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EASTER SPORT GUIDE - FIRESTONE RALLY - MUGELLO

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Brian Culcheth's Dolomite wins Hackle Rally

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S MOTOR SPORTING WEEKLY

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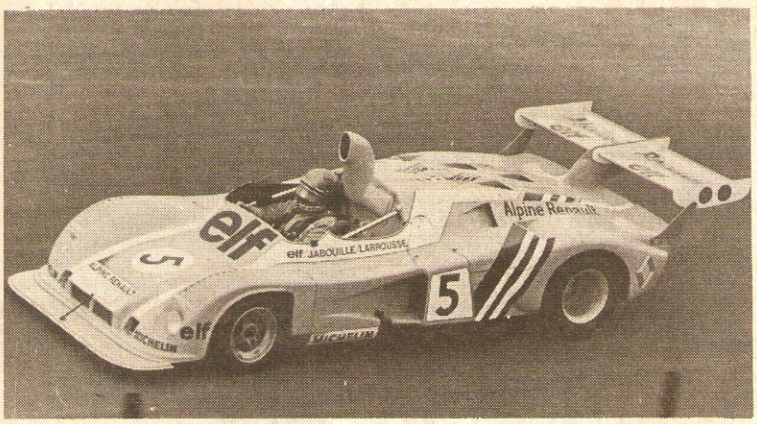

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EDITORIAL

Let's work together

A few short weeks ago, the future of International sports car racing was looking extremely bleak. The World Championship of Makes had suffered badly over the winter months from the economic climate and the loss of works teams like Matra-Simca and Alfa Romeo. No one really seemed to believe the current sports car regulations would work and consequently, prospects of any major teams taking part in this year's World series seemed resigned to wealthy privateers.

A further nail in this year's championship came when the FIA announced its new regulations for Groups 5 and 6 which come into effect next year. There were howls of protest from various divisions within the sport when it looked as if the FIA had written the rules to suit their own interests — namely Alpine-Renault, who themselves are financed through the French government in a roundabout sort of way.

Following Matra's courteous withdrawal, due to the simple fact of finance, and also because they'd achieved everything they'd set out to do (like winning Le Mans three times in a row and the World Championship of Makes), Renault were equally quick to jump on the band-wagon. Revelling within a vast motor racing budget, it looked as if Alpine had killed sports car racing stone dead when they announced they would run a turbocharged car in the championship. No one would be able to compete. After all, no one could afford it. However, at Mugello last weekend, the World Championship of Makes took on a new lease of life. For how long it will remain this way, who knows.

Having originally had to withdraw from the series late last year because they simply couldn't afford to continue, Alfa Romeo came back. They came back simply because a wealthy German driver, himself a staunch sports car supporter, took it upon himself to find the finance to run the team. Alfa were delighted. It enabled them to continue on a less taxing basis.

The process continued. Porsche have found several wealthy privateers who have given new life to what were obsolete cars. Another German has followed suit and is in the process of running the Gulf Mirage team, albeit under a different banner.

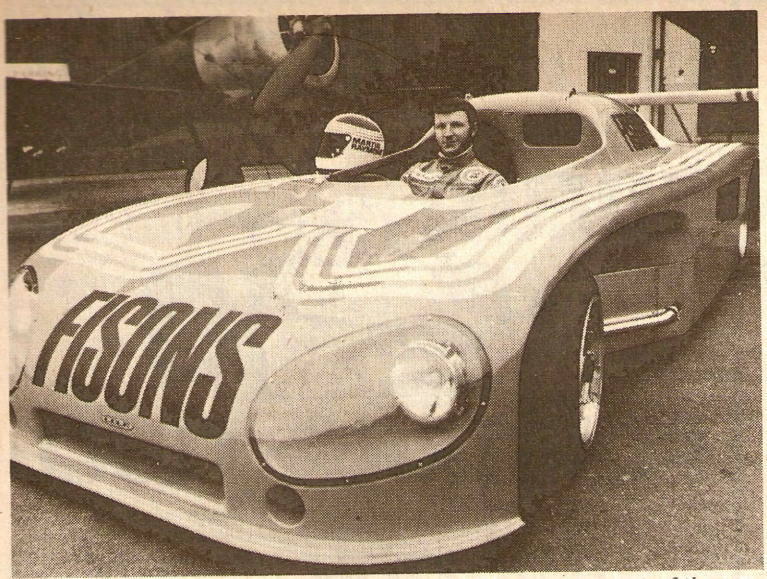
What some of these entrants have in common is that they come from Interserie racing. That in itself has suffered badly and, like virtually all the sports car divisions, and that includes GT, segregation is not necessarily the best way for success. Integration is the word. It is needed now more than at any other time. At last people are beginning to realise. Action taken now has already given the World Championship of Makes a new renaissance. True, the Alpine won. It may well carry on winning, rather like Matra, but as long as people are encouraged to work together, then motor sport will always benefit.

Mugello was a lesson in just that. We must remember what a precarious position we're in. Everyone is vulnerable and motor sport is certainly no exception.

our cover picture

Taking advantage of Donald Heggie's misfortune, was Brian Culcheth's Triumph Dolomite Sprint, which went on to win the Hackle Rally. The car is seen here on Pitmeddon 11.

Photo: Peter Newton.



Martin Raymond sits in his new T390. This is the first appearance of the new Lola which bears strong resemblances to the Matra and Alpine sports prototypes.

Fisons fertilise Raymond

Renewing their association with Martin Raymond this year are Fisons, the international chemicals and pharmaceuticals group. The tenacious privateer will campaign a brand new Lola T390 with Hart power in all the European two-litre sports car rounds and a number of World Manufacturer's championship rounds this year.

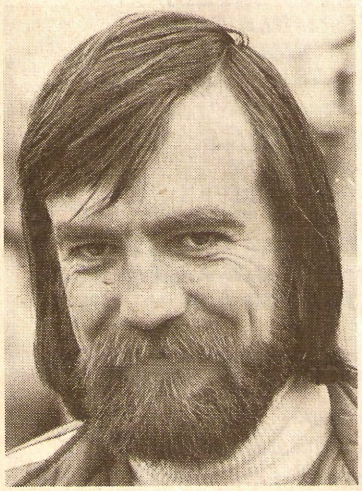
Fisons, whose chairman, George Burton is a Ferrari enthusiast and former Brooklands driver, were first associated with Raymond towards the end of last year. Raymond put in good races for them at both Paul Ricard and Brands Hatch.

This year's car, the latest two-litre Lola from Huntingdon, featuring the rising rate suspension at both front and rear, will be powered by Brian Hart's two-litre engine, the 420-R.

First event for the Lola, prepared by Raymond's own two mechanics at his Target Car Clinic in Finchley, will be the Dijon 1,000 kms, where his co-driver will be long distance enthusiast Tony Goodwin. A week later, it will make its British debut at Silverstone in the two-litre sports car race at the Silverstone International trophy meeting on April 13.

Fisons' involvement, which is greater than last year's end-of-season effort, is intended to take their name throughout Europe, to make agriculturalists more aware of their presence.

F5000 Surtees for Wilds?



Mike Wilds – Surtees F5000?

Entered for both the Oulton Park and Brands Hatch Formula 5000 rounds this weekend is Mike Wilds, driving a Cosworth Ford V6-powered Surtees TS17. However, a spokesman for Dempster Developments, Mike's sponsors, said on Monday that in fact nothing had been settled and the entry was in fact made a little prematurely.

It comes as no surprise to learn that Wilds and his backers are talking to John Surtees about the possibilities of running a F5000 car. Surtees himself is known to have wanted to produce a F5000 car for this year and at one stage, Frenchman Jose Dolhem hoped he would drive it.

Providing a satisfactory agreement can be reached, it is expected that Wilds will drive the new car, a TS17, at Brands on Easter Monday. It looks very unlikely that the car could be finished in time to compete at Oulton. Wilds, who has driven for BRM in the opening two Grands Prix this year, spent quite a lot of time testing with Team Surtees during the winter in one of their F1 cars. Until his ill-fated association with Stanley-BRM, Surtees had hoped that Wilds would fill the second F1 seat along side John Watson.

Following the success of the Ford V6 in F5000 of late as a potential winner, the prospect of Wilds in a Surtees-Ford V6 looks to bolster the European ShellSport series even further.

● Expected to be making an appearance in F2 soon with a brand new March 752 in Bruno Pescia.

● International Race Tire Service, Keith Greene's company which handles the commercial sales of Goodyear tyres is now on the telephone. Numbers are Ashford 44402, 44409 or 444398.

Oulton ETC cancelled

The European Touring Car Challenge round scheduled for Oulton Park on April 26 has been cancelled, due to lack of interest in the series in Europe. However, in its place Britain is to stage its first saloon spectacular of the year. To be known as the Shellsport 4000, the race will cater for Production saloons, FIA G1, G2 and Special Saloons over 10000cc.

There will be over £4,000 in prize money available at the meeting which will also feature a full programme of supporting races.

The ShellSport 4000 will be held over two 30 laps heats and a fifty lap final of the new short circuit at Oulton Park.

The first heat will comprise of FIA G1 cars over 1600 cc and Production saloons costing £1,700 and over. The second will be for G2 cars over 1300 cc and Special saloons over 1000 cc.

Thirty cars will be allowed to start each heat and the winner of each class will take home £100.

The final will be for a £500 first prize and will feature compulsory pit stops. These are aimed at equalising the performance of the various types of car and will apply only to the G2 and Special saloons. At any time during the race they care to choose they will have to make two one minute stops. These will be timed and observed although it is not necessary to do any work if the car does not need it.

Other major awards, for what promises to be a very interesting meeting, are £100 for the highest placed lady driver, £100 each to the person taking fastest lap in each class in either heat or final. In addition to this the leader of each of the fifty lap final will gain him, or herself, ten pounds a time.

Regs for the race are available now from the BRSCC, Empire House, Chiswick High Road, London W4 (01-995 0345).

Scheckter scores in S.A.

The second round of the South African Formula 1 Championship took place at the Welkom circuit last weekend and it provided Ian Scheckter with an albeit, fortunate, win in his ex-works Tyrrell 007.

Dave Charlton, driving his regular Lucky Strike McLaren M23, took pole but was led away by Scheckter. However, the Tyrrell driver spun just before he'd completed the first lap and dropped to fourth behind Charlton and the ex-works Lotus 72s of Guy Tunmer and Eddie Keizan. Jody's elder brother pulled back the lost ground, picked off the Lotuses and closed in on Charlton. With just 2 laps left, the Tyrrell was just 1½s behind the McLaren.

The race was then handed on a plate to Scheckter when Charlton ran out of fuel and had to pit. He got going again to claim third place behind Tunmer, but was subsequently disqualified for not getting out of his car as fuel was being added.

Safir F3 for Neve

Having suffered a severe set-back due to breakdown of sponsorship negotiations, Belgian driver Patrick Neve, who last year won the STP Formula Ford series in his ShellSport Lola, looks like having to forsake his works Lola F3 ride after all. This means that his team-mate from last year, Robert Joubert, will debut just one of the new cars at Thruxton this weekend although entered privately.

Neve looked to have been left out in the cold but sterling work by the FICA secretary Peter McIntosh at the Race of Champions saw a suitable arrangement agreed with Ray Jessop of Safir Engineering.

So at Thruxton this weekend, Neve will drive the team's brand new Safir F3 car with backing from ShellSport.

Fittipaldi F1 for Silverstone

The BRDC received their twentieth entry for the Daily Express International Trophy F1 race last week when the Copersucar was entered for Wilson Fittipaldi. This means that the race now has a capacity grid of F1 cars.

Accordingly, following a meeting between Jimmy Brown from the BRDC and F5000 Europe last week, it has been agreed that the only race in which F5000 cars can take part in over the weekend of April 12/13 is the fourth round of the ShellSport F5000 championship which will be held on Saturday afternoon. Silverstone will endeavour, however, to arrange an alternative date for the F5000 cars later in the year.

Works Modus for Sullivan

What has been more or less an open secret for the past few months is that American driver Danny Sullivan will in fact be leading the Modus attack in Formula 3 this year, starting at Thruxton this weekend.

The 26 year old driver from Louisville, Kentucky, commonly known as the "Kentucky Kid," drove several races for the works Modus team last year giving them their first ever F3 win at Thruxton in the process. Sullivan heads a two car works team of Modus M2s that will contest all the major continental and British F3 races this year.

The second car will be driven by Swiss driver Fritz Stehlin who, after a number of successes in touring cars, is embarking on a single-seater career. Team Modus are also to make a big effort at Monaco this year and hope to enter no less than three cars, the third driven by their works Atlantic driver Tony Brise.

Due to a delay in the arrival of a Novamotor-prepared Toyota from Italy, it is expected that Sullivan will have to make do with a Neil Brown Ford t/c for Thruxton.

Peltier wins Monza ETC

The opening round of this year's European Touring Car Championship for G2 cars got under way last weekend with the traditional Monza 4 Hour race. As to be expected, the race was more or less a complete farce, certainly as far as competitive runners were concerned.

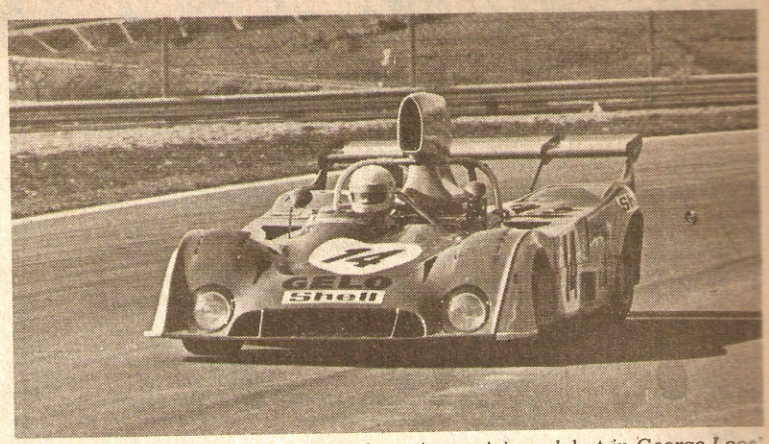
With no works cars from either Ford or BMW to worry about, Joseph Schnitzer sent along two of his latest 4-valve 3.5-litre CSL Coupes for customers Urs Zondler and Walter Brun. Both cars had backing from the Austrian cigarette company, Memphis International, and it was no surprise to see Dieter Quester sharing the car with Brun, the Austrian having agreed to drive for Schnitzer this year. Partnering Zondler in the other car was local hero Vittorio Brambilla.

In fact it was Brambilla who managed to take the pole spot at 1m 43.3s, a full 1.1s under the record. Partnering him on the front row exactly ½s slower was Quester.

The second rank featured Alain Peltier/Siegfried Mueller in an ex-Ickx 3.5-litre BMW CSL (1m 44.4s) and the superb Zakspeed Escort BDA of Hans Heyer/Mario Finotto (1m 49.9s). Next up was the 2-valve ex-Muir 3.5-litre BMW CSL of Peter Arm/Cox Cocher (1m 50.6s) and the second Zakspeed car of Manfred Mohr/Luigi Colzani (1m 51.4s). The rest of the field was made up of local heroes.

As to be expected, the two Schnitzer cars rushed off into the distance with Brambilla at the head. Meanwhile the little Zakspeed Escort of Heyer was dicing merrily for third place with Peter Arm's BeeEm and Colzani tucked in behind. Then, almost effortlessly, the Escort pulled clear. It began to look as if the two Schnitzer cars would walk away with the race but both were destined to become sidelined with mechanical bothers.

After four hours, it was the Peltier/Mueller CSL that emerged as the winner, averaging 180.204 kph and coming home 5 laps in front of the sole surviving Zakspeed car driven by Heyer/Finotto. Third, a further 5 laps down was the Russo/Amiglaini Escort followed, after a gap of 8 more laps, by "Pal Joe"/Giancalo Gagliardi (Escort) and Angelo/Chaipparini (Alfa Romeo GTV). Sixth was the Bruzzese/Colzani Alfa GTAm.



Jochen Mass and Tim Schenken made an inauspicious debut in George Loos' recently acquired Gulf GR7 at Mugello.

● Danish FF star, Thorkild Thyrring, has obtained backing from a company owning the largest chain of discos in Denmark and will be contesting F3 races this year in a brand new GRD 375.

● The new Formula 3 Ray, designed and built by Bert Ray, turned a wheel for the first time at Snetterton earlier this week. It will be driven by FF ace Stephen South at Thruxton this weekend.

