



The World Water Speed Record: A History

Roy Calley

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The quest for the Water Speed Record is one of the most dangerous, least forgiving and most unheralded of endeavors. Defined by the fatal crash to Donald Campbell in 1967 on Lake Coniston, it does not have the glamour that the Land Speed Record possesses, yet hundreds have made attempts down the years – many with spectacular and sometimes tragic results.

From the first official record set in 1920 in a boat elegantly called Miss America, where an astonishing speed of 74 mph was set, to the last, fifty-eight years later, where the Spirit of Australia skimmed across the surface at over 317 mph – a speed still unsurpassed. That small 243 mph increase in just under six decades hardly tells the story of the trials and tribulations that the likes of Campbell Snr and Jnr, Segrave, Don and Warby endured. Whereas the Land Speed Record has been beaten time and again by surprisingly large margins, the Water version has been tougher and more pronounced, only being increased by percentages. This book captures the burning desire and incredible single-mindedness that is needed to take on the elements and propel a craft across water faster than anyone before ... and for what glory?

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