[00:00:00] **Interviewer:** This is The Community Brain's industrial estates heritage project. It's the 1st of September, um, and via Zoom, I'm joined by David Tremayne, uh, joining us from his home in Darlington. Darlington, isn't it, David? Is that right?

[00:00:12] **David Tremayne:** That's the one, yep. Yep.

[00:00:14] **Interviewer:** Uh, so David is a journalist and author who's written a book about Donald Campbell and his attempts to break the water speed record.

[00:00:20] **Interviewer:** Um, David, do you mind stating your name for the tape as well as your date and place of birth?

[00:00:25] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, David Tremain, December 2nd, 1952 in Highgate, London.

[00:00:31] **Interviewer:** Lovely. Um, David, I wonder if we could start by just getting, um, just a little bit on your, on your, on your background, um, professional background in, in, in journalism and, and writing.

[00:00:40] **Interviewer:** And, and, and when you first, uh, were turned onto the Donald Campbell story and why you decided to, to, to, to ultimately write a book on it?

[00:00:48] **David Tremayne:** Okay. Um, professionally, I'm a Formula One, uh, motorsport writer and author. I started, I did my first Grand Prix report in 1983, another one in 86. [00:01:00] And then the full championship from 1988.

[00:01:04] **David Tremayne:** Uh, when I was a kid, I think I was 14 when Donald Campbell had his accident on Coniston Water, January the 4th, 1967. And that basically was the inspiration for everything that's followed in my life.

[00:01:19] **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, you've got a particular interest in sort of the speed records, land speed record, water speed record, is that right?

[00:01:25] **David Tremayne:** Absolutely. Yeah, I mean, that's my kind of, uh, antidote, if you like, to too much Formula One. But I just find both land and water records a fascinating subject.

[00:01:38] **Interviewer:** Yeah, I mean, before we get into the sort of, just the overall Donald Campbell narrative, did you, did you learn anything, you know, as you were writing the book, were there any things that surprised you, did anything jump out about Donald Campbell that maybe you weren't aware of before?

[00:01:52] **David Tremayne:** Um, I think the biggest thing was what a good guy he was underneath it. He had this plummy voice and [00:02:00] this image that he liked to portray, which is why I call it the man behind the mask. Um, and certainly his second wife said she hated all the plumminess and the, um, attempts to emulate his father. And several people told me that underneath he was just a, a thoroughly decent guy that was always trying to live up to his father's image.

[00:02:23] **Interviewer:** That's interesting. Yeah. I was just going to say, I mean, we know he was born in Kingston in 1921. So that's another, you know, another local, local link. Um, but, um, yeah, I guess, I guess we can't tell the story of Donald without first talking a little bit about Sir Malcolm. Um, so yeah, what was, what was Sir Malcolm's story briefly?

[00:02:43] **Interviewer:** And, and, and, um, what was, what, give us a sense of what Donald's upbringing would have been like?

[00:02:49] **David Tremayne:** Well, he had a very wealthy upbringing. His father was a very clever guy. He did, um, some of the first libel insurance for newspapers. He was a [00:03:00] Lloyd's member. He was a racing driver originally, um, and then became fascinated, in fact obsessed would be the right word, with the land speed record. And he failed three or four times initially, and every single time that he failed, it made him so angry, he just was never going to give up, and he became, I think, indefatigable was the best word to describe him. Apart from autocratic. Um, he'd never, ever stopped pushing to break the land speed record. He broke it nine times, uh, starting at 150mph and ending at 301. And then when he'd done that, that wasn't enough. And he set four water speed records. And all the time that he was running the record cars, after he discovered Maurice Maeterlinck's play, The Blue Bird, that he'd been to see at the um, theatre in London. He decided [00:04:00] that was what he wanted to colour his cars. He was going to call them Blue Bird and he was going to paint them blue. And being Malcolm, he knocked up a salesman to open his shop and sell him the paint there and then. He couldn't wait until the next day.

[00:04:15] **David Tremayne:** That was the kind of guy that Sir Malcolm was.

[00:04:18] **Interviewer:** I mean, I guess, um, for, for some people listening to this, um, so, so the, the, the first Bluebird, uh, what, what, what year was that, um?

[00:04:28] **David Tremayne:** Oh, he, he ran the, it was a Sunbeam car that had held the land speed record. And that was built by a man called Louis Coatalen at the Sunbeam motor works, and Campbell just badgered him until he sold him the car, so that would be 1924, 25.

[00:04:47] **David Tremayne:** And his first records were in 25, and then he carried on doing that until 1935, and then the water speed records followed in. 37 and 38 and [00:05:00] 39.

[00:05:01] **Interviewer:** Right. And I guess, um,

[00:05:03] **David Tremayne:** All kind of interwar stuff, if you like.

[00:05:05] **Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. And I guess, uh, you know, people might be interested to just consider what those vehicles would have, would have, would have looked like and, and, and, and how they were engineered back then.

[00:05:15] **Interviewer:** I mean, um, yeah, if you, if we're talking the, the, the, the water ones specifically, um, I mean, what, what, what -if we try to picture what, what the early bluebirds looked like? What, what, what are you picturing?

[00:05:27] **David Tremayne:** Well, most of the cars were, in fact all of his cars, had aeroplane engines. So, after the First World War, there were plenty of surplus engines.