March-BMW dominate Fuji 300

The first round of the Japanese sports car championship got underway last Sunday when the Fuji 300 Kms was held around the notorious banked track which was the scene of the halocast that killed several drivers last year.

The race was dominated by March-BMWs and was won by Noritake Takahara in a highly-modified 74S model. Second, also in a 74S, was Kunimitu Takahashi while Masami Kuwashima, having his first ever sports car drive, finished an encouraging third in a 73S version.

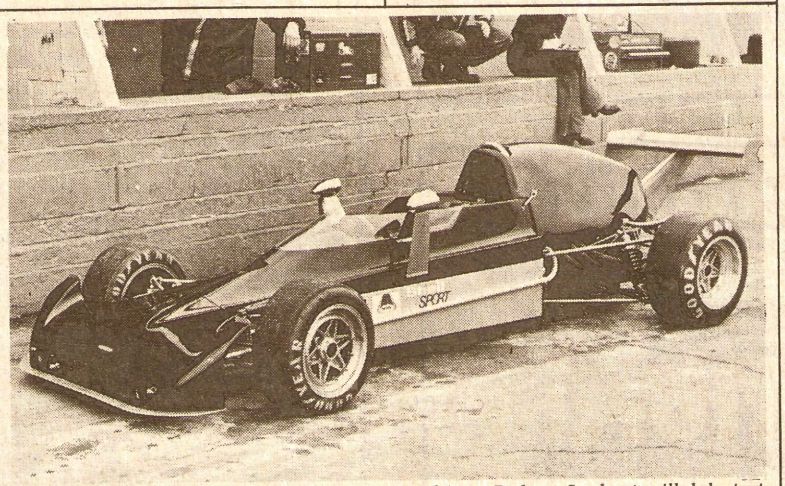
Kuwashima had in fact been quickest during the first practice session but slipped down a little later on as he found the conditions far too blustery. Masami then rushed from the circuit to catch a plane over to Europe in order to compete at Thruxton this weekend.

F1 testing

It was almost like a mini-Grand Prix at Silverstone earlier this week when several teams spent much of Monday and Tuesday testing their cars on the newly opened Grand Prix circuit.

Present for Lotus was Ronnie Peterson in his regular JPS 72 while the second car was driven by none other than Jim Crawford. Also present were Jochen Mass in a Texaco-Marlboro McLaren M23, Roelof Wunderink in the old Ensign and Brian Henton having his first run in the new March 751, albeit the test model.

Quickest overall, although times were well off what Silverstone can produce, was Peterson at 1m 18.1s. Henton was a very encouraging second quickest on 1m 18.5s, ahead of Mass who recorded 1m 18.9s. Crawford managed a cautious 1m 20.4s while Wunderink lapped in 1m 22.8s. John Watson and the works Surtees TS16 were expected to join the party for further testing on Tuesday. Late news from Snetterton on Tuesday reported Crawford writing off a 72.



The brand new F3 Lola T350 which South African Robert Joubert will debut at Thruxton this weekend.

Amon's dramas

All you Chris Amon fans are going to have to wait a little bit longer before you see the New Zealander make his European F5000 in his recently acquired Talon MR1.

Having failed to get the car ready for the Race of Champions, the team have suffered further set-backs in being able to obtain the relevant bits and pieces for the car which are scattered between Britain, America and Australia. The Chevrolet engines have only just arrived after being delayed by a shipping dispute but it looks extremely unlikely that Amon and his crew can get the car in a competitive state for the weekend. Chris certainly won't be at Oulton but hopes to make Brands on the Monday.

Sebring FSV to Holmes

Supporting the Sebring 12 Hours at the weekend was the second round of the American Formula Super Vee Gold Cup series. For the first time, the cars were running wings and trim tabs which the new regulations now allow. It was also the first time FSVs had visited Sebring. Around the twists and turns of the flat and featureless airfield circuit, the general concensus was that they seemed to work as the pole winning time underlined.

This was set up by a certain "Red O'Connor" driving one of Carl Haas' brand new Lola T324s. His time of 2m 52.9s was not that much slower than Hans Stuck's pole winning time in the big BMW CSL. Accompanying "O'Connor" on the front rank was Howdy Holmes in his Wilbur Bunce-entered Lola T324. It was in fact Holmes who totally dominated the event leading from start to finish and setting the fastest lap in the process. At one stage during the 12 lap race, Holmes' lead had grown to 14s but as he eased off in the closing laps, it dwindled to a mere 2s.

The man chasing hard was "O'Connor" who spent much of the race battling with Richard Melville's Royale RP18. However, the Royale spun on the last lap but lost a further place when Freddy Phillips, who had come up from the back of the grid in his Elden Mk14 after a wheel broke in qualifying, took him for third on the very last corner. Fifth was Billy McConnell in a Supernova followed by Bill Alsup's earlier Tui version.

● It is expected that Swedish driver Torsten Palm, who we mentioned last week to be looking to hire an F1 car for selected Grands Prix, will drive the second Hesketh 308 at the Swedish Grand Prix. The reason being that circuit promoter Smokey Asberg is helping provide the finance for Palm's outings and he and Hesketh are actively involved in promoting this year's race which will be sponsored by Polar Caravans.

G1 regs shelved

The new international regulations controlling G1 production car races in this country will not be applied until June 1, the RAC announced recently. The decision, which affects eight races, was taken by the RAC Motor Sport Council after hearing that the delay in publishing the regulations left little or no time for competitors to prepare their cars.

Meanwhile scrutineers will impose the rules which were in use last year.

An RAC spokesman said: "It is unfair to expect drivers to compete under new rules without knowing what they are."

USAC ace sues

Joe Leonard, the former USAC champion who was injured in last year's California 500, allegedly when a faulty tyre failed on his Vel's Parnelli USAC car, is suing both Vel Miletich, Parnelli Jones *and* Firestone to the tune of $1m. He claims that injuries he sustained on his right leg and ankle have not healed sufficiently for him to carry on his career as a race driver.

Dick Parson's F3 Modus

Having raced an F3 Ensign last year with moderate success, 22 year old Berkshire racing driver Dick Parsons will once again be contesting Formula 3 this season, only this time with a Modus.

The car is in fact the chassis used by Tony Brise at Monaco last year where it finished second to Tom Pryce's March. The car has just been updated and will be fitted with a John Penistan-prepared Novamotor Ford t/c engine. Commenting on his prospects for the coming season, which starts at Thruxton at the weekend, Parsons said: "This year I believe I have all the right equipment to win races. I have some backing from a group of local businessmen but am still short of money to actually run the car and am hoping to attract a commercial sponsor." Parsons, it may be remembered, ran under the Smiths Crisps banner last year.

Mieusset wins EHC opener

The opening round of this year's European Hillclimb Championship got underway on March 16 at Ampus-Draguignan and it provided France's "Jimmy" Mieusset with his third consecutive win at this particular climb.

Although unable to score points with a single-seater anymore, Mieusset is still awaiting delivery of his Alpine-Renault A441 sportscar, and so he used his 1974 championship winning March-BMW 742 to good effect once again, ending up comfortably quickest after two runs on 6m 42.23s.

Second overall but, as he was using a sportscar, elegible for maximum points was Italian Mauro Nesti in his Lola-BMW T294, some 11s slower than the F2 car.

Third was another single-seater, this being the Chrysler-engined F2 ROC Chevron B27 of Roger D'Amaisin and these three were the only runners to break 7m.

An interesting entry was Italian Eris Tondelli in his special Cosworth DFV-powered Chevron B26 but he suffered enough problems to keep him out of the top ten. Also expected to fair better was the brand new Osella PA3 sportscar of Franco Plone, the Italian combination finishing fifth, although the third sportscar home.

Jimmy Mieusset, the current European Hillclimb champion, on his way to another win in his F2 March-BMW a fortnight ago.

Ottershaw's G1 Opel GS/E

The Ottershaw Motor Company, the Surrey Opel Main Dealers, who were involved in Formula 2 last year when they helped back Tom Pryce in the semi-works Baty Chevron B27-BMW, are moving into G1 touring cars this year and will be running an Opel Commodore GS/E for Shaun Jackson starting at Oulton Park this Good Friday.

Jackson used to drive an AC Cobra, making his name with the car in 1970 by scoring no less than 19 outright victories in it. After only two races in the abortive Huron 2-litre sports car in 1971, Jackson retired temporarily. However, he made a return to the race tracks in 1973 driving a Triumph TR6 in which he scored 14 class wins in the Prodsports Championship.

The Ottershaw Commodore will be prepared by Mathwall Engineering.

BRIEFLY...

● Seen giving Masami Kuwashima's brand new F2 March BMW 752 a shakedown run at Goodwood late last week was David Purley.

● Among the entries in the well supported non-championship 2-litre sports car race at the Silverstone International Trophy meeting are John Lepp's March 75S, Guy Edwards' Lola T390, Martin Raymonds' Lola T390, Alan Jones' Lola T294, Vern Schuppan's Chevron B29 and John Burton in a Cheetah 501.

● Sad news in many ways is that neither Tom Pryce nor John Watson have been able to organise F2 rides this weekend for Thruxton. Both are expected to attend as spectators, along with Alan Rees (Shadow), Bubbles Horsley (Hesketh), Frank Williams (Williams) and Ken Tyrrell (Tyrrell).

● Former Ford works saloon car driver Gillian Fortescue-Thomas returns to racing at Thruxton on Easter Monday when she will drive a second ShellSport Triumph Dolomite Sprint alongside John Hine.

● Overall attendance at Sebring on raceday was 43,000, reputedly the largest crowd ever at the circuit and certainly the largest ever for an IMSA race.

World record

It nearly always happens in the States. This time it's a brand new *world* record for a pit stop set up during the recent Carolina 500 NASCAR race. Apparently Donnie Allison's DiGard Chevelle made a routine stop and had both offside tyres changed plus 14 gallons of fuel added by the Mario Rossi pit crew in 18.021s. This beats the old record for a five man crew which was also held by Rossi's boys in 19.840s. However, the crowning glory is that this latest effort beats the absolute record held by the legendary Woods Brothers who, with six men back in 1968, recorded 18.276s.

GP tennis

A unique event in the world of competitive tennis will be taking place in the Principality of Monaco on Monday, March 31, when several top Grand Prix drivers meet in their own International Tennis Championship.

This promises to be an intriguing feature of the Monte Carlo Open Tennis Tournament which is being held from March 22-31 on the courts of the famous Monte Carlo Country Club.

Among those drivers taking part are Emerson Fittipaldi, Clay Regazzoni, Jody Scheckter, Andrea de Adamich, James Hunt, Jochen Mass and Niki Lauda.

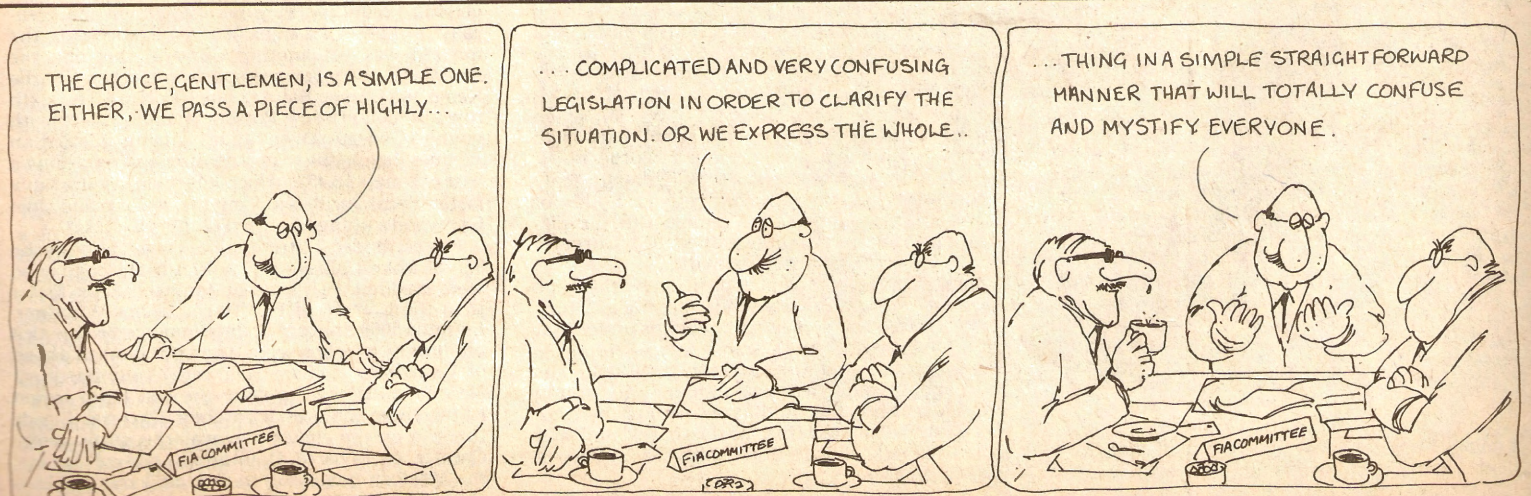
● It now seems fairly certain that Alan McCall will run two of his Formula Atlantic Tuis for John Nicholson and Freddy Phillipos in the Canadian Player's series this year.

● Reine Wisell and his girlfriend were unlucky on the way to Mugello, for they parked for lunch off the main square in Milan to return one hour later and find the car stripped clean. All their clothes and Reine's personal documents were stolen, so anybody expecting to here from Reine Wisell in the near future may have to wait until they next see him, for with his papers went his address book.

● Jim Crawford, the SDC racing Atlantic driver, will make his public F1 debut on Easter Monday when he demonstrates a JPS Lotus 72 for a few laps during the BRDC Silverstone Club meeting.

CATCHPOLE

By Barry Foley



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The winning BMW CSL which was shared between all four drivers after the sister car retired.

SEBRING 12HRS

BMW's textbook triumph

by Gordon Kirby **Photographs by Charles Loring**

Almost from the very start of practice it had seemed as if the BMW team and their pair of white 3.0 CSLs were going to dominate this race, They had been, consistently, the fastest two cars throughout the meeting and after Hans Stuck wrested the lead away from the troubled Corvette of John Greenwood, one or the other of the BMW's was always at the head of the field. The Stuck/Posey machine, designed specifically by Jochen Neerpasch as the 'rabbit' of the two, lead strongly until losing time with a burst oil line which ultimately caused its engine to fail just before the halfway mark. From then on the Brian Redman/Allan Moffat BMW, supplemented by a 90-minute leg each by Hans Stuck and Sam Posey pulled further and further away from the horde of Porsche Carreras to win ultimately by four laps. A completely calculated and dominating victory for the BMW team over their American competitors.

The rest of the field was badly decimated well before nightfall with the Greenwood Corvette retiring from gearbox failure, the Peter Gregg-/Harley Haywood Carrera running into a slower car while chasing hard after Sam Posey's leading BMW and the Al Holbert/Elliott Forbes-Robinson Carrera losing volumes of time with a series of tyre failures and a shunt with a backmarker. All of this left the George Dyer/Jacques Bienvenue Carrera with a well-earned second place, comfortably clear of three other Carreras. The NART Ferrari Boxer was driven relentlessly by Milt Minter/Eppie Wietzes through an awesome series of mechanical troubles including a cockpit fire and came home a distant, but encouraging, sixth.

BMW's victory was also notable in that it was the first time in more than six years that a major North American race had been won by a car using Dunlop tyres.

ENTRY AND PRACTICE

The International Motor Sport Association, white hope for American motorsport that it is, followed on it's revival of the Daytona 24 Hours with the revival last weekend of the Sebring 12 Hours. With the healthy state of IMSA's Camel GT series as a backdrop, John Greenwood, racing driver, car constructor and promoter extraordinaire was able to re-establish the waning old Sebring airfield and provide enough prize money to stage round two of the Camel GT series. It is, of course, the hope of both Greenwood and IMSA that Sebring will continue to grow throughout the next few years. If this is at all possible depends largely on the growth of the Camel GT series. If it can throw off it's current coat as a haven for wealthy, amateur enthusiasts perhaps the Camel GT series can transform races like the Daytona 24 Hours and the Sebring 12 Hours into the long distance classics that they once were. If it cannot, well . . . maybe IMSA and their GT Championship are happiest where they now stand.

