

## Donald Campbell's Bluebird K7 hydroplane returning to Coniston Water UK in 2026

Australian Dave Warby—son of Water Speed World Record holder Ken Warby MBE and a current world water speed challenger in Spirit of Australia II—is to be the pilot of Donald Campbell's Bluebird K7 hydroplane when it runs on Coniston Water, in the Lake District of North West England, in 2026 the Ruskin Museum has announced.

His reserve will be RAF pilot Flight Lieutenant David-John Gibbs from Grantham, Lincolnshire, who is the designated pilot for the Longbow speed record challenge being led by Dave Aldred.

With two Orpheus engines being examined and prepared for use, this announcement is the latest step toward putting Bluebird K7 back on Coniston Water for the first time since the crash that killed Donald Campbell CBE during a World Water Speed Record attempt on January 4, 1967.

Warby notes that Campbell and Bluebird K7 had been the inspiration for his father, Ken Warby MBE to successfully challenge and achieve the World Water Speed Record in 1978, reaching 317 mph. The trophy remained with him until his death last year, then was returned by the family to its custodian, the Royal Motor Yacht Club, and in Oc-

tober 2024 was reunited with K7 for the first time since Donald Campbell's tragic death.

"Seeing my father design and build Spirit of Australia in the family backyard, then setting two World Water Speed Records was a huge inspiration for me," says Warby. "Now having built and driving my own boat, Spirit of Australia II... will be invaluable in driving Bluebird K7 on Coniston Water in a safe, successful manner."

Flt Lt David-John Gibbs is Officer Commanding Tutor Standards Flight in the RAF, where he and his team ensure all Tutor flying instructors operate to the required level of proficiency. An active pilot outside work, he instructs on historic ex-military airplanes, including the Jet Provost, L29 Delfin, Chipmunk and Tiger Moth, and operates a collection of vintage gliders. To date he has logged over 6,000 flying hours on 50 different types of aircraft.

Gibbs says, "I feel exceptionally privileged to have been selected as a pilot for Bluebird K7. I'm looking forward to not only the challenge of driving the boat, but also working closely with the Ruskin Museum and the team as we bring Bluebird K7 back to running order." ■



(Top right) Dave Warby in the cockpit of his hydroplane Spirit of Australia II.  
(Right) Flt Lt David-John Gibbs. Photo: AS1 Georgia Calloway, RAF Wittering.  
(Below) Bluebird K7, © Geoff Hallawell collection c/o The Campbell Family Heritage Trust