[00:05:37] **David Tremayne:** Principally, the one that he used was the broad arrow Napier, which was a 12 cylinder engine, but with three banks of four cylinders, which was about, um, initially 400 and something, but eventually 900 and something horsepower. And you're putting that through tyres that probably weren't even six inches wide.

[00:05:58] **David Tremayne:** Often through chain drive, [00:06:00] and you were running on beaches, and often the beaches were damp, so you can imagine how hair raising these things were to drive. And they would weigh two, two plus tons, the cars, and the boats would be powered by the same, um, either the Napier Lion, or in Malcolm's case, by then he'd gone to the Rolls Royce R type 12 cylinder airplane engine, which is what he put in his boats. And the boats were, to begin with, V-hull, so you know, like your typical cabin cruiser, if you like, but with streamlined bodywork and the engine behind you. And then his final boat was a very advanced, what's called a three pointer, so it has sponsons on the front, which lift the front clear of the water.

[00:06:47] **David Tremayne:** And then the propeller would have another, um, plating shield just in front of it. So literally, all the hull was out of the water by about six inches. So there's a lot less hydro [00:07:00] dynamic drag and the boat went much quicker as a result. And Malcolm is in the vanguard of developing. That, um, sort of new design of boat.

[00:07:08] **Interviewer:** I mean, it strikes me that this is probably not, uh, the cheapest hobby in the world. Uh, was, was, was Sir Malcolm, I mean, you mentioned that Sir Malcolm was, was wealthy. Um, I mean, was, was Sir Malcolm just privately financing all of this himself? And was it the same when, when Donald was, was doing it?

[00:07:24] **David Tremayne:** Definitely Malcolm did. Plus he had, um, some backing from people like Castrol and Dunlop. But Malcolm was very much his own man, and he knew exactly what he wanted to do, and how he wanted to do it, and everyone else had to bend to his will. And he was a very domineering father, um. Maybe not quite as, um, cruel as he sometimes seemed.

[00:07:50] **David Tremayne:** But I remember talking to, um, one of his wives, sorry - Donald's third wife, and she recalled the same thing that I'd seen [00:08:00] where his father came back from America once on board a ship, having set the land speed record. And this little boy, Donald, at 12 or 13 years old, just very much of the time with an overcoat and a tie and everything else, ran up the gang-plank and stuck his hand out to shake hands with his father for the television cameras and to say congratulations, dad. And Malcolm pretty much ignored him.

[00:08:27] **Interviewer:** Wow.

[00:08:27] **David Tremayne:** And Tonya, Tonia Byrne, who Donald married, his third wife, said that was when she fell in love with him.

[00:08:34] **David Tremayne:** She'd already met him. Um, but when he showed her the pictures of, of that, she was sort of so imbued with sympathy for this poor little kid who was all prepared to do the right thing for his dad who got ignored. And that was what Malcolm could be like. Other times he'd play with him and there's a lot of footage of them when Donald would [00:09:00] have a new toy train.

[00:09:01] **David Tremayne:** And then it would get broken because it came off the rails and Malcolm would blame him for it. He's quite, uh, quite a hard father, which is why Donald was so obsessed with the idea of impressing him. And his dad always used to say, you should never do this because you're accident prone. But what it really meant was there's only room for one star in this family.

[00:09:25] **Interviewer:** I see, I see. Yeah, yeah. It's uh, it's interesting, you know, I've heard many of those sorts of stories about someone, you know, a kid approaching a sports star for an autograph or something and being spurned away, but it's rarely that the sports star is the father.

[00:09:38] **David Tremayne:** I hate it when, I've seen a lot of drivers do that, where they'll sign something and just give it to the kid without looking.

[00:09:46] **Interviewer:** Yeah.

[00:09:46] **David Tremayne:** And you always think... Ask him what his, what his name is.

[00:09:50] **Interviewer:** Yeah.

[00:09:50] **David Tremayne:** Write it to him. That kid will be your fan forever.

[00:09:53] **Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. It's just so interesting having recently interviewed, um, Brabs, uh, who, who, who, you know, I think [00:10:00] as well.

[00:10:00] **David Tremayne:** Yep.

[00:10:00] **Interviewer:** Um, and, uh, the very, very different, you know, sort of upbringing, um, still, still with the, the famous, the famous father.

[00:10:08] **David Tremayne:** Yes.

[00:10:08] **Interviewer:** Um, but, but, but Jack in this sense was, I think was protecting Brabs away from, from, from,

[00:10:13] **David Tremayne:** Yes.

[00:10:14] **Interviewer:** From what he where, whereas,

[00:10:15] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, I don't, I don't think Jack would be the domineering kind of dad.

[00:10:20] **Interviewer:** No, no, no. But it's, um, yeah, it's just an interesting parallel to...

[00:10:25] **David Tremayne:** It's always fascinating. That is like the Andrettis, like Mario Andretti and Michael.

[00:10:32] **David Tremayne:** Um, I still think the best story on that was, uh, Mario won a race on Father's Day by less than a second from Michael. And afterwards, Michael said, I kind of thought you might let me have that one, Dad. And Mario just said, Michael, that's not the way it works. Which just sums up a racing father completely for me.

[00:10:54] **Interviewer:** Absolutely, I think it sums up a lot of things about fatherhood. Very good. [00:11:00] Um, yes, so, uh, so yeah, how many times does Sir Malcolm break the record? Does he, does he just do it once

[00:11:05] **David Tremayne:** Nine, nine landspeed and four water.He's the one who has set the most land speed records of anyone. The next closest is Craig Breedlove with five.