Despite stories of renovation and repaving, the 5.2 mile Sebring circuit remained much as always when the entry of ninety machines, plus a brace of Super Vees and Goodrich Radial Challenge tintops, pressed their way into the narrow confines of the circuit's paddock. Brian Redman was adamant that the road surface was as rough as ever and as usual, everybody was complaining about not being able to distinguish the vast, disused airfield from the borders of the track itself.

This year there was an additional problem in that tufts of grass had sprouted everywhere through separations in the slabs of runway. So much so that Sam Posey described his first few laps in his BMW as being, "like driving through a field of smooth grass." All of this coupled with the natural abrasiveness of the old runways made the circuit very hard on tyres and Goodyear's Lee Guag advised everybody not to use fresh rubber until late in practice.

It was then with a distinct note of querilous restraint that the field took to the circuit just past high noon on Thursday. The BMW team, looking even more thoroughly prepared and calculating than they had in their American debut last month at Daytona, had stationed their pair of 3.0 CSLs at the head of the queue and, Hans Stuck leading Brian Redman, they screamed away from the others into a display of their own.

Within half a dozen laps the pair of BMWs had each broken the GT lap record and they sang on together, putting a stamp on the early minutes of the race meeting that was to last until the chequered flag fell at eleven o'clock Saturday night. While Redman slipped back from Stuck's tail, the brakes fading in his BMW, Hanschen began pitching and throwing his machine even harder. For a handful of glorious laps the BMW darted along the flat surface, flicking itself deeply onto the verges, throwing up ragged clouds of dust and grass and finally coming into the pits after breaking Jerry Thompson's 1973 Corvette record by more than three seconds.

Stuck ultimately took pole position by the huge margin of one and a half seconds, lapping in 2 mins 48.786 s which was some seven seconds under that old GT record. Car mate Sam Posey never got in much practice and the qualifying session was short enough that there was time only for young Hanschen to practice on that occasion. Nevertheless Sam was his usual enthusiastic self and was looking eagerly ahead to having his second race in the 3.0 CSL.

Brian Redman found himself partnered with Australian saloon ace Allan Moffat in the other BMW, Ronnie Peterson not being able to enter this race as it didn't have an FIA permit. Brian's car was using a taller final drive ratio than the other BMW and without extending himself the Formula 5000 Champion recorded a best lap of 3 mins 51.639s which left him a rather surprised fourth fastest. Surprised because he had been handily quicker than anybody save Stuckey throughout practice and it wasn't until the last few minutes of qualifying that Redman found himself shouldered off the front row.

Although substantially unchanged from their Daytona configuration the BMWs were wearing Dunlop rubber at Sebring as opposed to Goodyear equipment. The compounding and construction of the Dunlops is similar to that used by the team in Europe last year and the new stock of tyres comes complete with a technician who also mounts and balances all the rubber — not something to be taken lightly in these days of overworked Goodyear tyre men.

The challenge to the BMWs was to come from two quarters. The most serious of course, was that of Daytona winners Peter Gregg/Hurley Haywood who were once again back with their white Brumos Porsche Carrera. There were two or three other Carreras which just might have been able to offer a threat and certainly most serious of these was the deep blue version of Al Holbert entered for himself and Elliott Forbes-Johnson. Then of course there was the man who was the raison d'etre for this year's Sebring event. John Greenwood, who would be sharing his Super Corvette with veteran Camaro/Corvette driver Jerry Thompson.

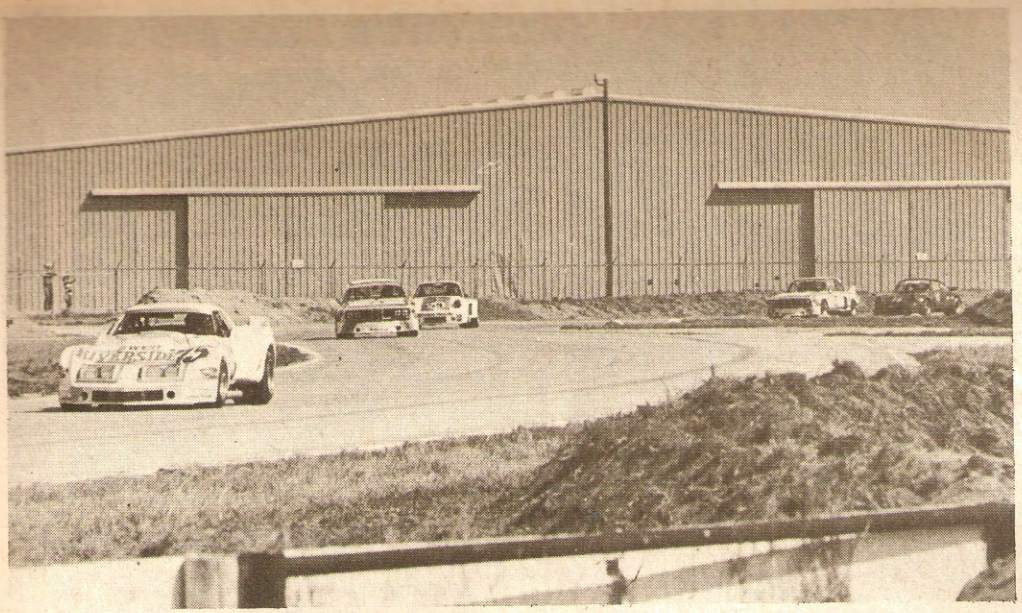
Gregg/Haywood emerged from a troubled practice to take the outside slot on the front row with Peter Gregg pulling out everything (and perhaps more) in doing a 2 mins 50.326s best lap. This was set on the very last lap of Gregg's qualifying session and came after he had been unable to get below 2 mins 53s for lap after lap. Hmmm. . . Previous to this the Brumos Porsche had lost lots of time with clutch failure and myriad other, niggling troubles.

Greenwood practiced his Corvette almost exclusively so that co-driver Thompson didn't do any laps in the car until Thursday's night practice. After just a few laps Thompson clipped a braking markerboard while trying to negotiate his way through the largely unmarked blackness. The Corvette spun to the stop with most of it's fibreglass tail torn off and it was with the tailsection taped quickly together and missing it's little wing that Greenwood forced his way around for a best lap of 2 mins 51.387s, thus pushing the Redman/Moffat BMW to the outside slot on the second row.

Holbert/Forbes-Robinson qualified fifth fastest (2 mins 54.918s) ahead of the Carrera of John Graves/John O'Steen/Dave Helmick. This latter trio had gone well at Daytona and their experience brought them a best lap of 2 min 55.790s. Filling out the fourth row was the yellow Toad Hall Carrera of Mike Keyser/Bill Sprowls/Andreas Contreras and the blue Ippokampos Capri RS3100 of Harry Theodoracopulos/Skip Barber. Keyser set the fast time in his Porsche (2 min 55.888s) which was considerably faster than either of his two rental drivers could manage. Theodoracopulos' Capri was using it's Cosworth V6 engine and carried huge, four-pad front brake calipers and it's quick lap (2 mins 55.904s) was set by Skip Barber on one of the half-dozen laps he managed in the car.

Ninth fastest was the well-modified Camaro of Mo Carter/Tony De Lorenzo, the Canadian veteran finally working his way down methodically to a best of 2 mins 56.170s. Completing the top ten was yet another Carrera, this one the Armor-All entry for ace sponsor-catcher Charlie Kemp and Carson Baird (2 mins 56.315s). The sixth row also comprised a Porsche and a Camaro with young George Dyer again hiring Canadian Jacques Bienvenue to partner him and recording a best of 2 mins 56.452s which left them comfortably faster than Thrill Show magnets Tim and Joie Chitwood's orange Camaro (2 mins 57.618s).

Fastest under 2-litre qualifier was the Porsche 911 of Mike Callas/Jim Cook/Adrian Gang who were credited with a lap in 2 mins 58.820s, faster than the Carrera of Bob Harmon/Jon Woodner. Formula 5000 driver Woodner managed to break 3 minutes by nearly a second and put himself ahead of Canadians Ludwig Heimrath/Rudy Bartling/Norman Ridgley who were the last team to get below three minutes with their Carrera. Beside this trio on the eighth row was the virgin white Carrera of Roberto Quintannilla/David Loring, the Mexican qualifying the car at 3 mins 00.290s although his co-driver-cum-mechanic had practiced the car faster than he and in fact, had been



First lap and John Greenwood's Corvette is already pulling clear of Hans Stuck, Peter Gregg and the rest.

fifth fastest during night practice in his first time in the car and first time on the course.

The ninth row consisted of a couple of Mexican pairings, a BMW CSL for Daniel Muniz/Johnny Gerber (yes, the very one you may remember) and a Carrera for the Bolanos brothers J. C. and Gustavo and Michel Jourdain. Completing the quicker runners was yet another Carrera, this one for American Porsche veterans Bob Beasley/Bruce Jennings. Others cars in the huge field included the second Greenwood Corvette for brother Burt Greenwood and a gentlemen by the name of Scott Voeltz, who were both slow, and the NART Ferrari Boxer which was brought down for Milt Minter/Eppie Wietzes to drive. The Boxer was barely more prepared than it had been at Daytona, more than seven weeks ago, and Wietzes and Minter struggled through the practice sessions with all kinds of troubles haranguing them including clutch failure during qualifying, which left them without an official time.

RACE

Early Saturday morning those who had not managed to qualify among the first fifty were given a last-chance 5 lap race, from which the top ten finishers would be added to the back of the grid. The field for this was, by definition, rather weak in quality although the Ferrari Boxer, with Wietzes at the wheel, was at the back of the grid. Also a couple of cars who had already qualified took the opportunity of starting this five-lapper in order to bed brakes and scrub tyres.

Wietzes took the Ferrari easily through the field, moving into the lead toward the end of his third lap. But as he braked into the hairpin just before the pits the clutch baulked, a puff of smoke belched from beneath the car and Eppie swung into the pitlane. Just as it had the day before, the Boxer had again exploded it's clutch. Nevertheless, anxious to have at least one red Ferrari in the field (there was only one other Ferrari at Sebring, that being the Jones/Mignot Daytona) the organisers encouraged CoCo Chinetti's crew to fix the Boxer and push it onto the back of the grid. Those same officials also decided to add a further ten cars to the field so that when eleven o'clock finally approached there were seventy machines filling the grid to overflowing.

This long, long string of German-dominated machinery paced their way around the angular circuit minus the blue Ford Capri of Harry Theodoracopulos/Skip Barber which had snapped a driveshaft while bedding brakes on the first lap of the 'last-chance' qualifying race. As the sun beat harshly down across the dusty old airfield John Greenwood was able to jump away from the second row into an immediate lead, leaving Stuck's BMW and Gregg's Carrera to settle into place within the deep reverbrations of the Chevvy's exhaust.

The white Corvette tore through the first corner and down toward the esses, all it's systems now working well. All through the first lap Greenwood worked hard at his machine so that as he swept by the pits for the first time he was all alone, nearly five seconds clear of Stuck in the first of the BMWs. Gregg was holding third place not far from Hanschen's tail, while Redman, driving the longer-geared of the two works CSLs, led a close train consisting of Holbert, O'Steen and Keyser. The rest of the field snaked through in an endless line, some cars, like the Ferrari Boxer forcing it's way up the line, but most of them settling aready into their pace.

For a few laps Greenwood was able to slowly extend his lead, but despite his apparent control of of the race he was already running into dead trouble. The Corvette's clutch was sticking and John was not having an easy time finding gears so that soon, as the physical strain began to wear on him, Stuck started closing the twelve second gap.

On the twelfth lap Hans screamed by the Corvette and pulled away on his own, while Greenwood slipped back into the clutches of Gregg's Carrera. Before the white Porsche could catch the Corvette however, Greenwood seemed to discover a method of dealing with his problem and was able to hold his place in the wake of Stuck and the BMW.

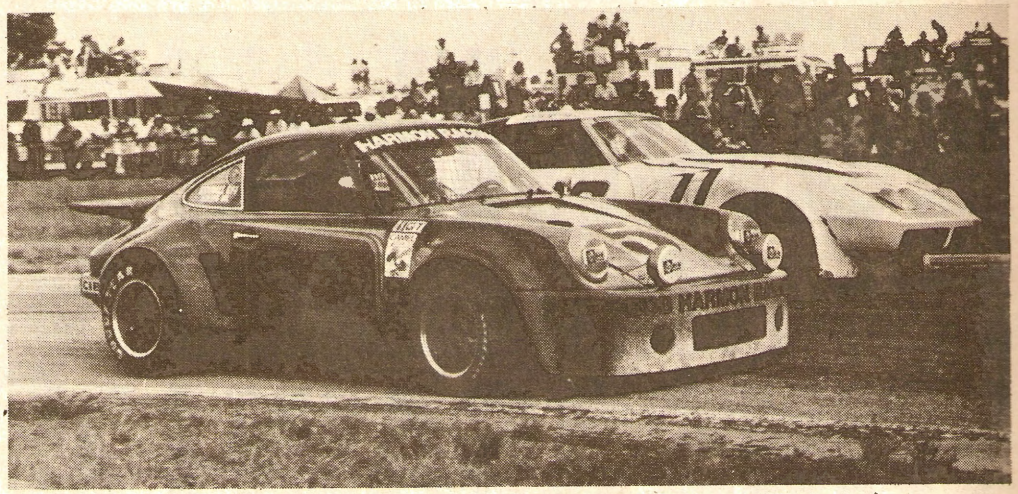
The thirsty Corvette was the first of the leaders to peel off into the pits, taking on fuel just after the first hour as Greenwood handed over to Jerry Thompson. Thompson got into his stride just a few car lengths behind Redman, the second BMW now in third place and after a few laps it became obvious that the Corvette was not going to be able to offer a serious challenge to Redman's position.

Meanwhile Stuck was holding a comfortable lead over Gregg and though obviously the 'rabbit' of the BMW team, his pace was comparatively easy and relaxed. After an hour and a half Gregg stopped for fuel, leaving the BMWs in first and second some fifty seconds apart. It was at least another fifteen minutes before either Stuck or Redman had to stop, the German coming in first and handing over to Posey who got back out directly ahead of his teammate.

Before Sam could get into his rhythm Brian dashed by into the lead and edged away on his own before coming in for his first fuel stop just before the two hour mark. Redman stayed in the car and set off again now well behind the chase for the lead, but holding a solid third place after Thompson brought the Corvette in for it's second fuel stop and a change back to Greenwood.

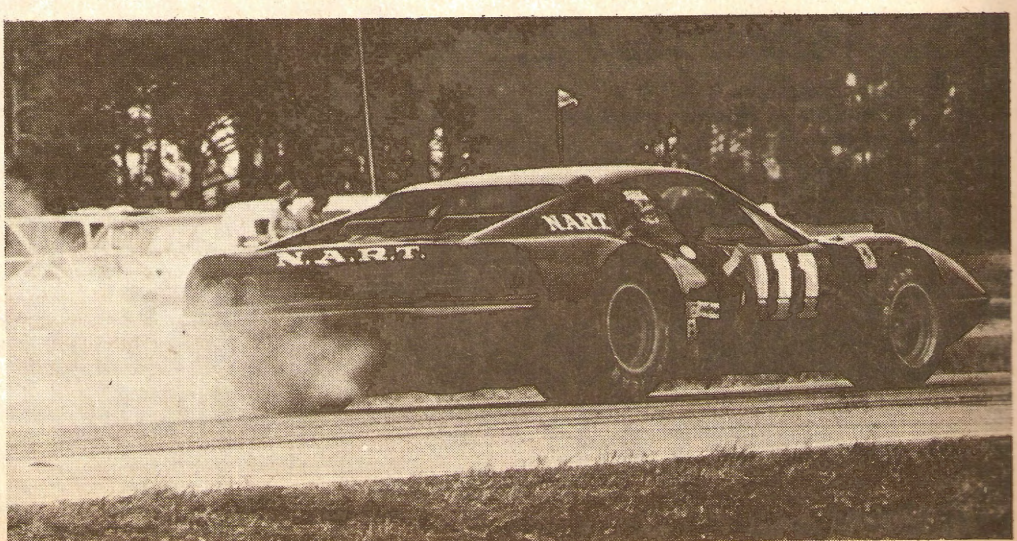
While Posey had been playing himself into his BMW, Peter Gregg had been rushing up in his mirrors so that Sam suddenly said to himself, "Christ I'd better do something about hanging onto this lead." He responded quickly to the challenge and although Gregg was able to nose ahead at a few places, Posey and the BMW always maintained the upper hand. It was fascinating to watch this dice because it provided an ideal comparison of the CSL versus the Carrera.

