

# Joe Scalzo's

## City of Speed and elsewhere

### Cobb

Five Englishmen -- Parry Thomas, Malcolm Campbell, Henry Segrave, George Eyston, and John Rhodes Cobb (1899-1952) -- spent parts of the first half of the Twentieth Century racing gargantuan six- and eight-wheel projectiles, with each one of them battling to make himself the planet's fastest man. Cobb and his piston-engine Railton Special won the battle, setting a new World Land Speed Record of 350 mph in 1938; another new one of 369 mph in 1939; and then, in 1947, hurtling across the Bonneville Salt Flats at 394.19 mph -- an LSR standard which lasted for almost 20 years.



But Cobb, in 1954, committed the fatal mistake of going amphibious. On the same Scottish Lake said to be home to the Loch Ness Monster, Crusader, his jet engine speed boat, struck

**an unexpected wake at 200 mph and Cobb was thrown out and drowned. In honor of his exploit, the citizens of Glenurquhart, on the Loch Ness shore, erected a Cobb memorial which still stands.**



**Cobb was a giant standing better than six feet tall, and weighing 220 pounds. He was born in 1899, in village of Esher near Brooklands, the world's fastest banked racing track, 2.7 miles to the lap which he frequented as a boy and would set many speed records as a man. It was the personal financial resources Cobb earned as managing director of a number of companies in the fur trade that permitted him to fuel his passion for high-speed racing.**

**Cobb's wins and records at Brooklands were numerous: In 1925 he won his first race in a ten-liter Fiat; in 1929 to 1933, in a 10.5 liter Delage imported from Paris just for him, he broke the flying start record three times and won the British Empire Trophy; and in 1933 commissioned the design of the Napier Railton, powered by a huge V-12 aircraft engine.**

**The Napier-Railton was Cobb's monster – applying anything above quarter-throttle made it impossible to keep on the ground. Even so, the Napier-Railton set the all-time Brooklands lap record of 143.44 mph; twice won the Brooklands 500; broke the world's one-hour mark; and never maimed Cobb.**

**World War Two shut down Brooklands and the LSR business and Cobb, leery of air raids, buried his record-holding Railton Special for the conflict's duration. Then from 1943**

**through 1945 enlisted as a pilot in the Royal Air Force and was discharged with the rank of Group Captain. Cobb was a patriot.**



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