[00:11:20] **Interviewer:** And he, um, and he passes away not long after the war, 19, 1948. And then it's not long

[00:11:26] **David Tremayne:** Last day of 48.

[00:11:27] **Interviewer:** Yeah, and it's, uh, not long after that, that the, the record, the, the water speed record, I think, is, is, is lost to the, to, to the United States, is that right?

[00:11:36] **David Tremayne:** Well, in 1949, Donald was told that, uh, uh, Henry Kaiser, a very wealthy industrialist, was going to go after the record. As it turned out, he didn't get it, his boat was a complete failure, but in 1950... Um, the Americans, they took the three point hydroplane one step further and made the propeller at the back the third point of support, so even [00:12:00] less of the boat was in the water.

[00:12:02] **David Tremayne:** And an ironically named boat called Slo-mo-shun IV broke the record. And that was what Donald was determined to defend, his father's record. And that was the boat that he was challenging with his father's old boat, but in modified form. Um, that basically disemboweled itself, um, in 1951 with a gearbox failure.

[00:12:27] **David Tremayne:** Um, and thereafter he was out of the game. And then a guy called John Cobb... who had gone on to set land speed records, died trying to break the water speed record in 1952, and that was when Donald decided, I'm going to have another go. And the thing Donald had in common with his dad was a man called Leo Villa, and Leo was Malcolm's chief mechanic, but where he was an employee, very much an employee, he was called Villa all the time by Malcolm. [00:13:00] He was Unc to Donald because he was more like an uncle and he'd seen, you know, Donald's, since he was a kid, since he was born and often helped him out of scrapes with his dad. So Donald had a much closer relationship with this guy and between them and the Norris brothers they came up with the K7 hydroplane with a jet powered um, boat.

[00:13:24] **Interviewer:** Cos am I right in thinking it's the K4 that breaks the records for, for, for Donald. Sorry, Sir Malcolm.

[00:13:30] **David Tremayne:** No Malcolm. The K3 was the first one,

[00:13:32] **Interviewer:** The K3.

[00:13:33] **David Tremayne:** Then the K4. And then five is an unsuccessful boat. A hydrophile called White Hawk. K6 was John Cobb's Crusader, and then K7 was, um, Donald's very, very successful Bluebird, um, jet boat.

[00:13:53] **Interviewer:** Yeah. So, uh, tell me about the, a little bit about the K7 itself. I mean, what, what, we know, so we [00:14:00] know that there was, uh, it was tested in these Siebe Gorman tanks, which is why we're, you know, why we picked up on this story.

[00:14:06] **David Tremayne:** It wasn't so much that there was tested, it was a mock up of the hull, because... One of the things Ken Norris, um, we talked quite a lot over the years, but one of the things he had to address with himself was the safety factors because of the responsibility that he felt and his brother, Lou, the responsibility they had for a human life.

[00:14:32] **David Tremayne:** And one of the things, the Siebe Gorman, the Gorman tank that they went in was to, um, familiarise Donald with, if the boat sank, how would he get out and to test the oxygen system and everything else. So he did that, um, typically the press were there watching the whole thing and he was lowered 25 [00:15:00] feet into the water and then undid his belt and sort of pushed himself out to go to the surface.

[00:15:06] **David Tremayne:** So that was one of the, quite an early safety measure actually at a time when that was usually the last thing that anyone would think about.

[00:15:15] **Interviewer:** I see. Yeah. So he's not, he's not testing the boat itself for, for its speed or anything. It's just about, it's testing, it's the contingency in case of a

[00:15:22] **David Tremayne:** Yeah.

[00:15:22] **Interviewer:** Case of emergency.

[00:15:23] **David Tremayne:** Absolutely. But,

[00:15:24] **Interviewer:** So that,

[00:15:24] **David Tremayne:** But a very important part of it.

[00:15:26] **Interviewer:** Yeah. So that, so that picture that you shared, uh, which is, which is an amazing picture. Um, so I can see that, that, that it's kind of open above him. So is he about to

[00:15:35] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, exactly.

[00:15:35] **Interviewer:** Get out at that, at that, at that stage.

[00:15:38] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, it's what you would call now if you were doing a powerboat license, colloquially it's known as a dunk test.

[00:15:46] **Interviewer:** Right.

[00:15:46] **David Tremayne:** You have to do- these days you have to do it underwater upside down and show that you can undo belts and all the things you need to do staying calm to get yourself back to the surface.

[00:15:58] **Interviewer:** It's fascinating. Yeah. And, and, and you [00:16:00] said, um, that the, the, the press would've been there, you know, the public would've been there.

[00:16:04] **David Tremayne:** It's all publicity, you know, uh, not the public so much, but it was always, everything the Campbells ever did was with an eye of what the publicity would be. Because in a way, the publicity's the oxygen that helps you fund these things.

[00:16:17] **Interviewer:** And, and, and he would've been very much a, a celebrity at the time he would've been known, known?

[00:16:21] **David Tremayne:** Oh yeah. Yes. Yeah. He was well known. Um, not so much because he hadn't been successful then, but he was well known as Campbell's son, and he liked, very much liked that limelight.