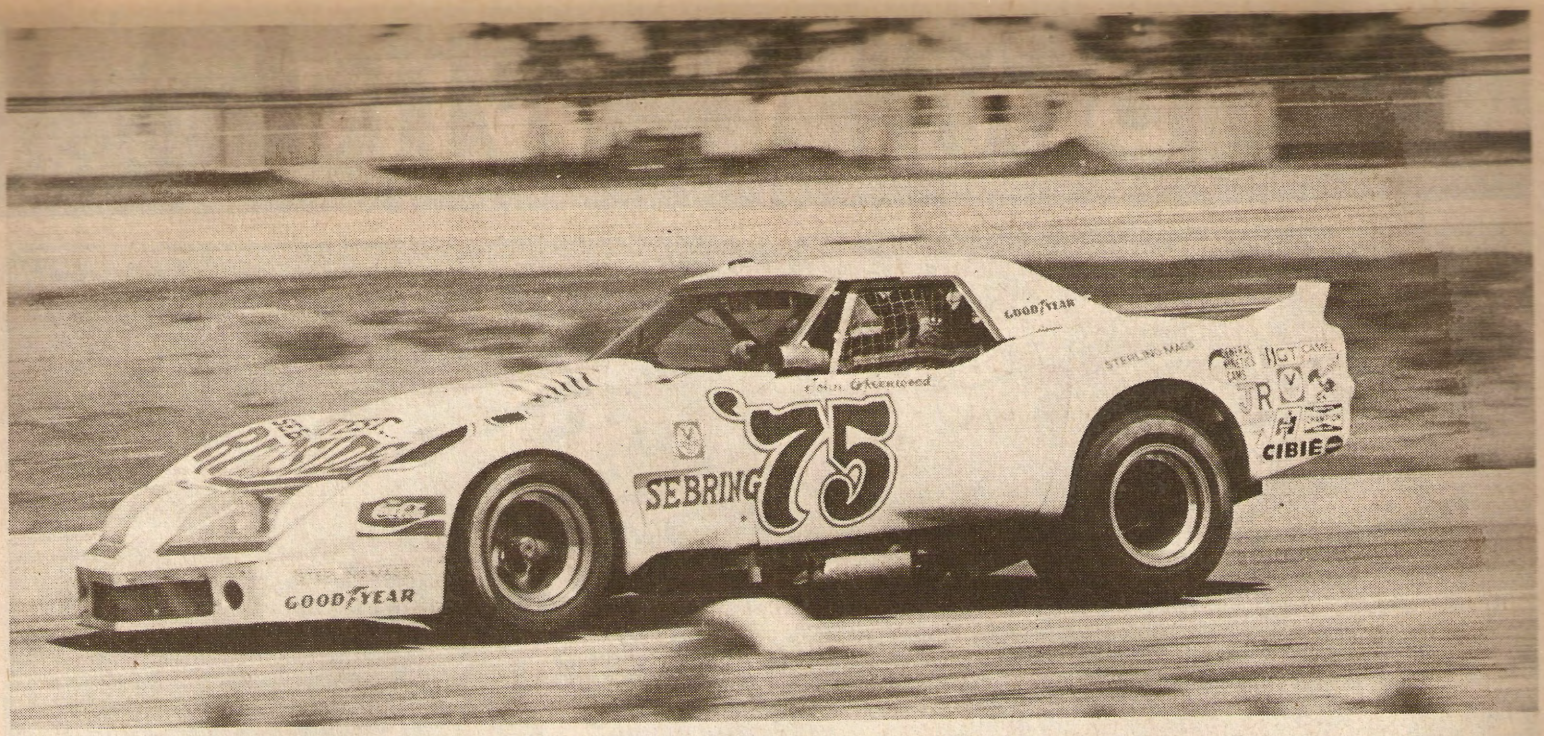
Gregg was often able to close right up on the BMW under braking (although the CSL was using hard pads which were supposed to last the full twelve hours) and occasionally he could force his way inside only to lose all of his advantage as soon as Sam was able to feed the BMW's power on. The



The John Woodner/Bob Harmon Carrera dives inside the Clay Young/Ford Smith Corvette.

The NART Ferrari Boxer driven by Milt Minter/Eppie Wietzes had problems but struggled home sixth.





John Greenwood, who has a business interest in the Sebring event, led initially in his fabulous Chevrolet Corvette.

torque of the BMW engine simply hurled the car down the road so that under initial acceleration in the space of perhaps one hundred yards Posey could pick up four or five can lengths on Gregg.

This battle went on for at least half an hour until Gregg, trying as hard as ever to get by Posey, got a little too crossed up while lapping the second Greenwood Corvette. Consequently the Brumos Porsche and the Scott Voeltz-driven 'vette clouted each other. Gregg staggered down the road with a smashed left rear fender flare, a flat tyre and, worst of all a broken differential casing.

The Porsche limped around to the pits and the Brumos crew jacked the car up. It soon became apparent that Gregg's troubles were major ones and when Posey came into the pits, some fifty minutes later for his regular fuel stop, the Gregg/Hayward Porsche was still sitting forlornly in its pit.

"I thought, 'Hey, he's having a routine stop at the same time as us,' " said Sam describing his impression of the situation, "Then I saw nobody was working on the car and I realised something was wrong. Then I suddenly cheered loudly to myself because I guessed he was really in trouble."

Sam was dead right. He hadn't been receiving detail information on his pit board about Gregg's situation but now, all at once he realised that he was holding onto a handsome lead. Greenwood had been slowing as a result of his gearbox troubles and almost at the exact time that Posey came in to change over to Stuck, the Corvette finally pulled in for the last time.

With the race barely more than one-quarter completed the BMW team had pushed itself into a comfortable lead with only the Holbert/Forbes-Robinson Carrera looking like keeping them somewhere within range. But then even that possibility went away when the Carrera ran into a series of punctures, then lost it's windshield molding and was finally chopped by a slow Corvette which damaged one of the car's rear swing arms.

So suddenly, the Sebring 12 Hours was turned into a rout for BMW. But just as that scenario seemed to fall into place, Stuck brought his leading CSL in with a major oil leak. This turned out to be the result of a burst line and it was fixed and the car sent out again, now in second place behind Redman/Moffatt. But within half an hour Stuck was out of it, his engine blowing up mightily along the pit straight, the result apparently of the aftermath of the oil line failure.

It was soon decided to put Stuck and Posey into the Redman/Moffat car as they are the two who will campaign the full Camel GT series for BMW and it seemed a good way of ensuring them some Championship points. Redman, who had driven six of the first seven and a half hours in his car, changed over gladly to Posey who came in after burning off his fuel load to hand over to Stuck.

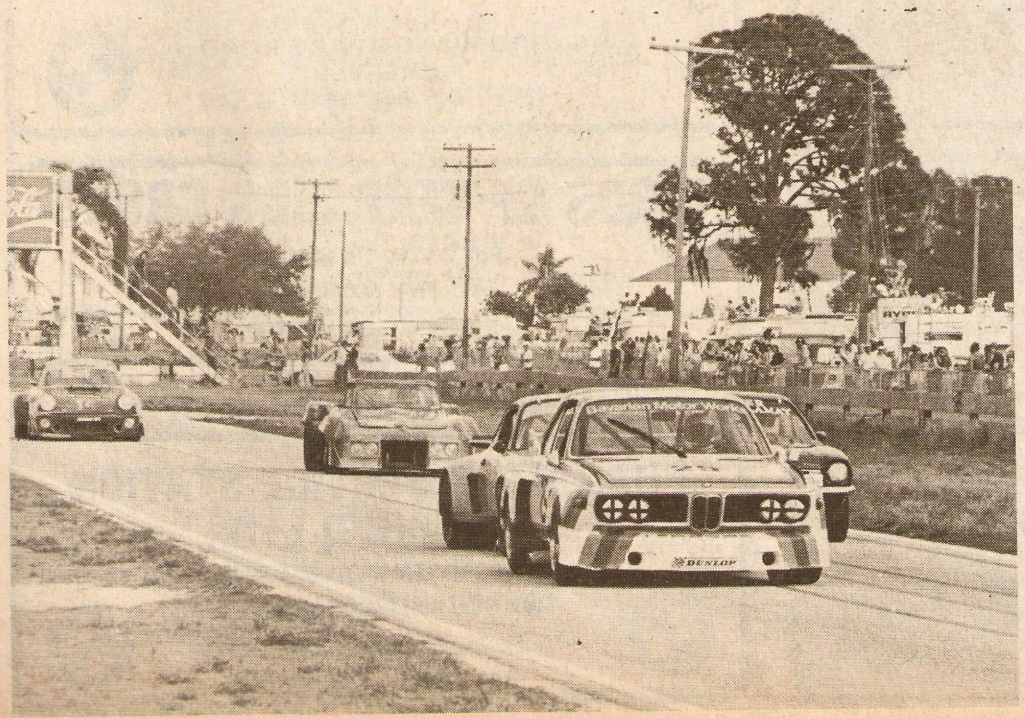
With just forty-five minutes to go in the race Stuck came in to change seats with Redman, who climbed in for the final drive to the flag, by then holding a five lap cushion to the Dyer/Bienvenue Carrera. Brian drove carefully to the flag, slowing to a cruising speed at the very end just to make sure that nothing nasty could snatch victory away from he and the BMW team. It was a complete victory, for the 'rabbit' had done it's work with the major opposition, and the 'tortoise' had run perfectly to the end. A textbook triumph.

After the failure of the Gregg/Haywood Carrera and the problems experienced by the Holbert/Forbes-Robinson version, it was George Dyer's Hans Mandt-prepared car that moved to the head of the Porsche train. Not far behind Dyer/Bienvenue the yellow Toad Hall car of Mike Keyser tried hard to close the gap, but barely an hour before the end a slower Porsche moved directly into Keyser's path. Suddenly the Toad Hall Carrera's race was over, it's left front suspension smashed back into the wheel well.

So Dyer/Bienvenue took a neatly-forged second place well ahead of the Graves/O'Steen/Helmick Carrera. This latter Porsche had spun much earlier in the race and although not losing much time, it had forced Charlie Kemp into the guardrail. Kemp's Armor All Carrera lost nearly an hour while Carson Baird came out and limped back to the pits with a broken tie rod. Later the car ran into electrical troubles which dropped Kemp/Baird completely out of the hunt.

Fourth place was taken by the black Kremer Porsche of Bolanos/Jourdain/Bolanos who moved up at the expense of various other Carreras including the Quintinnalla/Loring machine, which held a good seventh place before breaking a camshaft after three hours. Fifth place went to the Carrera of Dickinson/Webbe/Theodoracopulos which was rewarded for it's consistency if not it's speed. Harangued by oil leaks, engine troubles and a fire, the Ferrari Boxer plugged on in the hands of the fine never-say-die duo of Minter/Wietzes who thoroughly earned their sixth place ahead of the Harmon/Woodner Carrera. Woodner drove nearly eight of the twelve hours in this car, bringing it home despite a lack of brakes and the failure of all but fourth gear.

Brian Redman's winning BMW leads two of the faster Carreras past slower traffic.



Sebring 12 Hour Camel GT race, March 22, IMSA round 2

1, Brian Redman/Allan Moffat/Sam Posey/Hans Stuck (3.5 BMW 3.0 CSL), 238 laps, 102.64 mph; 2, George Dyer/Jacques Bienvenue (3.0 Porsche Carrera RSR), 234 laps; 3, John Graves/John O'Steen (3.0 Porsche Carrera RSR), 230 laps; 4, Juan Carlos/Bolanos/Michel Jourdain/Michel Bolanos (3.0 Porsche Carrera RSR), 229 laps; 5, George Dickinson/Bill Webbe/Harry Theodoracopulos (3.0 Porsche Carrera RSR), 220 laps; 6, Milt Minter/Eppie Weitzes (4.4 Ferrari Berlinetta Boxer), 214 laps.

7, Bob Harmon/Jon Woodner (3.0 Porsche Carrera RSR), 212 laps; 8, Diego Febles (3.0 Porsche Carrera RSR), 210 laps; 9, Harry Jones/Marcel Mignot (4.4 Ferrari Daytona GTB), 208 laps; 10, Tony Garcia/Albert Naon/John Freyre (2.0 Porsche 911S), 208 laps.

Fastest lap: Stuck, 2m 49.2s, 110.638 mph (GT Record)

Rockey set for Ireland

Despite a heavy accident on the South West Stages last weekend, Nigel Rockey has informed us that he will most definitely be on the Circuit of Ireland this weekend. His new sponsors, Gateway Supermarkets, were apparently happy with their initial association with the Bristol driver, and a deal for the rest of the year looks almost set. Rockey's car has now been straightened out and was being re-painted as we went to press. It is appearing on the Circuit in the "we're in the pink" livery that had its first public showing on the South West Stages. A new axle has been fitted for the Circuit, but thanks to the latest work of the light fingered brigade, Nigel will have to make do with his "old" engine that has done sterling service already, including the Dales. There has been absolutely no news at present about the stealing of his Boreham engine. Rockey will be getting works service on the Circuit to supplement the efforts of his usual crew.

Reflections on a BL truimph

Regular readers of our Gaelic Oil/The Scotsman rally championship reports may have noticed that this week's account of the Hackle was rather shorter and more abbreviated in other ways than usual. It is regretted that the editorial staff were involved in a totally unforeseen situation which prevented them from getting to the rally finish at Freuchie, and severely limiting the number of stages they were able to see; thus most of the report had to be compiled over the telephone. Current positions in the championship after three rounds are as follows: Bill Taylor 28, Jim Howden 23; Alistair Findlay 22, Charles Samson and Alastair Robson 21; Ian Milne 20, Ian Wilson 19.

So far this year only one round, the Valentine, has gone to a Scot, both the other events falling to non-eligible Englishmen. A situation the Scots view with intense chagrin. Last weekend Donald Heggie had the rally in his pocket before the Broadspeed car again let him down, making it the fourth retirement in five events for the luckless crew, who are now beginning to wonder if the cloud that is currently hanging over them will ever go away. This time the trouble was an aluminium adaptor which connected the "aeroquip" piping with the clutch slave cylinder. The adaptor sheared and the Broadspeed mechanics had no replacement; a sickeningly minor problem with very permanent results. Broadspeed have used these adaptors in their racing Escorts for years with no problems, but once again a minor component failure has resulted in instant retirement.

It was heartening however to see the consistently quick stage times and the reliability of British Leyland's much-maligned Dolomite Sprint rally car. Brian drove a calculated and consistent rally to be the deserving winner at the end of the day, and the victory has no doubt done much for the morale of all concerned in the project, most of whom, like the Idem Broadspeed equipe, were wondering when their luck would turn. The Dolomite made an impressive sight on the stages in its smart colours and Brian got the car into the top five stage times on every occasion bar the first stage. Brian reportedly had a trouble-free run to boot, so ST will doubtless be very happy with the situation, and look forward to the Granite City with renewed confidence.

● Marek Gierowski will not now be going to the Circuit of Ireland, the reason being that he has sold his Porsche to Jan Churchill.

Total talk

The South African Total Rally will be observed again by the CSI this year and is likely to make it into the World Championship in 1976 as a result. It will probably have its best entry ever this year, as several European teams including Peugeot are planning on sending crews in proper Group 2 cars. The Press on Regardless, the be-devilled USA round will apparently be run in 1975 and will be observed by the CSI for re-inclusion in 1976 if it shows that it has overcome its problems.

Deported

At a poorly attended reception last Monday, the Port Wine - Rally of Portugal (formerly the TAP) announced that nearly 100 entries have so far been received for the similar-format event. The event's date has been changed to 1st to 4th May and entries now close one week later, on April 17th.

The Rally of Portugal's organiser, Cesar Torres, arrived late after aeroplane trouble but was quick in inform guests of the impressive British result on the Firestone, and hoped that it may encourage competitors from this country.

Top names already entered includes a Fiat team of Alen, Darniche, Mikkola and Paganelli, doubtless hoping for a repeat grand-slam performance of last year. Current ECR champion, Walter Rohrl is entered with Opel, as is Anders Kullang. Renault will be campaigning Piot and Nicolas, while Datsun will be represented by Chris Sclater and Harry Kallstrom. Previous TAP winner, Achin Warmbold has entered his works-assisted BMW, and Toyota will have Bjorn Waldegaard and Ove Andersson.

