

Speed king

Donald Campbell

1921-1967

Donald's ambition was to defend the world water speed record of 141.74 mph set by his father, Sir Malcolm, in 1939.

Always a man who craved action, he had hoped to train as a pilot during World War II but poor health led to him being invalided out of the RAF.

After three unsuccessful attempts on the record, using his father's boat, he built a jet-engined vessel of his own.

This, like all his cars and boats, was called *Bluebird* – a name that became synonymous with his own.

In 1955 he recaptured the record achieving 202.32 mph.

Six successive attempts saw him finally reach 276.33 mph in Australia in 1964.

In 1960 he suffered a skull fracture in a 365 mph crash in a jet-powered car.

But in 1964 he became the first person to break the water and land speed records in the same year taking a *Bluebird* car to a shade over 403mph.

Donald's dream was to build a jet car that would break the sound barrier.

But his life was cut short in 1967 when the *Bluebird* boat somersaulted at around 300 mph and sank on Coniston Water.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/37259.html>.