[00:16:32] **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, um, oh, hold on one second. My, sorry, my headphones just came out, so I wasn't hearing you. Were you saying something just then?

[00:16:46] **David Tremayne:** Uh, just, just Donald loved the limelight.

[00:16:49] **Interviewer:** Right, right. Okay. Yeah. Sorry. Yeah. Literally cable just came out. Um, um, yes. So, yes. So the K7, um, so what is it about it that makes it such a [00:17:00] success when, um, he eventually does break the, uh, the water speed record?

[00:17:04] **David Tremayne:** Well, this, it was a different kind of boat.

[00:17:06] **David Tremayne:** Um, everything that you didn't need from the front of the boat was taken away. So if you think of it, it looked like a lobster. So instead of having the pointed nose and the sponsons either side, had two separate sponsons attached to a very narrow fuselage by spars. And then behind him was the engine. It was very boy's own sort of space vehicle appearance in the 50s.

[00:17:32] **David Tremayne:** You can imagine it was sort of very much a groundbreaking boat, but it didn't really look like a boat. And the fact that it took a little while to develop it, but then he would break the water speed record almost every year. Mainly because if he upped his record he got five grand from Billy Butlin, the holiday magnate.

[00:17:54] **Interviewer:** Oh, that's interesting. Where did that, why did that connection come about?

[00:17:59] **David Tremayne:** Uh, I [00:18:00] can't remember how they became friendly. But, um, Butlin liked him and, um, created a cup for the holder, for the breaker of the water speed record, so Campbell would very sensibly, um, keep something in reserve each time.

[00:18:22] **Interviewer:** Oh, he was intentionally not going as fast as he could.

[00:18:25] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, he would bump it up. He broke the record twice in 55, and then I think Butlin came in from like 56 onwards. And then he broke it in 56, 57, 58, and 59. And then he started a car project, which occupied him until 1964, and then at the last day of 64, he'd broken the land speed record himself in the middle of the year in July.

[00:18:55] **David Tremayne:** And then he got the old, uh, K7 out of mothballs, [00:19:00] and as luck would have it, succeeded in breaking the water speed record on the 31st of December. So he became the first guy, and the only guy to break both those big records in the same calendar year, which is an outstanding kind of achievement when you think about it.

[00:19:18] **Interviewer:** Yes. Yes, absolutely. Yeah. I mean, it's, it's so interesting you mentioned that cash incentive because I was, I, I'm there looking at it and I'm going seven, seven records broken over, over nine years. And I was, you know, my, my question was going to be, well, why was he so addicted to breaking this record? And, you know, but no, no, now, now,

[00:19:37] **David Tremayne:** It was quite a pragmatic thing.

[00:19:38] **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:19:39] **David Tremayne:** And, you know, he got a lot of criticism for it, um, but yeah, I mean he was just, he had a lot of expenses building that thing, and he had a very expensive lifestyle. Um, he had three marriages, so he sort of had a couple of divorces along the way, which I don't suppose were [00:20:00] cheap even then, so it was a sensible thing to do in a way.

[00:20:04] **David Tremayne:** Some people would feel maybe that he, Stirling Moss, for example, didn't like the way he kept sort of holding something in reserve, but it was only like, you know, Stirling wouldn't drive his cars flat out all the time. He would do enough to win. And, you know, the different kind of lives they led, but, um, you know, Campbell had a, he wanted to be a professional record breaker and 5,000 pounds a year in those days was pretty good money.

[00:20:35] **Interviewer:** And you mentioned that, um, he was known, he was known prior to breaking the record as Malcolm's son. Does he then, you know, become more of a figure in his own right?

[00:20:46] **David Tremayne:** Very much so, yeah.

[00:20:48] **Interviewer:** And is it a proud British export as well, the fact that we've got the record?

[00:20:51] **David Tremayne:** Hugely so. Yeah, and I mean, he was, um, operating at a time when we had Mike Hawthorn, Stirling Moss, Peter Collins, Stuart [00:21:00] Lewis-Evans.

[00:21:00] **David Tremayne:** We had a lot of very good British racing drivers that were winning, um, and British motor racing was beginning, thanks to Tony Vandervell, beginning to gather speed. So, all of this was um, very, very good publicity for, for Britain. And Campbell was, both Campbells were hugely patriotic. I mean, it would be unfair to say, um, Malcolm Campbell was fired purely by ego.

[00:21:28] **David Tremayne:** He did have a very strong sense of, um, nationality. And he wanted to get the records back when America took them. And so did Donald. You know, both of them did it very much for, Queen and country.

[00:21:41] **Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. And the 50s and 60s are a time when Britain is projecting itself quite, quite, quite successfully on the, on the, on the, on the global stage.

[00:21:48] **Interviewer:** Um, I mean, 60s, obviously, you know, culturally, pop culturally, um, but, uh, even 50s, you go back to the Festival of Britain.

[00:21:56] **David Tremayne:** That's a very good point you raise because what was happening [00:22:00] to Donald from, say, 64 onwards, you had the Beatles, flower power, Carnaby Street, um, this sort of middle aged guy in a pinstripe suit didn't really make it with the young kids anymore, and he very much was feeling out of his time by the, by the end.

[00:22:19] **David Tremayne:** So, um, yeah, his best years were the 50s for sure.