Camp out

Spectators wishing to watch the action on this weekend's Chieftain Rally are advised to make their way to the Lodge Camp venue, near Tilshead in Wiltshire, where full facilities will be in evidence. The stage will be visited at around 10 am and details for the rest of the day's watching will be available there.

Top entries include Terry Brown, Pat Ryan, Mike Ranger (Imp), Basil Wadman (Peugeot); David Oliver and Graham Elsmore with Avon Team cars and Richard Wooldridge, back in action with the Team Robert Moss Escort TC. See last week's Special Stage for further details.

Lincs entry

The regulations for the Bass Charrington Tour of Lincs have only been out for just under two weeks, but already the organisers have been inundated with entries. They already have 170 applications and with top names among them, the Tour of Lincs promises to be a fine event this year. Entries so far received include George Hill, Jeff Churchill, Paul Appleby, Richard Hudson-Evans, Pip Dale, Jill Robinson, Mike Rawson, Terry Brown, George Beever and Tony Baines.

RHE – shock return

Sporting Club Sponsorship

The arrival of a new rally sponsor is news indeed these days, thus it is very encouraging to see that the Victoria Sporting Club are entering the fray. The club have had a close association with sporting personalities in the past (supporting Alan Rudkin in boxing for some years) and they are also currently involved in co-sponsorship of the annual Pro-Am golf tournament. Just how the club became involved in rallying is best described by Tony Jackson, joint managing director: "... during a discussion about our cruise ships operating out of Sydney, Australia, a suggestion was raised that we might participate in the future London to Sydney marathon rally. Obviously one cannot enter such a major event without having considerable experience. We, therefore, look upon this as just the start of a long association with rallying culminating in our entry in the next marathon rally."

The scheme is certainly an ambitious one, for though the car, the ubiquitous Escort RS, is nothing out of the ordinary (though it is an ex-Clarke and Simpson machine, a good recommendation) the crew most definitely are. Co-driver Rick Smith is no stranger to the rallying game having previously competed in home internationals with Stewart Morgan in the St Bruno Toyota and with Vic Carlisle in a BMW 2002Tii for Dealer Team BMW; but the driver, Evan Clements, is a racing driver with no previous rally experience. In the light of this, the events selected for the car are somewhat ambitious. The programme starts tomorrow with the Circuit of Ireland where the crew are seeded no. 96; and will go on to include the Welsh, Donegal, the Scottish, the Manx and the RAC. If Evan lacks experience, this is certainly one way to get it. The car has recently been rebuilt at the front and side by Adlards of Clapham following an excursion at Bagshot when it was being driven by Tony Jackson, but all is now well and a 'works' pedal box and new axle were fitted last weekend. Evan is reported as feeling that rallying is not so totally demanding on the driver as circuit racing . . . one wonders whether he will still feel this way at the end of the season. Meanwhile he is reportedly going to continue with his track adventures.

● The Allegro craze has another powerful addition to the ranks which may well be seen on more prestigious events than the Monte Minor, on which it recently made its debut. This particular "Aligator' is the Lex of Dartford supported G2 1750 of Mick Rushbrook/Bill Save. It is fitted with an LSD, and twin 40 DC0E Webers with which to stir the motor into life.

Tavern regs

Regulations are now out for the Tavern MC's Tavern Rally, to be run on Sunday, April 20. It is the second round of the Castrol/Autosport rally championship and the first car will leave Butlins Car Park, Minehead, Somerset, at 08.00, and the finish is at the Cleeve Park Hotel, Chapel Cleeve, Nr. Minehead, at about 16.30. The route will be approximately 190 miles in total and there will be 60 competitive miles split into 17 stages on Forestry Commission land. Entries are now open and close on Thursday, April 10; the maximum number of crews will be 120. There will be two scrutineering sessions; on Saturday from 18.00 to 19.30, and on Sunday from 07.00 to 09.00. Clerk of the Course is Martin Clark, and Secretary is John Dando, 8 Fairlyn Drive, Kingswood, Bristol BS15 4PU. With only 120-130 road miles this year, the Tavern offers competitors a fine day's sport.

Send SAEs

The organisers of the Bass Charrington Tour of Lincs would like to point out that because the rally is a qualifier for three championships, the Castrol/Autosport, BTRDA and Triple C, they are only sending regulations to competitors who send in SAEs. Merely because you are a registered competitor in any of the championships does not mean in this instance that you will automatically be sent regs. The lady who will send them to you however is Mrs Joan Fenwick, Beelsby House, Beelsby, Grimsby, South Humberside.

Renault Alpine to quit rallying now?

It looks as if the perils of inflation may be hitting home in France as well as Italy and Britain. The rumours are that Renault Alpine will not do any more rallies after the Safari, but will use their remaining budget to press on with their prototype racing car. Already their Safari effort has been plagued with problems as Jean-Pierre Nicolas will not start as a result of a training accident in which he hit a VW full of French tourists and hurt his back. It looks as if Alpine will withdraw from the Moroccan Rally which leaves that World Championship event wide open for anyone who can beat the Citroens.

A tough new forest levy

It is unfortunate to report that the RAC have just been advised by the Forestry Commission that, from the 1st April, 1975, the charge for using Forestry Commission Roads will be increased to 26p per car mile, with a minimum charge of £400 (both amounts subject to V.A.T.).

The RAC are making representations to the Forestry Commission for a longer notice of this increase and for a lower minimum charge, but the clubs are warned that they should budget for other events on the basis of the new charges.

Firestone ramblings

Jolly Club, Alfa Romeo and Fiat plans

Amilcare Ballestrieri left immediately after the Firestone Rally to fly to Sicily where he will drive an Alfa Romeo this weekend in the Sicilian Rally. This all-tarmac event is a counter for the Italian Championship. Alfa Romeo had a very impressive service set-up in the Firestone Rally, masterminded by Dante Solvay, whose main interests lie with the Jolly Club. They even seemed interested in coming to the RAC Rally and if their performance on the loose stzges of the Firestone is anything to go by they should do well.

Another prompt departure was John Davenport who flew to East Africa to run the Peugeot service for the Safari. He will be swapping the Coleman Escort for Bill Parkinson's Cessna 402.

The Fiat team got marooned at Bilbao airport when the in-coming flight from Paris failed to arrive but with no further interests until Elba and Portugal, they were in no hurry to leave. The only black spot on their horizon seemed to be the question mark hanging over the X1/9 project which now looks as if it may be abandoned. A pity not to see Bernard Darniche having a proper go at the Stratos. Fiat's philosophy is based on the fact that most of the major rallies are now based on dirt roads where, they hope, their 124 Spyder will still be 100 per cent competitive. It is also a reflection of the current trend to economy in their team, though they seem certain to contend at least six World Championship events and will do the major European Championship event, including Wales and Scotland, though these two rallies will probably be only for the Finns Hannu Mikkola and Markku Alen, and not Verini.

PREVIEW

Circuit time schedule

The 1975 Benson and Hedges Circuit of Ireland starts tomorrow from the showground at Ballymena. The cars will be flagged off from here starting at 13.00. There are 20 stages in part one, six of them in Northern Ireland. At 23.05 the first cars arrive at Lough Key, Co. Roscommon where there will be a 20-minute break. The first hard night is completed by a breakfast halt in the West country Inn, Ennis at 05.20. Part two of the rally starts at 06.30 and the first car is due in at Killarney at 12.55 on Saturday afternoon. The "classic" Sunday run starts at 07.00 and this year it is back on more traditional ground. First car to return to Killarney should be back by 16.00. After sampling the delights that this relaxing and pleasant town has to offer, part four starts at the civilised hour of 14.00 on Easter Monday. Supper that night is at the Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny, and the first car is due there at 20.55. Crews are off again at 22.00 for the final hard slog to the finish which this year is at the Agnew Street car park in Larne where the cars will be starting to arrive at 11.10.

The Belfast Telegraph are running a telephone information service throughout the rally and the number to ring for the latest information is (0322) 8041. The system is being updated with new information approximately every four hours. A list of special stages and locations is as below.

George Hill – dark horse

Dessie McCartney – a win this year?

SPECIAL STAGES

No	NAME	Map Ref ROAD CLOSES	Length		Surface	Nearest Town to start
	CONTROL I OUT 13.00 START BALLYMENA SHOWGROUNDS Part 1 FRIDAY MARCH 28/SATURDAY MARCH 29					
1	Orra Lodge	S2/148213 F2/221289	12.30	8.56	Tar	Newtown-cromellie
2	Torr Head	S2/237334 F2/173403	13.00	10.20	Tar	Cushendun Co Antrim
3	Glendun	S2/215323 F2/077294½	13.30	10.20	Tar	Cushendun Co Antrim
4	Banaghaer	S2/884255½ F2/889242	14.30	4.66	Tar	Ballymoney Co Antrim
5	Barnes Gap	S2/634942 F4/543876	16.00	8.23	Tar	Sperrin Co Tyrone
6	Syonfin	S3/440575 F3/454½504½	17.00	5.57	Tar	Fintona Co Tyrone
7	Poorhouse	S7/095142 F7/997½231	18.45	12.71	Tar 80% Loose 20%	Ballinamore Co Leitrim
8	Dawn of Hope	S7/965½262 F7/909½283½	19.30	4.49	Tar 60% Loose 40%	Dowra Co Sligo
9	Drumkeeran	S7/910241	19.45	11.30	Tar 75% Loose 25%	Drumkeeran Co Sligo
10	Altagowlan	S7/901175 F7/810199½	20.30	8.34	Tar	Arigna Co R'common
11	Lough Na Lieb	S7/747½140 F7/689133	21.00	9.82	Tar	Castlebaldwin Co Sligo
12	Carrowcrory	S7/739080 F7/701102	21.00	5.55	Tar	Kesh Co Sligo
	CONTROL A in 23.05 Halt: LOUGH KEY FOREST PARK BOYLE, Co ROSCOMMON					
	CONTROL A OUT 23.25					
13	Hillstreet Lakes	S12/934917½ F12/914869	22.00	5.52	Tar	Hillstreet, Co Roscommon
14	Garrownaskeagh	S12/969786 F12/889½748½	22.30	6.65	Tar	Strokestown Co Roscommon
15	Bracknagh	S12/937½674 F12/957606	23.00	5.79	Tar	Roscommon Co Roscommon
16	Toberdan	S12/937½584½ F12/965542	23.30	8.88	Tar	Knockcroghery Co Roscommon
17	Carrowreagh	S15/877½415 F15/845½348	00.30	9.87	Tar 95% Loose 5%	Thomas Street Co Roscommon
18	Lough Rea	S15/651090 F14/563½144	01.30	13.35	Tar	Loughrea Co Galway
19	Hollymount	S14/491062 F14/532½011	02.30	6.18	Tar	Peterswell Co Galway
20	Lough Cutra	S14/491½006 F14/470907	02.30	12.84	Tar	Gort Co Galway
	CONTROL II IN 05.20 BREAKFAST:— WEST COUNTY INN, ENNIS CONTROL II OUT 06.30 PART II SATURDAY MARCH 29					
21	Gallows Hill	S17/569186 F17/483613	05.45	9.30	Tar	Cratloe Co Clare
22	Old Kildimo	S17/465518 F17/433447½	07.00	8.12	Tar	Adare Co Limerick
23	Glenwilliam	S17/413330	07.30	8.23	Tar	Ballingarry Co Limerick
24	Sugar Hill	S17/237320 F17/220384	08.15	10.41	Tar	Newcastle W Co Limerick
25	Desmonds Grave	S20/972153	09.30	9.95	Tar	Castleisland Co Kerry
26	Lough Caragh	S20/715928	10.30	13.84	Tar	Glenbeigh Co Kerry
	CONTROL III IN 12.55 OVERNIGHT — KILLARNEY, CO KERRY PART III SUNDAY MARCH 30					
	CONTROL III OUT 07.00					
27	Molls Gap	S21/954486 F21/892741	06.15	12.75	Tar	Killarney Co Kerry
28	Turner's Rock	S24/923630 F24/922592	07.15	6.05	Tar	Kenmare Co Kerry
29	Castle Donovan	S24/005501½ F24/114494½	07.30	15.42	Tar 80% Loose 20%	Bantry Co Cork
30	Cullenagh Lake	S24/192516 F24/187566	08.30	7.51	Tar	Dunmanway Co Cork
31	Mount Prospect	S24/164579½	08.45	10.83	Tar	Dunmanway Co Cork
32	Borlin	S24/047½620½ F21/017½696	09.45	8.63	Tar	Kilgarvin Co Kerry

(continued on page 16)

33	Roughty River	S21/984720 F21/942½698	10.00	7.42	Tar 70% Loose 30%	Kilgarvin Co Kerry
34	Killmakillogue	S24/789626½ F24/775585	11.00	6.26	Tar	Lauragh Co Kerry
35	"Auto Ireland" Tim Healey Pass	S24/778585 F24/810½506	11.15	6.98	Tar	Lauragh Co Kerry
36	Knokoura	S24/673457 F24/644443½	12.00	4.82	Tar	Castletown- berehaven
37	Cods Head	S24/613418½ F24/608480	12.15	9.81	Tar	Allihies Co Cork
38	Ardgroom	S24/649514 F24/689½552	12.30	12.20	Tar	Eyries Co Cork

CONTROL IV IN 16.10 OVERNIGHT IN KILLARNEY, CO KERRY
CONTROL IV OUT 14.00 PART IV MONDAY MARCH 31

39	Gartnagane	S21/080½886 F21/189924	12.45	15.24	Tar	Barraduff Co Kerry
40	Brenagh River	S21/179½071 F21/197138	13.45	7.39	Tar	Ballydesmond Co Cork
41	Knockanebane	S21/218163 F21/311175½	14.00	6.9	Tar	Rockchapel Co Cork
42	Aherlow	S18/875½298 F21/941332	16.00	7.77	Tar	Tipperary Co Tipperary
43	Moanvaun	S18/887½478 F18/914588	16.30	18.69	Tar	Cappagh White Co Tipperary
44	Hollyford	S18/925534½ F18/935502	17.30	9.01	Tar	Hollyford Co Tipperary
45	Killahycross	S18/345581 F18/403619	18.45	7.57	Tar	Urlingford Co Kilkenny
46	Aringna	S18/407645½ F18/659½572	19.00	7.01	Tar	Freshford Co Kilkenny

CONTROL V IN 20.55 SUPPER — NEWPARK HOTEL, KILKENNY
CONTROL V OUT 22.00 PART V MONDAY MARCH 31/TUESDAY APRIL 1

47	Flagmount	S19/519½637 F19/662½605½	21.00	17.83	Tar	Ballyfoyle Co Kilkenny
48	Old Leighlin	S19/660655 F19/693757	22.00	9.85	Tar	Old Leighlin Co Carlow
49	Aghavanna	S16/072848 F16/139½952	23.00	19.91	Tar	Rathdangan Co Wicklow
50	Sally Gap	S16/143½966 F16/140177	23.30	28.97	Tar	Laragh Co Wicklow
51	Great Freffans	S13/894468 F13/829559	02.00	7.46	Tar	Summerhill Co Meath
52	Muff	S13/750962	03.15	8.61	Tar	Kingscourt
53	Raferagh	S8/752027 F8/764½059	04.00	6.57	Tar	Shercock Co Monaghan
54	Babylon Hill	S4/009403 F4/046428	05.30	9.27	Tar	Markethills Co Armagh
55	Milltown	S4/116½487 F4/154489	06.00	6.20	Tar	Seapatrick Co Down
56	Ballooly	S4/205470	06.30	4.46	Tar 70% Loose 30%	Banbridge Co Down
57	Annahunshigo	S4/255362 F4/323351½	06.45	7.98	Tar 90% Loose 10%	Rathfriland Co Down
58	Hamilton's Folly	S4/344386 F4/355474½	07.15	6.91	Tar	Annsborough Co Down
59	Lough Aghery	S4/295530½ F4/258½570	07.30	11.07	Tar	Ballynahinch Co Down
60	Nutt's Corner	S4/200776 F4/200776	9.00	1.0	Tar	Dundrod Co Antrim
61	Ballynalough	S4/246796 F4/208840	09.00	4.29	Tar	Templepatrick Co Antrim

CONTROL VI IN 11.10 FINISH LARNE, CO ANTRIM

Fourth overall on the Firestone and first in G1 was the Etchebers' BMW 2002

Tarren takes customers . . .

