera District Council were given exclusive use of Lake Bonney for Campbell's attempts between November 14th and 20th. Towed into position were 6 large marker buoys measuring 10ft by 10ft. The measured mile was marked by a red and yellow buoy one mile before entering the measured mile. Nine special Police Officers were stationed into Barmera along with the District Telephone Manager, Postal Manager, a picture gram unit along with extra Ambulance. The Bluebird K7 was transported by road departing Adelaide on November 6th along with the project team. Donald, his wife Tonia and project manager G. Ferret arrived on November 12th by air, landing on the 800 yard landing strip prepared specifically for them by the Barmera District Council. Donald and the team, who based themselves at the Barmera Community Hotel for the attempt duration, were welcomed amidst much fanfare.



A monument was erected to commemorate Sir Donald Campbell's World Water Speed Record attempt on Lake Bonney, Barmera S.A by the Barmera District Council. The monument is located at the Bluebird Café which is the site in which the Bluebird was housed.

## The Launch, the Attempts, the Frustration

The Bluebird entered the water for the first time since 1959 into Lake Bonney on November 12th 1964. An earlier attempt to launch the boat had failed and adjustments were made to the ramp at Bishops Boatshed. A two way radio was fitted to the Bluebird K7 to assist in the trial runs. At 3.15am the team were readying the Bluebird for it's first official trial run. By 4.30am Barmera was a hive of activities with spectators and camera crews lining the shores. Unfortunately choppy water hindered the trial but Donald Campbell indulged the large crowd by driving the Bluebird out onto the Lake at low speed. Later in the morning, Campbell did two runs reaching speeds of 210mph and later in the afternoon 3 attempts failed due to water flooding the engine. Following a delay in radio communication and firing trouble, further attempts were cancelled for the day. It was then decided that the course would be altered. On November 15th, work commenced on the alterations witnessed by large crowds as trees were blasted out of the foreshore at Donald's request. With the weather against them, Campbell and his crew awoke to strong winds on November 17th and 18th which resulted in the marker buoys which were anchored by large concrete slabs, being washed ashore. And so the set up began again. To alleviate the frustration, a charity event was held that night which led to Campbell's decision to cancel the following days trial run. The information was not transferred to all of the crew, and the following morning saw them up early finding the conditions ideal. The water of Lake Bonney were like glass, the perfect base for a World Record. With this ideal opportunity missed, inclement weather followed and it was not until November 23rd and when 3 runs took place, one of which recorded a speed of 216mph. Again, poor weather returned and it was this, along with engine and navigation problems which led the team to source a new location in which to break the record and achieve the "Unique Double". And so on, December 10th 1964, the Bluebird, Donald Campbell and his team departed to Lake Dumbleyoung in Western Australia.