[00:22:23] **Interviewer:** Yeah. So, um, yeah, and then his, his eventual demise happens whilst, once again, trying to, to break the record. Is that correct? Uh, January, January 67. Tell us, tell us what, what happens. And, and, and also, I think, as interestingly, what happens afterwards, uh, regarding, you know, the failure to, to find his, his body and, and, and the wreckage of the boat.

[00:22:45] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, the interesting thing was, um. He always used to justify going back in 1966, as it was, late 66, to Coniston by the fact that the Americans were challenging for his record. And everybody's saying, yeah, yeah, [00:23:00] whatever. That's an excuse. Of course, it wasn't. If you did your homework, there was... Craig Breedlove, Art Arfons, his two land speed rivals, both talking about building boats.

[00:23:11] **David Tremayne:** There's a guy called Lee Taylor who did build a boat and who subsequently broke Campbell's record six months after he died. Um, so he was, what he wanted to do was break the record, break 300 miles an hour, and then he wanted to use that to find the finance for a supersonic car. That was his next project, a rocket powered supersonic car. So he went to Coniston, he had a lot of trouble with engines and the weather in the winter of 66. And then comes 67 early on. He actually ran on Christmas Day and Boxing Day when there was virtually nobody there. They'd all gone back, all the timekeepers and most of his crew had gone back for Christmas.

[00:23:59] **David Tremayne:** [00:24:00] Um, and Leo Villa was really angry when he found out because he did about 280 miles an hour with just a handful of people helping. But I love that story because it says so much about his spirit. Um, he got a lot of bad press because of the problems, and inevitably there was all this nonsense about was he really scared and not wanting to do it, which is such a cheap, stupid media thing to do.

[00:24:26] **David Tremayne:** Um, none of them would have got in it and done it. And you can only do these things when the vehicle works. So he was going through all the problems and solving them with his team. And then on the fourth, he did one run at 297 miles an hour, so he was only three miles off what- he needed two, two runs over 300.

[00:24:48] **David Tremayne:** And one of the things he'd done, well that Ken Norris had done, was put a water brake on the back of the boat, which was literally a rod that dropped down when you pressed the brake pedal, [00:25:00] and the extra drag slowed the boat up quite significantly. And it's- my feeling is anyway, that he roughened up the water quite a lot when you did the first run, but you could, if you turned around, you could go back very quickly before the, the flow of the water ebbed back in onto your course, and I think he underestimated how much the water break disturbed the surface.

[00:25:29] **David Tremayne:** So on his second run, he was traveling at an estimated 328 miles an hour when the boat kept doing this thing, walking from sponson to sponson, sort of rocking, called tramping. And eventually the aerodynamic lift was such that it did a two hundred, a three hundred and sixty degree arc, took off somersaulted backwards and then went nose first into the lake at certainly over two hundred miles an [00:26:00] hour.

[00:26:00] **David Tremayne:** So a massive impact that was impossible to survive. And the boat was spread, the wreckage was spread over for a couple of square miles probably. So, nothing happened for years. Um, the idea, I remember talking to Innes Ireland, the racing driver, who tried to, um, tried to take over but couldn't find the funding.

[00:26:25] **David Tremayne:** And then gradually, Leo died and, you know, the whole Campbell saga, um, toned down significantly because nobody was coming up to, to take over. And then a diver called Bill Smith knew where the, he'd dived and found the wreckage. And the rear end was intact, but the whole front of the boat was missing. And eventually Bill, um, found all of the stuff and had permission to raise the boat.

[00:26:57] **David Tremayne:** It's like saying, okay, do you like [00:27:00] jigsaws? And him saying, yeah, well, I've got a thousand piece jigsaw. Um, they're all kind of life size bits. Um, oh, by the way, they're 300 feet underwater in silt in really almost impossible visibility. Do you fancy finding all those bits and gluing them back together? And that's exactly what the Bluebird Project did.

[00:27:23] **David Tremayne:** And the boat ran a couple of years back, 2017, I think, or 18, I think. Um, on Johnny Dumfries, the racing driver's loch, up in Bute, on Loch Fad. And when you look at it, you think, mentally, you're thinking replica, but it's not. It's, it's the actual boat, rebuilt brilliantly, um, and it's iconic. You know, you think, this is a British, a symbol of British success.

[00:27:53] **David Tremayne:** With a tragic, not just a tragic, but a glorious backstory that was ultimately tragic. [00:28:00] And that's why it's such an important historic artefact, if you like.

[00:28:05] **Interviewer:** Absolutely, yeah. And I'm, I'm, you know, you might, you might not want to touch this with a 12 foot barge pole, but I'm led to believe that there's legal disputes ongoing over as to where the, the, the K7 is, is, is going to live.

[00:28:15] **Interviewer:** Is that, is that right? I've not quite understood.

[00:28:18] **David Tremayne:** No, you're absolutely right.

[00:28:19] **Interviewer:** Who's in dispute with whom?

[00:28:22] **David Tremayne:** The Campbell Family Heritage Trust and the Ruskin Museum are in dispute with Bill Smith and the Bluebird Project. Um, I'm very fond of Gina Campbell. I'm very fond of, um, the whole Campbell saga, as you probably realise, but I'm also very fond of Bill, and Bill, I rely on Bill for my safety with my project.

[00:28:47] **David Tremayne:** So, I s- I'd basically like to see somebody make them all sit down and just agree how they're going to go forward together. That's all I'll say. Um, it's probably [00:29:00] gone beyond that, which is very sad, but it's such a great story. It's a shame it's kind of got to this.