Ianto Roberts, Operations Director of the recently announced "Tarren" rally car testing facility in central Wales, has been inundated with enquiries from motor clubs wishing to arrange "blanket" club days at the facility. In order to achieve firm indications of use, in drawing-up an agenda, Ianto would like to hear from all the motor clubs which may be considering an outing there. Ianto should be contacted at: Yuys Eidiol, Furnace, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 8PG.

It would appear heartening that Tarren is generating such interest, to an extent that many clubs have talked of either a single day or a full weekend booking. Mr Roberts would like to point out, however, that 20 cars in one day would allow for only approximately eight laps per car. Ten cars per day would allow much greater use of the track per car, and would also be a manageable accommodation figure for weekend bookings.

Work on a completely new loop is expected to commence next week and the proposed route has already been pegged-out. Work is expected to be completed by the end of May. The new loop will not interfere with either of the existing tracks.

● After hitting a barn on the Red Dragon last year, the G1 Mexico of Bryan Roe and Peter Forrester finally gave up the unequal struggle. Its crew however have done anything but; and are at present busy building up a standard Twin Cam-engined Escort with a new shell for use in BTRDA Silver Star and MN rounds. First event for this experienced team will probably be the Servais.

● Shellsport have denied rumours that they have withdrawn their support from the Tour of Dean Rally. Shell inform us that no decision whatsoever has been taken and that discussions have been held between Shell and the organisers (Newport CC) regarding certain aspects of the event but no decision has been made either way.

● By the time you see Curley's Chequered Flag Lancia Stratos on the Circuit of Ireland, the "rally-supercar" should look even more photogenic, with the addition of a Tour de Corse type front apron spoiler.

Avon grab a slice of action

Six rally drivers are to compete in the various rally championships of 1975 under the banner "Team Avon Tyres" in a new rally sport promotion announced by Avon Tyres Limited of Melksham, Wiltshire. It will be the first time that Avon Tyres has had its own rally team competing in the major championships. Avon's drivers will be HRH Prince Michael of Kent, Richard Iliffe, Gordon Batchelor, David Oliver, Graham Elsmore, and Russell Close. Prince Michael will use the Team Avon Tyres banner to compete in the Avon Motor Tour of Britain and the RAC rally in his Ford Capri.

All the cars in the team will run on standard Avon tyres — either Snowgrips or 70 series radials — and will be painted in Team Avon Tyres colours of red and black stripes on a white base. Explaining Avon's decision to run a rally team this year, Competitions Manager Alan Blake said: "Avon tyres have made great strides in rallying in recent years and have proved that they can compete with the best. We feel that the time is now right to really show what our tyres can do in a competitive rally team."

Team Avon Tyres will make their debut on 30th March when David Oliver will compete in the Avon Tyres Chieftain Rally on Salisbury Plain in his 1300 GT Sport.

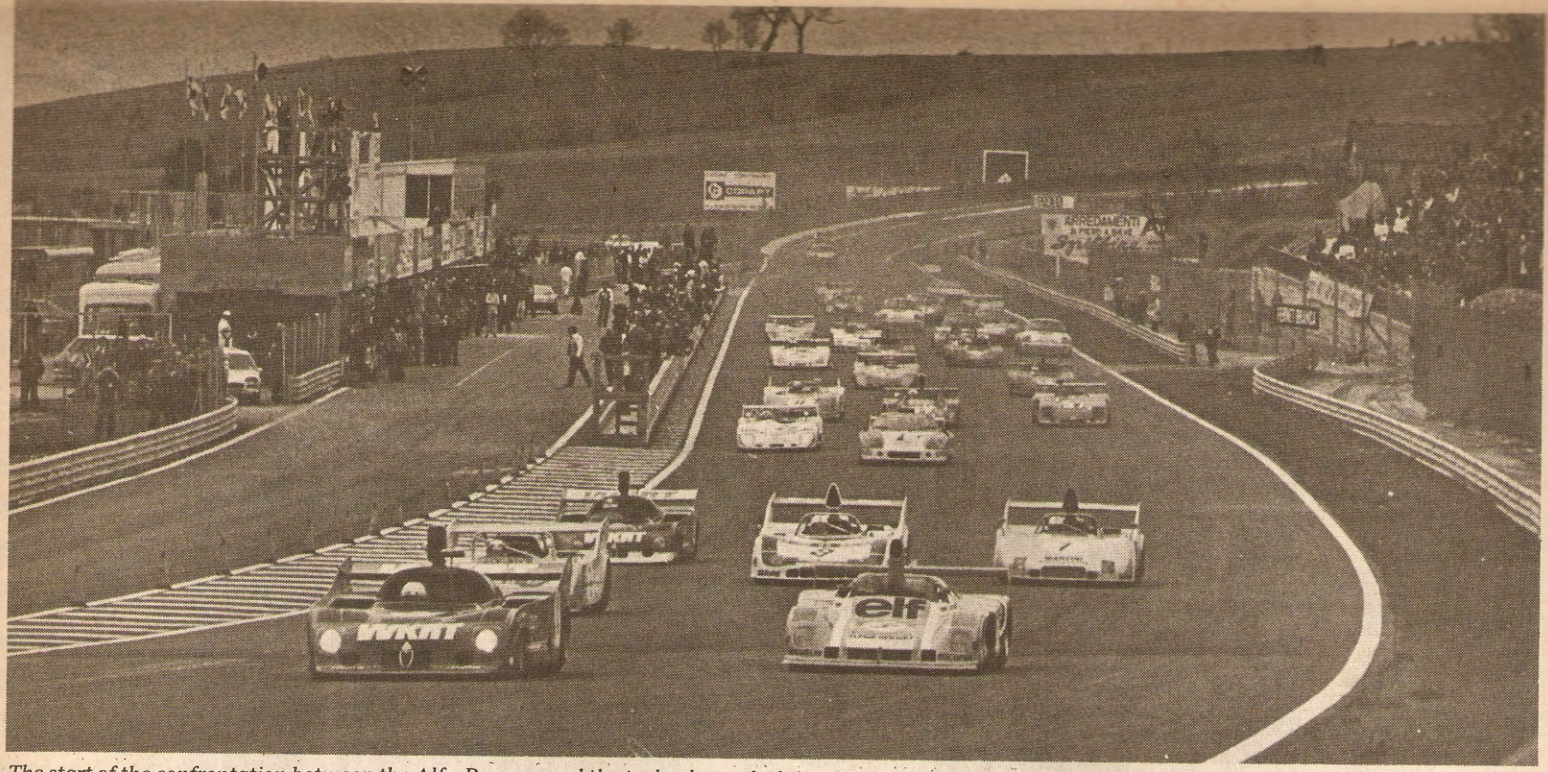
● Both competitors and spectators planning to get to Ireland this weekend may have more trouble getting to their favourite rally than is normal to expect with the services that are currently in existence. Not only are the ferry men planning a one day strike for today, but the fishermen are planning a blockade of East coast ports incorporating nets and other obstacles, all of which may upset the plans of foreign entrants.

● Intending to compete in the BTRDA Gold Star and Triple C championships in a rather more determined fashion than last year are Richard Walker/Simon Cross in a Vegantune 1800 TC Escort. Engine work will be carried out by John Murfin of Retford and sponsors are John Hudson Trailer Supermarket of Bawtry, who specialises in supplying trailers for heavy goods vehicles. First outing for the car is scheduled to be the Chieftain over Easter.

A bargain French frolic

For British competitors wishing a "rave-up" weekend under the Normandy sun, with a rally thrown-in, there can be little better on the calendar than the ADSA and London CC sixth Dieppe Rally. A weekend event, over May 31-June 1, the Dieppe boasts a 350 km route comprising three loops and one return section. Four hillclimbs on the loop will be visited on each circuit. On Sunday a slalom takes place in front of a large audience along the sea-front.

A reduced entry fee of £24 is available for British competitors and both food and accommodation is most reasonably priced. Previous Dieppe winner, Antoine Lurot, assures us that the event is tremendous fun, socially as well as competitively. The British contingent has quite a reputation for letting its hair down. The town of Dieppe doesn't mind in the slightest and, in fact, puts up £1,000 towards the cost of the event. Prospective participants should contact: Antoine Lurot, General Co-ordinator, Dieppe Rally, c/o Lurot-Brand and Co, 144 Brompton Road, London SW3. Telephone 584 6221, home 262 6125. You are advised to contact Antoine at the earliest as it may well be possible to organise a reduced rate ferry-crossing. A list of accommodation addresses will be provided, covering a wide price spectrum.



The start of the confrontation between the Alfa-Romeos and the turbocharged Alpine-Renault with Merzario and Larrousse leading away from the flag.

MUGELLO

Alpine arrive

Story and photographs by JEFF HUTCHINSON

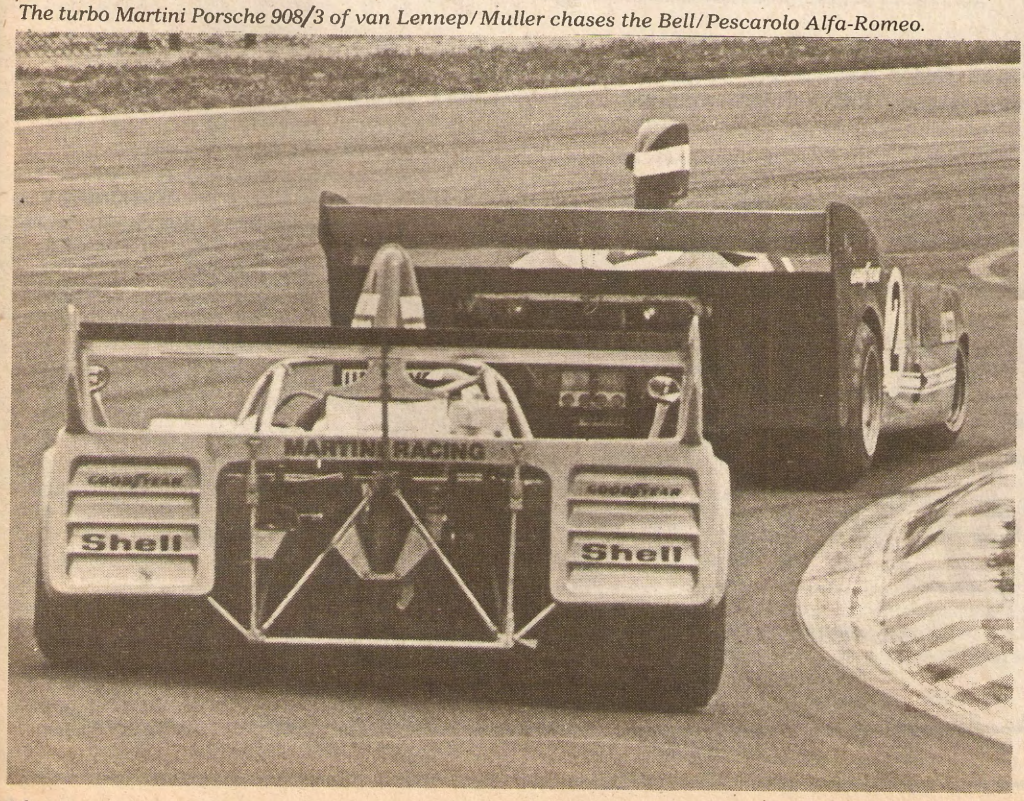
Gerard Larrousse and Jean Pierre Jabouille gave the new Elf-backed Alpine-Renault turbo a debut victory at Mugello last Sunday, winning the 150 lap race by just one lap from the Willi Kauhsen Alfa Romeo 33TT/12 of Arturo Merzario/Jacky Ickx.

It was the first 'proper' round of this year's World Championship of Makes which provided exciting racing and a tooth and nail battle for the lead between the Renault Alpine and Alfa team, the Alpine only assured of victory in the final stages when Merzario was forced to make a three minute stop to change worn out brake pads.

It was also the debut of the turbocharged Porsche 908/3, three of which started the race but with only Herbert Muller/Gijs van Lennep continuing their winning ways with their Martini backed car, finishing untroubled on the same lap as the leading Alfa. Both the others cars were delayed with turbo problems.

The second Alfa Romeo of Henri Pescarolo/Derek Bell was slowed with handling problems after very few practice laps, but still finished a strong fourth.

The turbo Martini Porsche 908/3 of van Lennep/Muller chases the Bell/Pescarolo Alfa-Romeo.



The ex-Gulf GR7, now run by German privateer Georg Loos was a disappointment for its drivers Jochen Mass/Tim Schenken when a broken distributor wire put it out on the warming up lap.

John Hine/Ian Grob drove another strong race with their new KVG racing Chevron-Hart B31, the car running like clockwork to take the 2-litre class win and fifth overall, but only 15 seconds ahead of the all-girl crewed Alpine-Renault A441 of Lella Lombardi/Marie-Claude Beaumont which caught up after a long pit stop for the KVG car.

The Loos Racing Porsche Carrera driven by John Fitzpatrick/Toine Hezemans won the GT class yet again, finishing ninth overall in the process. It was an exciting close fought race which bodes well for the future of long distance racing.

ENTRY AND PRACTICE

A couple of months ago, long distance sports car racing looked to be in a sorry state. All the big names had withdrawn and it looked as though organisers would be lucky to attract more than a handful of competitive cars.

Although Daytona was eventually classified as a round of the World Championship of Makes, the Championship proper opened at the beautiful new circuit of Mugello, built after the original road circuit of Mugello was closed, and only a stone's throw away from the old start-line at Scarparia. The tree and brick wall lined approach roads, once part of the circuit, now bring back a nice touch of nostalgia tinged with fear to many of the present drivers conditioned to the comforting world of steel barriers and catch fences.

With its mountain backdrop and rolling grassy hills the circuit is situated in almost the same terrain as Salzburg, but unlike the Austrian circuit, the designers have made full use of all the natural features to build an exciting and challenging 5.3 kilometre circuit and not just a giant high speed "speedway" following the contours of the hills. If any criticism can be laid on the new Mugello circuit it is perhaps, that it's not fast enough, for most of the corners are second and third gear, the 3-litre cars using fifth gear only once past the pits, while they only use fourth a few times as well.

The dismal outlook regarding entries suddenly looked a lot brighter approaching the race, and eventually 32 cars arrived for practice of which ten were running in the 3-litre prototype class. The remainder of the entry was made up from several competitive 2-litre prototypes, a host of 2-litre cars running 1300 engines to count for the Italian championship and a strong field of Porsche Carreras contesting the GT class.

Heading the entry and the grid after two days (a total of six hours) of practice was the leading Alfa Romeo of the Willi Kauhsen Racing Team. It was one of last year's cars with slight suspension geometry changes, the most visible difference

between last year and this year being a great white WKRT across the back wing and nose section; otherwise the cars were still painted in their old Alfa colours. In fact, it was surprising to see no signs of sponsorship on any of the team's two race cars or spare car. Apparently the deal with Kauhsen's sausage sponsors is only for a few races now and for the rest of the year he has fixed up a major new sponsor which is a well kept secret until the contracts are signed some time at the end of March.

With Kauhsen for this first race were several of the Alfa mechanics, Carlo Chiti and Sig Ceviri. Things were looking and happening little different than in the past, a situation which was causing considerable aggravation between Kauhsen's men and the Alfa men, which he hoped will get sorted out once the cars and the races are away from Italy.

Arturo Merzario and Jacky Ickx were paired in the leading car, Merzario having set a 1m 48.83s to take pole position the first day of practice. The lap record of 1m 46.5s stands to Patrick Depailler's Elf Team March, for which the circuit is ideally suited.

Alfa's second entry for Derek Bell/Henri Pescarolo did not run so smoothly. Despite several day's of pre-race testing Bell was late starting practice because the mechanics could not get the car to run in the cold weather. When he did eventually get out it was only a couple of laps before a bearing broke in the gearbox. A long wait later, the second "spare" car, a brand new and untried chassis finished only hours before practice, was eventually started with the aid of a ladies hair-dryer warming the metering unit. This time the car lasted just a few laps again when it was put off the road by a leaking oil-seal between the clutch and gearbox.

The race car was prepared once more, and this time Pescarolo managed just four laps (his only four laps of the circuit) before the same oil seal went again. Thus with a best time of 1m 53.6s by Bell, the second Alfa was starting the race from the fourth row of the grid. After skid pan tests, Bell's car had been set up very stiff and he planned to make a back to back test against the more soft settings of the other car. He never had the chance, so the car was reverted to a soft set-up for the race, neither Bell nor Pescarolo having had the chance to try it.

