



Donald Campbell: The Man Behind The Mask

David Tremayne

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Generations are familiar with the haunting black and white television footage of Donald Campbell somersaulting to his death in his famous Bluebird boat on Coniston Water in January, 1967. It has become an iconic image of the decade. His towering achievements, and the drama of his passing, are thus part of the national psyche.

But what of the man himself?

The son of the legendary Sir Malcolm Campbell who was famous for being the ultimate record-breaker of the inter-war years - he broke the land speed record nine times and the water speed record four times with his Bluebird cars and boats - Donald Campbell was born to speed. He was outgoing and flamboyant, yet carefully orchestrated the image he presented to the world. Some saw him as a playboy adventurer; others, such as the radio producer on the twenty-first anniversary of his death, as a reckless daredevil with a death wish. He was known to take solace in extra-marital dalliances, and was obsessed with spiritualism. And in his final years, battered by a 360-mph accident while attempting the land record on the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah, and his prolonged and anti-climactic subsequent effort on the treacherous Lake Eyre in Australia, Campbell appeared a haggard and often frightened man. He had become trapped on his record-breaker's treadmill as he continually sought to prove himself to his illustrious father, in whose long shadow he felt forever trapped.

DONALD CAMPBELL: THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK paints a fascinating portrait of an intense, complex, superstitious yet abnormally brave man who was driven not only by the desire to prove that he was worthy of the mantle of his father, but also by his fervent and unswerving desire to keep Britain at the forefront of international speed endeavour. This book generates a unique insight into how his desperate fear of failure finally lured him into taking one risk too many.

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