[00:29:07] **Interviewer:** Yeah.

[00:29:08] **David Tremayne:** I still hope something could be done.

[00:29:11] **David Tremayne:** Don Wales is, um, Donald Campbell's nephew, and Don, it's Don and Gina, and the Campbell Family Heritage Trust. And I've known both of them for ages, and they, I think of them as good friends, the same way I do Bill. And I can see why both sides have got arguments and disagreements and everything. I just wish it was something that could be... resolved to the benefit of all.

[00:29:38] **Interviewer:** Yeah.

[00:29:38] **David Tremayne:** Because what would be beautiful, it's such an inspiring story. And it- it wasn't something I learned about Campbell, because it was pretty obvious right from the start, but I love people who don't give up and he never gave up. Um, and that was one of the lessons, um, that I learned from him more than anything else.

[00:29:57] **David Tremayne:** Don't give up. Just keep pushing for [00:30:00] whatever you want. And for kids, young kids and everything else. We talk about wanting kids these days to go into the STEM subjects. Well, those kind of projects are exactly what inspire them. You know, if Bluebird ran, um, three or four times a year somewhere and then the rest of the time was on display and people could go and look at it.

[00:30:24] **David Tremayne:** I think that would be a very, very good, um, uh, project to attract young people.

[00:30:32] **Interviewer:** Yeah, because it's not currently, it's not currently publicly, publicly displayed, it's with, it's with Bill Smith at the minute, is that right?

[00:30:37] **David Tremayne:** Yeah.

[00:30:38] **Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Um, so, uh, have you got five minutes just to talk Brabham real quick?

[00:30:44] **David Tremayne:** Of course, yes, yes, yes.

[00:30:45] **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, so, so I mean, you know, the reason we're talking about Donald Campbell and K7 is because we're aware of this Siebe Gorman link where they, uh, where, you know, as we discussed earlier, but just, uh, within the same industrial estate complex, uh, we had the Brabham [00:31:00] Formula One team for, for a number of years under Bernie Ecclestone's leadership.

[00:31:04] **Interviewer:** Um, so I just want to get you to reflect real quick, um, on, on A, Brabham, Brabham's importance, um, in, in Formula One history, you know, um, not just Jack Brabham, but then the, the, the wider team name, and then what they were able to achieve in those Bernie years, um, including the, the, the championship triumphs with Nelson Piquet.

[00:31:25] **David Tremayne:** Well, Brabham was, uh, as a driver, Brabham was, um, pretty good. I think he's underrated by a lot of people. Um, everyone knows about Jim Clark, Graham Hill, John Surtees, Jackie Stewart, Jochen Rindt. Jack was as good as those guys on his day, and if you think, if Jack had been luckier in 1970, he would have walked away into retirement with a fourth world championship.

[00:31:51] **David Tremayne:** Now that's quite a, for a guy who was 44 years old. He went to the, um, 1966 Dutch Grand [00:32:00] Prix. He just turned 40 and everyone was talking about how old he was. So he went to the line, he had a jack handle as a walking stick and he put on a false beard and sort of hobbled to the grid and then he won the race.

[00:32:14] **David Tremayne:** Admittedly, he was lucky when Jim Clark broke down, but Jack won the race. Um, so as a driver, he was right up there, but also he and his, um, design partner, Ron Tauranac, they were both incredibly pragmatic. Jack didn't spend anything more than he needed to, and Tauranac was not only similar, but he was a hugely pragmatic designer, and what he wanted most was a car that handled.

[00:32:45] **David Tremayne:** So, it was driver friendly, and this was in the 60s. And they were very good at it. They made production cars for Formula 2, Formula 3. They made Grand Prix cars. Jack was the first man and one [00:33:00] of only two ever to win a Grand Prix in a car bearing his name, the other being Bruce McLaren two years later. So Brabham itself, they won the World Championship in Brabham, him as a driver, won it in 59 and 60, and again in 66, but in his own car.

[00:33:20] **David Tremayne:** And the following year, Denny Hulme won it at Brabham. And then the team sort of slowly began to slide, and Bernie Ecclestone bought it in late 71. And Bernie had a completely different way of running everything. And then he brought in a young, talented South African called Gordon Murray. And Gordon was in the forefront of a lot of technical developments in the early 70s.

[00:33:50] **David Tremayne:** And they had drivers like Carlos Reutemann, Carlos Pace, John Watson, and then Nelson, uh, Niki Lauda, then Nelson Piquet. Um, they were all really [00:34:00] quick. And Gordon's cars were not only clever, but they were very drivable as well. So, completely different people. Bernie was certainly not Jack Brabham and vice versa.

[00:34:11] **David Tremayne:** Bernie was a businessman and nobody's fool. Um, but he was also very good at delegating and, you know, he would outline the rules by which he wanted people to work and then leave them to get on with it. And Brabham was very successful again. As you mentioned, you had the championships with Nelson Piquet.

[00:34:36] **David Tremayne:** Bernie and Jack were totally different people, but they both made Brabham a huge success. And Bernie mastered the art, which Jack Oliver copied with Arid(?), of selling it, like on a piece of elastic, so people could at least buy it for a while, and then he'd bring it back in. But, um, that operation he ran at Chessington, everybody knew where they were, and [00:35:00] what they could get away with, and what they couldn't.