Second quickest on the first day and second overall alongside the Alfa was the Jean Pierre Jabouille/Gerard Larrousse turbo-charged Alpine — now Michelin shod. Larrousse set a 1m 49.35s the first day, but after a change of gear ratios and some more suspension adjustments it was eventually Jabouille who set the quickest time with a 1m 48.89s, only a fraction slower than the best Merzario could manage.

The Alpine-Renault chassis is the same one Larrousse used last year, but with a new suspension layout based loosely on the F2 car. The 2-litre turbo-charged V6 engine gives an incredible 500 bhp, which puts the car on the same level as the 3-litre cars. Unfortunately, however, the car still had its 2-litre size 100 litre fuel tank, so the extra pit stops necessary would put them at a severe disadvantage.

For the next race at Dijon a new chassis with 120 litre tanks should be ready. Besides minor suspension tweaking and a minor gearbox problem the new turbo-Alpine ran trouble free throughout practice and was tipped by many to be a strong favourite for victory despite it's fuelling problem.

Listed as third fastest by the rather doubtful time-keepers was the first of three Porsche 908/3s entered, the 908/3 chassis with a turbocharged Carrera grafted into the back. Herbert Muller/Gijs van Lennep were continuing with Martini to run one car entered under Team Dr Dannesburger, the car's owner, for he bought the chassis from Porsche out of the Porsche museum. The second Porsche turbo entry was also under his name, the team having come to an arrangement with its Spanish owner, Heiderich, to use the car as a semi-spare arrangement for this race. Leo Kinnunen was entered as the driver for this car, but had Muller and van Lennep sharing the driving.

The final turbo on the entry was the Reinhold Joest car, which he was sharing with Italian Mario Casoni after a deal with his Ovoro liquer sponsors. Joest also brought his familiar non-turbo spare car along which was being driven by Ernst Kraus/Jurgen Barth at this race. All but one of the existing Porsche 908/3s were present at this race, the fifth one still standing in the entrance hall to the Porsche factory. The main external feature of the two cars was the airbox and the larger CanAm type tail.

Porsche man Norbert Singer was present over-seeing the Martini car, but emphasised that he had been hired for the job and Porsche had nothing to do with financing the effort. In fact, he held out little hope that it would be too successful, for all three cars were using the Porsche 908/3 gearbox, "which was designed for only about half the torque that the turbo is putting through them now," Singer explained. "We have tried to build the boxes as strong as possible, but there is no room for Porsche 917 gears in the 908 box."

Muller was credited with the third best time of practice at 1m 50.84s, which even he was surprised to see, for nobody got him within 1.5 seconds of this time. His car ran without any serious problems throughout practice, although it did miss most of one session while a leaking oil seal on the cooling fan shaft was replaced.

During a short warm-up session before the race a slight oil leak was also discovered between the engine and gearbox, so perhaps the strain was proving too much after all.

A surprise last minute entry for this race was one of the ex-Gulf GR7s for Tim Schenken and Jochen Mass. Ford pressure following an offer for Mass to drive the Alfas saw a deal set up with German entrant Georg Loos. He has bought two of the '74 Gulf chassis, installed two nice new '75 Cosworth-DFV engines and uses one car as a spare. "Which I will run as well if the starting money is right."

Len Bailey and the two chief Gulf mechanics came along to see that everything ran smoothly which it seemed to do, other than a "cooked" gearbox at the beginning of practice due to a faulty oil pump.

Mass set a time in the middle 1m 50s bracket, while Schenken was also below 1m 51.0s. But according to the timekeepers their best was a 1m 51.07s, which made little difference anyhow. It was Mass' first sports car race since the Springbok series in '72. "It's a bit more like saloons than F1."

The Joest/Casoni Porsche 908/4 came next on the grid, their only problem being a wrecked turbo after a stone had got mixed up with the fan. Joest did a very respectable 1m 52.26s while the best time from Casoni was over 7 seconds slower!

The Kinnunen Porsche turbo was next, the Flying Finn setting a 1m 52.64s, while Muller and van Lennep also practised the car.

Heading the fourth row of the grid came the second Alfa which had the John Hine/Ian Grob alongside, fastest of the 2-litre cars. They were giving their new Chevron B31 powered by a 2-litre Hart engine its first race, and almost its first test session. The car looks virtually the same as last year's, but for rear sub-frame and suspension alterations to allow for the longer Hart engine. The well organised KVG men ran a trouble-free practice, Hine setting a last lap best of 1m 53.67s to head the 2-litre runners, Grob being just under a second slower, his big effort spoilt when the car ran out of fuel. This was its only problem.

Next quickest was the 2-litre Lola-BMW T294 of Cosimo Turizio, the Naples driver who has proved quick in several other International races and who really deserves the backing to try a full season of F2 or the like. Turizio set a 1m 53.69s, but was also handicapped by his co-driver and the car's owner Carlo Bilotti who was over 6s slower.

Also going well in the 2-litre class was the Alpine-Renault girl pairing of Lella Lombardi and Marie-Claude Beaumont. Lella got down to a best of 1m 55.94s before she slid off the road in the final session and ploughed up a couple of rows of catch fencing. Fortunately damage was limited to just bodywork and a split radiator, so the car was fit to run by race day.

Both the Ligier-Cosworth JS2s filled the sixth row of the grid, Jean-Pierre Jarier setting a best of 1m 56.55s in the car he was sharing the J-P Beltoise, while Jean-Louis Lafosse set a 1m 57.67s in the second car which he was sharing with Francois Migault, who replaced Jose Dolhem.

Jarier was not looking too pleased about working so hard just to get on the sixth row. He explained, "The car is very unstable and hard on the brakes. It is not very positive like the Matra but for what it is you cannot expect so much."

Wider wheels and body, suspension mods and bigger brakes are the main differences to the chassis now that a Cosworth DFV replaces last year's Maserati power. It was interesting to note the car's Michelin tyre wear which has now reached F1 sizes and if things go well will no doubt be fitted to the Ligier F1 car, due to go testing by mid-September. It was the Michelin's tyres which Beltoise thought might account for some of the instability which was improved by changing to harder springs.

The only other driver to get below two minutes was local "Gianfranco" co-driving one of the new Renault-Alpine styled Osella PA3 chassis fitted with a 1600 FVC engine. He set a 1m 59.78s, his co-driver Lorenzo Niccolini being considerably slower.

An exceptional effort was put up by the talented newcomer Duilio Truffo, who, driving a small 1300 cc powered Osella, lapped in 2m 1.15s, but his co-driver "Mici' was a bit of a handicap at some 13s slower!

Late arrivals, but just in time for the second day of practice was Roger Heavens' familiar 1950 FVC powered Lola T294, which he was hiring out to Brazilians Pedro De Lamare/Antonio Prado. First the truck engine blew up just outside Dover, then after a change of trailer and tow car it took 18 hours to get across the Channel because of bad weather.

During the final session the racer's engine also blew a great hole in the side, so things were not going too well for the Heavens' equipe and they were destined to go no better.

Well back on the grid was the 'standard' Porsche 908/3 of Barth/Kraus; Jurgen Barth's best was only 2m 1.74s.

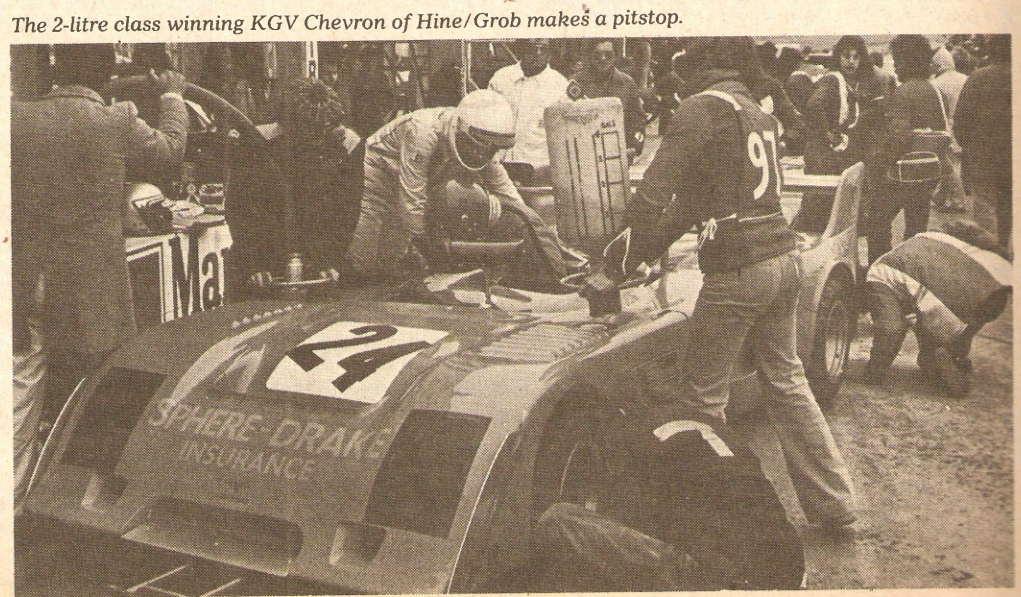
Behind a bunch of keen 'local' prototype competition, the two Loos Porsche Carreras driven by John Fitzpatrick/Toine Hezemans/Manfred Schurti headed the strong Carrera line-up, a couple of seconds faster than their main opposition of Bartwig Bertrams/Reine Wisell/Clemens Schickentanz sharing two Tebernum-sponsored Carreras replacing the challenge put up by the two Kremer Porsches all last year.

A single De Tomaso Pantera of Gabriel Gottifredi/Beppe Schenetti was the only opposition to the all Porsche GT class domination.

RACE

Despite the cold winds and overcast sky, an estimated 30,000 crowd were lost among the

The 2-litre class winning KGV Chevron of Hine/Grob makes a pitstop.



natural grandstands of the surrounding hills by the time the cars lined up for the 11.30 am start.

A brief warming up session for 20 minutes earlier in the morning had not really given teams the chance to try any major changes, although it was enough time to find the Ligier of Lafosse/Migault was in trouble. The engine was filling up with oil, so the oil pump was changed but the fault persisted, the scavenge side of the system not operating. It was too late to do anything about it, so reluctantly the second Ligier was forced to scratch before the race had even started.

By the time the cars had eventually finished the pace lap and taken the flag for the Indy type start, the race was almost 20 minutes behind schedule, the mileage having already fallen by the wayside.

From the front row of the grid the Alfa and Alpine shot off side by side, Merzario just getting the edge into the first corner, but by the time the cars appeared on the main straight again, Larrousse was still right beside.

For several laps the Alfa and Alpine changed places, the Alpine holding a narrow lead until the cars soon started lapping slower traffic.

Behind the two leading cars, which soon opened a healthy lead over the rest, was Muller holding off Joest, Pescarolo, Kinnunen before another gap to Turizio and Hine who soon shook off an initial challenge from Jarier, who in turn found himself being hard pressed and eventually passed by Lombardi.

It took Merzario until the bunch of GT back-markers, which the leaders were already starting to lap after five laps, before he could close the gap and pass Larrousse. The latter seemed to be taking things much more steady through traffic, although he was also forced to slow a little when he found his initial burst of speed had caused the tyres to go 'off' slightly.

During the first hour, Merzario built up a steady 15-second lead over Larrousse who was managing to hold the gap fairly constant.

Muller was slowly dropping further and further back, but still a strong third and eventually joined by team-mate Kinnunen who disposed of Pescarolo without much trouble and was driving a good 'supporting' race to the lead Martini car.

Joest had soon dropped out of the lead picture, first being passed by Pescarolo and then Kinnunen and finally Turizio who sat right on his tail for many laps soon after the start. Joest eventually called it a day and retired to the pits to explain that the 'old' spare turbo they had been forced to fit in practice had lost all its power and the car could hardly stay ahead of the 2-litre runners.

Turizio was also out of luck after 19 laps when the oil pressure disappeared and he was out of the race for good with a blown engine.

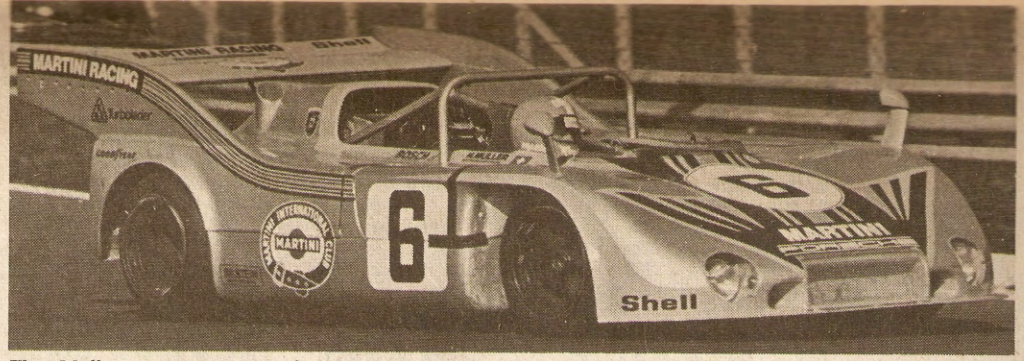
By the time the leading cars had made their first stops the order remained the same, the battle really on between Jabouille and Ickx, Jabouille closing and taking the lead on lap 50, setting fastest lap of the race six laps later with a 1m 49.9s. Ickx's lap times seemed to drop a little and his gear change past the pits was very slow and deliberate, the problem being the difficult change from fourth to fifth which he explained at the next stop.

Van Lennep had taken over from Muller, their Porsche running a routine race so far, and the only other car on the same lap as the leaders by the 50th lap, one third distance.

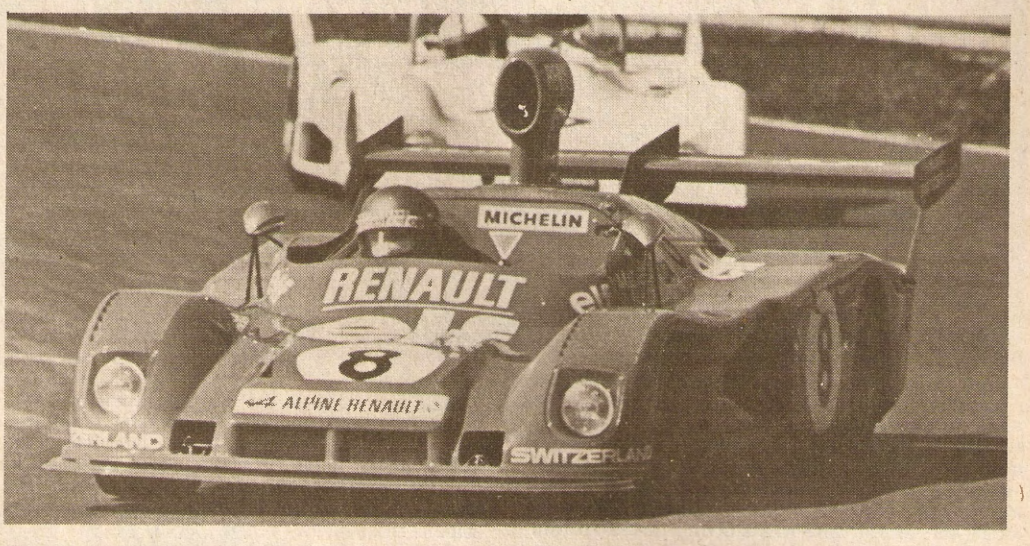
Kinnunen's fine drive was spoilt when his car also started to lose power like Joest's. He made several stops while the mechanics tried to re-coup the boost pressure, but finally a bent fan shaft was diagnosed and the whole unit changed, an operation which took a total of 29 laps and cost the Finn any chance of success.

The Pescarolo/Bell car was slowly dropping out of the picture, Pescarolo falling back in the opening stages as the tyres went off, Bell having to change the front tyres at his stop because of chunking problems. "The handling is terrible, because we had no chance to practice," said Henri. The second Alfa was also using a lot of oil and Bell was force to stop early at the end of his first stint with the oil pressure almost disappearing on right hand corners, the car well behind the leaders, but still well clear of the next car which was the Chevron of Hine/Grob. This had taken a strong lead of the 2-litre class and fifth place overall ever since Turizio's exit in the opening stages of the race.

Lombardi/Beaumont were a strong sixth, while the Ligier was in bad brake trouble. The heavy braking had got the discs too hot and warped them slightly which was causing 'Knock-off' of the brake pads between every corner. With so many corners on the Mugello circuit this presented a major problem as well as a not very pleasant one having the pedal to the floor every



The Muller/van Lennep turbo Porsche finished third (above) while the little Alpine-Renault of Marie-Claude Beaumont (below) and Lella Lombardi nearly won the 2-litre class.



first pump of the brakes.