[00:35:03] **David Tremayne:** And this was in the days when Bernie had his office there. Um, and spent more time there than he did up in London, in this place in Prince's Gate. Um, and I think I told you that story about him disliking the way the phone, an old fashioned phone was on the wall. The, uh, the leader was always curled round and twisted up and it wasn't quite straight.

[00:35:27] **David Tremayne:** And something had annoyed him coming into the office one day, and he just ripped it off the wall. Smashed it on the floor and said, get that fixed, otherwise I'm going to close this place down. And everyone was kinda, whoa, okay. And then two minutes later, he poked his head back around the door and said, don't think you're dealing with a rational man because you're not.

[00:35:48] **David Tremayne:** And that's typical Bernie. Um, I mean, if you looked at the Brabhams, in Jack's day, they were always nice cars. They were very nice cars. But in Bernie's days, they were immaculate. [00:36:00] Everything about this operation was super professional, rather like Ron Dennis with McLaren. Hugely professional preparation and presentation.

[00:36:11] **Interviewer:** I think you mentioned on the phone that Bernie, like, with his own cars and vehicles, he likes to have them absolutely perfectly lined up. And you said something about the trucks, that they used to swap the licenses around.

[00:36:21] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, well my friend Alan Henry, the late Alan Henry, a journalist, went to interview Bernie at, um, Compton and Ecclestone, I think it was called, somewhere down near Welling, in the days when Bernie was just a car dealer.

[00:36:36] **David Tremayne:** And he had motorbikes as well, and every single bike was lined up outside with the wheels, front wheels were all at the same angle. And the trucks that took everything to races, certainly in the 80s and 90s, were all silver. They were all FOM type trucks. And they all had consecutive number plates. I don't quite know how he arranged that, but that's [00:37:00] another typical sort of bit of Bernieism.

[00:37:03] **David Tremayne:** Um, but they didn't always park in numerical order, but for the sake of appearances, they had number plates that were stuck over the others, like FOM-1, FOM-2, whatever. So everything looked absolutely perfect. The other thing was, if you went into the media car park, the parking, car parking attendants were so pedantic.

[00:37:28] **David Tremayne:** Just a bit more, a bit more, a bit more, and you think, for heaven's sake, you know, career parking, this is ridiculous. But Bernie was thinking of the helicopter shots above where everything looked perfectly laid out. It was that kind of attention to detail. And you'd have to say that's one of the reasons why he was so successful.

[00:37:48] **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, am I right in saying you mentioned on the phone that you worked with Brabham, uh, for a period?

[00:37:54] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, I worked for Brabham in 1991, writing press releases at races. [00:38:00] So Teddy Mayer was actually running the team then. Sergio Rinland was the designer, and Martin Brundle and Mark Blundell were the drivers.

[00:38:14] **Interviewer:** Was this where they were based at Chessington, and were you visiting there yourself?

[00:38:19] **David Tremayne:** You might say that was the last wholly professional year of Brabham, because from 92 it went to Middlebridge and Dennis Nursey, and the money was nothing like as strong, and they had Giovanna Amati and Damon Hill as the drivers.

[00:38:37] **David Tremayne:** Um, I went down to Chessington a couple of times. And I also think, I'm pretty sure it was Chessington we went to for a company called Activa, which I think initially was a spin off of Bernie's companies. And then it was owned by Herbie Blash, who was Bernie's loyal lieutenant, along with Charlie Whiting for such a long time.

[00:38:59] **David Tremayne:** Um, and we [00:39:00] actually did some wind tunnel testing down there.

[00:39:02] **Interviewer:** Right. Do you remember much about the Chessington site, the sort of physical layout?

[00:39:07] **David Tremayne:** It was very tidy. It was always very smart. Um, everyone looked smart. You know, there was nothing dirty on the floor. Bernie wouldn't have countenanced that. Um, and I worked for his magazine up in town.

[00:39:20] **David Tremayne:** Same deal. You know, he didn't like food on the, on the desks. He liked everything to look really smart. And that attention to detail was, it just seems like, um, in his veins. So everything that Bernie worked on had to be run on those lines. It was a very professional team, Brabham, and very successful. Um, you know, they won some extremely good races.

[00:39:48] **David Tremayne:** And of course they won two championships. So,

[00:39:52] **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, um, but yeah, sadly by the time David, uh, races with them, it's sort of, it's, by that stage they've sort of hit, hit, hit [00:40:00] difficult times under, under new ownership.

[00:40:01] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, so they sort of slightly, that was in 1990, so it was all a bit sad.

[00:40:08] **Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, um, yeah, but it's a, it's a fascinating story and there's one, one final, um, uh, story from those years that I think is an interesting one is this, is this fan car, uh, that, that, that wins, that wins one race.

[00:40:23] **Interviewer:** So what's the, what's, what's the story there and what's the kind of agreement that is come to afterwards?

[00:40:29] **David Tremayne:** Well, uh, Gordon Murray was, was experimenting and that year he came up with a sort of triangular shaped car and he wanted to use surface radiators. So you could get a nice pointed nose on the car, and it didn't, didn't work.

[00:40:46] **David Tremayne:** And then you had to put big wide radiators and a big wide nose on it. But behind the scenes, there's a guy called David North, and he'd seen what Jim Hall, an American designer, of the Chaparral [00:41:00] Cars had done in 1970, which was, it was a very ugly car, the Chaparral 2J. It was in a series called Can-Am, Canadian American Sports Car Championship, so these things had like 8 litre Chevy engines.

[00:41:16] **David Tremayne:** Um, and did well over 200 miles now and were absolute beasts. This car looked like a shoebox, but it almost like a kid had made a, a model car out of a shoebox. But what it did, it had two snowmobile engines also in the back, which sucked all the air from under the car. So it had these little skirts to seal it and it would literally suck the air up.

[00:41:41] **David Tremayne:** And the thing was, I don't know, a couple of seconds a lap faster than the dominant McLarens. So everyone was, oh, you know, we can't have this. And he, I think he did two races, one with Jackie Stewart and one with Vic Elford, then it was banned. And David North's sort of concept was [00:42:00] very similar, but you couldn't have snowmobile engines, so he had a fan above the engine, which was an Alfa Romeo flat-12.

[00:42:09] **David Tremayne:** So instead of being V shaped, it was horizontally opposed. So it lent itself to that and they put a fan on it, sealed the car underneath. And they had this sort of outlet at the back that looked like a dustbin and was actually covered by a dustbin lid when it wasn't running. And the idea was that they would say the fan was for engine cooling, but of course, what it did, and I actually saw it testing at Brands Hatch before it was taken out of service, let's say.

[00:42:41] **David Tremayne:** And I think it was... I think it was Niki who was driving it, and when it was idling, he would blip the throttle and the car would drop down. A bit like, um, a Mexican lowrider, because it was sucking the air out and sucking the car down to the ground. Well, it went to the Swedish Grand Prix in [00:43:00] 1976. On the- sorry, 78, and the dominant car was the Lotus 79, Mario Andretti and Nick- and Ronnie Peterson.

[00:43:09] **David Tremayne:** And Niki Lauda annihilated Mario in the race. And won comfortably, and of course everyone was crying because they'd have to build similar cars, which actually wasn't that difficult to do. They could have all done it, and they would have probably had two fans or, you know, whatever. Um, but, you know, they argued. You said, um, the other day that Mario was moaning about the debris that was being blown out at him, which of course would have been sucked from his own, under his own car and would have been blown onto whoever was following. So, yeah, that's Formula One for you. And in the end, um, Bernie ran FOCA, which was an association of all the teams anyway, and he sort of listened to everyone [00:44:00] complaining and agreed that the car would no longer race, but it wasn't banned. And he's very adamant that it was not banned.

[00:44:11] **David Tremayne:** He chose to take it out of service, so it did win that one race. And it's a fantastic story because it's a great idea of clever lateral thinking.

[00:44:22] **Interviewer:** Yeah, absolutely. And

[00:44:24] **David Tremayne:** It's a little bit like having an engine and it produces a load of power and you have a wing car like the Lotus that goes along and it sucks itself down because of the motion, but it's like having a supercharger on the engine so it just doesn't breathe in, you force the air into it.

[00:44:42] **David Tremayne:** It was the supercharging equivalent of aerodynamics. We're saying, we will put something in here which will literally help the car, even when it's not moving, to suck the air out from underneath. And it was extremely clever, and it was a beautiful looking car, very elegant. And it did one [00:45:00] race and won. And that was it.

[00:45:02] **Interviewer:** Fascinating. It's a fascinating story.

[00:45:04] **David Tremayne:** Bernie was good enough to sort of figure, okay, I won't keep it. I think that says, it says a lot about his sportsmanship actually.

[00:45:15] **Interviewer:** Yeah, it was a gentleman's agreement that ultimately had it, had it, had it withdrawn.

[00:45:19] **David Tremayne:** Sort of, yes. Gentleman isn't a word many people associate with Formula One.

[00:45:27] **Interviewer:** Yeah, no, um, yeah, it's, it's a fascinating story and one that ties into sort of, or, you know, a lot of what we're talking about in the industrial estate and also we're, we're, we're, tying into activity that we're doing next year around the Mini Cooper, 60 years on from the Monte Carlo triumph, uh, which was designed, or hacked as we're using the term, in Surbiton, in the garage in Surbiton, with the Cooper brothers there.

[00:45:49] **Interviewer:** So, all of this is like, innovation around, um, and then the Donald Campbell as well.

[00:45:55] **David Tremayne:** Yeah, and of course, the Cooper thing also was, um, rear engine cars existed [00:46:00] um, before the war, but they were popularised again after the war by Charles Cooper and his son John. And, you know, that led to a continuation of the British domination. And all from this one little area.

[00:46:17] **Interviewer:** And, and, and, and that ties those two, those two separate strands together. Though we were talking earlier about the pop culture, you know, Britain projecting itself in the 60s and the Mini, the Mini became a huge part of that. But then, but then also a sporting triumph as well.

[00:46:31] **Interviewer:** So, um, it's, uh, yeah, that's, that's one of the reasons we're really keen to celebrate it next year, and that's a whole other story that we could go into, but I'm conscious that I've already kept you for far longer than, uh, than you said you had. So, um, so yes, we'll, we'll, we'll wrap it up there, but I'm, I'm sure I, um, we'll be back in touch again in the future.

[00:46:50] **David Tremayne:** If there's anything you think I might know about, I'm happy to talk about it.

[00:46:52] **Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.