Despite the problems behind, the battle for the lead was still a great one, the Alfa moving back into the lead shortly after the Alpine made its second stop. If the race carried on as close as it had been up to the half-way stage it looked like being a really exciting finish.

Unfortunately, the possibility of that came to an end just after two thirds distance. Merzario came into the pits with the brake pads down to the metal and as he stopped one pad welded itself to the disc. By the time the mechanics got the old pad out and new ones in place three and a half minutes had gone by which would be impossible to regain unless the Alpine also had problems. Larrousse took over from Jabouille for the final stint with a two-lap lead, Jabouille reporting that the gear change was a little difficult, but otherwise all was fine. Larrousse took no chances and dropped his lap times to a nice steady pace, unperturbed by the cheering and waving crowds as Merzario closed up and pulled back a lap with half an hour to go, for it would be impossible to make up another two full laps to take the lead by the finish.

Merzario's hard driving soon took him past the Muller/van Lennep Porsche, however, which also finished a lap behind the winners, 30 seconds behind the Alfa which gave the crowd a real value-for-money pit stop when the Alfa stopped for fuel with just nine laps to go. Merzario went the whole length of the pit road with the rear end swinging from left to right as he accelerated out to stay ahead of the Porsche.

Pescarolo/Bell nursed the second Alfa into fourth place a further lap down, the re-styled Kauhsen/Alfa team pleased with their result, but no doubt cursing that they had miscalculated the pad wear of the lead car which they thought would comfortably last the race.

Hine/Grob came home an eventual fifth overall and 2-litre class winners although it was an exciting finish when the Beaumont/Lombardi Alpine Renault went ahead at the last pit stops. The front and rear tyres had to be changed and half way through the change the air bottle valve packed up. Almost two laps were lost while the tyres had to be changed by hand and when Hine finally got out of the pits the Alpine was some 30 seconds ahead. John really had to turn up the wick in the final stages and with ten laps to go managed to get ahead again and pulled out a 15-second lead by the finish.

The Ligier came in next, a further five laps down and only just ahead of the Barth/Kraus Porsche 908/3 after the Gitanes car had stopped for a brake pad change with just 15 laps to go.

In ninth place and the GT winner was the Fitzpatrick/Schurti/Hezemans Carrera which finished just under a minute ahead of the Schickentanz/Wisell car and ran an engine-trouble-free race.

Of all 11 retirements, the De Lamare/Prado Lola was one, the car struggling with overheating problems for most of the race before finally retiring with a severe misfire problem.

Despite the Frenchman's win over the Alfa team, the enthusiastic and appreciative crowd gave Larrousse and Jabouille a loud reception at the finish. It was a good race which they had worked hard for to win. If the rest of the season carries on as well as this first race it could see a popular revival of long-distance racing which forms an important part of the motor sport calendar.

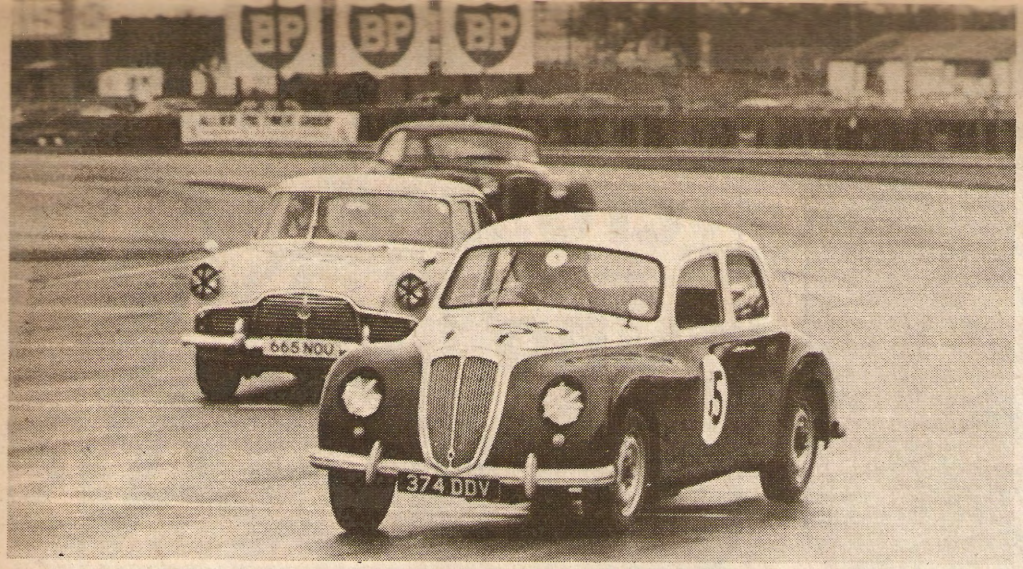
Mondial Marche Mugello
Mugello, Italy, March 23
150 laps x 5,245kms
World Championship of makes, round 2

1, J-P Jabouille/Gerard Larrousse (Alpine-Renault Turbo A442), 4h 47m 37.7s, 164.145 kph.
2, Arturo Merzario/Jacky Ickx (Alfa Romeo 33TT/12), 149 laps.
3, Gijs van Lennep/Herbert Muller (Porsche 908/3 turbo), 149 laps.
4, Henri Pescarolo/Derek Bell (Alfa Romero 33TT/12), 149 laps.
5, John Hine/Ian Grob (Chevron-Hart B31), 144 laps.
6, Lella Lombardi/Marie Claude Beaumont (Alpine-Renault A441), 144 laps.
7, J-P Beltoise/J-P Jarier (Ligier-DFV JS2), 139 laps; 8, Jurgen Barth/Ernst Kraus (Porsche 908/3), 139 laps; 9, Manfred Schurti/John Fitzpatrick/Toine Hezemans (Porsche Carrera), 134 laps; 10, Clemens Schickentanz/Reine Wisell (Porsche Carrera), 134 laps.

Fastest lap: Jabouille, 1m 49.8s, 171,967 kph.

World Championship of makes points: 1, Alpine-Renault and Ferrari, 20 points; 2, Alfa Romeo, 15 points; 3, Porsche, 12 points; 4, Chevron, 8 points; 5, Ligier, 5 points.

The victors – Larrousse and Jabouille.



Classic saloons arrive: Ron Collings' Lancia leads Bill Wykeham's Zephyr through Woodcote.

SILVERSTONE

Gray upsets domination

It was very nearly a dream come true for the Jaguar DC at Silverstone last Saturday. Jaguars (or at least Jaguar-engined cars) won all six races except the modsports thrash in which Robin Gray's Lawrencetune Morgan+8 won brilliantly from three pursuing E types. Willie Green took a brace of wins in the beautiful JCB lightweight E while John Harper (XK120) won the Oldham and Crowther (*née* Spreckley) race, Michael Rouse (Jaguar Mk 9) the first Classic Saloon race and David Ham the historic race in his Lister Jaguar. The afternoon was bedevilled with changeable weather giving a variation from damp to soaking track conditions.

First out in the rain was a full grid of Thoroughbred Sports Cars for the Oldham and Crowther round. Martin Crowther seemed determined to win his own race (not really the done thing!) by dicing with John Harper's similar XK 120 (John "Metal" Pearson's car) but after a great scrap, with Crowther pulling off a couple of demon out braking manoeuvres, Harper asserted his authority to forge ahead through backmarkers on the last lap and win.

It's been said so often but Reg Woodcock did drive at incredible speed in his TR3 and win his class clear of Peter Foster who had a hairy drive on the damp track, getting his DB4 at all-sorts of odd angles. Simon Phillips was fifth in his Fraser Nash from the rapid Lotus Elite of small class winner Michael Gue, who beat David Preece's DB4 as the latter was docked 10s.

The track was still very wet when the much heralded pre-1957 Classic Saloons came out to do battle. Opinions of the merit of racing such cars seemed sharply divided but suffice it to say that a three-cornered battle for the lead persisted throughout the race with Michael Rouse's lumbering Jaguar Mk9 holding a slender advantage over class winner Robert Meacham (2.4 Jaguar Mk1) and Peter Jackson's Lancia B20 throughout, all three driving their charges with great restraint. The same cannot be said of Craig Hinton who had some lurid moments in his Jaguar Mk7 and was pipped on the line by small class winner Philip Stokeley whose persistence in racing his Alfa Romeo Guillietta has paid off at last.

Undoubted star of the race (and probably the meeting) was Andy McLennan whose Austin A35 stalled on the line but carved back through the field driving brilliantly, the Shadow employee's drive being punctuated by a hairy spin at Woodcote when he had to turn left to avoid the armco!

The track was still damp but there was no holding Willie Green in the Speed Merchants Post Historic Sports Car round as he led from start to finish. Ex-hillclimber Richard Thwaites was never far behind and won the small class in his Eastern Carpets Elva Mk7S. Martin Hilton's AC Cobra was a lonely third throughout from the only other unlapped runners, Brian Baker (Lotus 23B) and John Harper in the superb V12 Ferrari Breadvan.

An interesting little gaggle followed led by Tom Leake's DB4 GT Zagato from Robin Rew, who put his cameras down long enough to show that his rebult (following last year's Oulton shunt) Reliant Sabre has lost none of its speed, and Rupert Glydon's fleet little Lola Mk1. Bill Nicholson's evergreen MGB and Bob Owen's Maserati 151/65 won their classes.

It wasn't exactly holiday weather for the Pontins supported Modsports race with a damp track, but most runners settled for slicks. At the start it looked like more Jaguar domination as Guy Bedington (V12E), Tony Strawson (the Capri ace having a run in John Churchill's E type) and John Burbidge scurried off into the lead with Robin Gray's Morgan+8 down in eighth place after a terrible start. Strawson soon hit the front but Gray was driving with typical enthusiasm and caught the E types on lap four, forcing his way to the front on lap seven. Despite a fine chase by Strawson in the unfamiliar car, Gray held his lead while Bedington and Burbidge were slightly dropped in third and fourth. Roger Andreason's Datsun 240Z was next up beating Ed Stevens (TVR Tuscan) for the 3 litre class with Andy Bailey (Sprite) next up winning the 1150 class after early class leader Peter Richings spun his Midget at Woodcote with a locked rear wheel after three laps. The 2 litre class went to Chris Westell's 1.3 Midget after a typically smooth drive ahead of new boy Graeme Dodd's similar car, repaired after a practice bump.

The Historic Sports Car race started in the dry with the Listers of David Ham, Chris Drake, Bert Young (Jaguar powered) and John Beasley (Corvette engined) in a close scrap for the lead. Ham kept at the front throughout but the rain from lap seven onwards caught out Drake who went straight on at Woodcote and dropped back a bit letting Beasley up to second from Young.

A fine fifth went to Michael Wetherill's PAO Lotus XV who was well clear of Robert Cooper's D type and the only other unlapped car. Peter Martin's Maserati 250S. Other noteworthy class winners were Simon Phillips, out again in the Frazer Nash and John da S. Lucas' Porsche 356.

The traditional AMOC versus JDC Challenge race closed the day. Willie Green would have been able to win with ease in the JCB lightweight E but he waited for John Pearson's XK120 to make a race of it — and good value it was too. The two Jags couldn't be too complacent though for Malcolm MacGregor's Aston Martin DBS was a constant threat in third place with David Preece's DB4 (he was given a 10s penalty, dropping him a place) and Tom Leake's DB4 GT Zagato in close attendance. Next up Robert Cooper (D type) upheld JDC honour by beating Ian Mason's DB5 after a close battle.

PETER RICHINGS

Oldham and Crowther Thoroughbred Sports Car round (10 laps), Overall: 1, John Harper (3.8 Jaguar XK120), 12m 49.4s, 75.24 mph; 2, Martin Crowther (3.8 Jaguar XK120), 12m 51.0s; 3, Reg Woodcock (2.2 Triumph TR3), 13m 23.6s; 4, Peter Foster (3.7 Aston Martin DB4), 13m 11.4s. **2701 cc and over:** 1, Harper; 2, Crowther; 3, Foster. **Fastest lap:** Harper, 1m 14.4s, 77.81 mph. **1651-2700 cc:** 1, Woodcock, 73.87 mph; 2, Simon Phillips (2.0 Frazer Nash); 3, Robert Mansfield (2.0 Frazer Nash). **Fastest lap:** Woodcock, 1m 15.4s, 76.77 mph. **Up to 1650 cc:** 1, Michael Gue (1.2 Lotus Elite), 70.08 mph; 2, Roy McCarthy (1.6 MGA); 3, Mike Walker (1.6 MGA). **Fastest lap:** McCarthy, 1m 20.2s, 72.18 mph.

Classic Saloon Car race (10 laps). Overall: 1, Michael Rouse (3.4 Jaguar Mk9), 14m 41.4s, 65.66 mph; 2, Robert Meacham (2.4 Jaguar Mk1), 14m 41.8s; 3, Peter Jackson (2.4 Lancia B20), 14m 42.6s; 4, Philip Stokeley (1.3 Alfa Romeo Giulietta), 15m 25.2s. **Over 2700 cc:** 1, Rouse; 2, Craig Hinton (3.4 Jaguar Mk7); 3, John James (3.4 Jaguar Mk7). **Fastest lap:** Rouse, 1m 26.0s, 67.31 mph. **1902-2700 cc:** 1, Meacham, 65.65 mph; 2, Jackson; 3, Bill Wykeham (2.5 Ford Zephyr). **Fastest lap:** Meacham, 1m 26.4s, 67.00 mph. **1201-1901 cc:** 1, Stokeley, 62.56 mph; 2, M. Hawes (1.5 MG Magnette); 3, Miles Marshall (1.5 Borgward Isabella). **Fastest lap:** Stokeley, 1m 27.4s, 66.23 mph. **Up to 1200 cc:** 1, Andy McLennan (1.0 Austin A35), 58.97 mph; 2, Keith Reynish (1.1 Ford Prefect). No other finishers. **Fastest lap:** McLennan, 1m 31.8s, 63.06 mph.

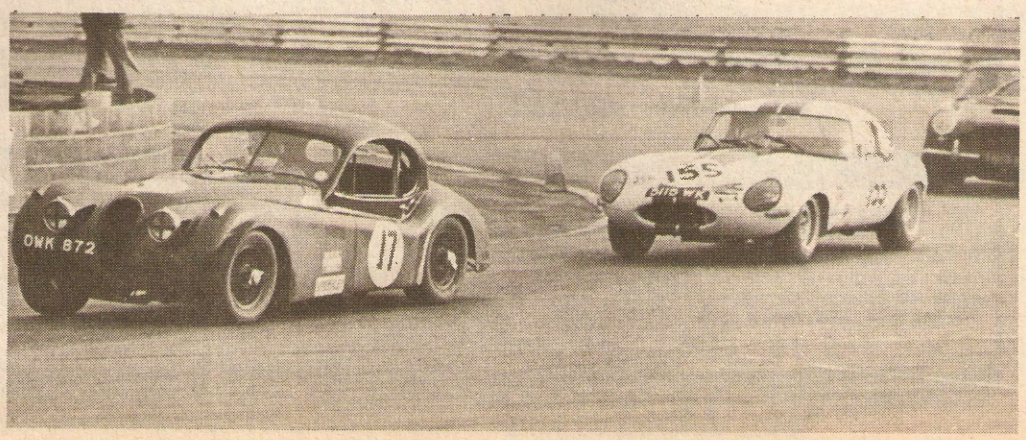
Speed Merchants Classic Car Championship round (10 laps). Overall: 1, Willie Green (3.8 Jaguar E), 11m 41.0s, 82.58 mph; 2, Richard Thwaites (2.0 Elva Mk7S), 11m 46.8s; 3, Martin Hilton (5.0 AC Cobra), 12m 06.8s; 3, Brian Baker (1.6 Lotus 23B), 12m 49.2s. **Sports Racing up to 2000 cc:** 1, Thwaites, 81.90 mph; 2, Baker; 3, Rupert Glydon (1.1 Lola Mk1). **Fastest lap:** Thwaites, 1m 7.6s, 85.63 mph. **Sports Racing over 2000 cc:** 1, Bob Owen (5.0 Maserati 151/65), 65.74 mph; 2, Tony Woodhouse (5.3 Attila Mk3). No other finishers. **Fastest lap:** Owen, 1m 23.4s, 69.41 mph. **GT up to 2000 cc:** 1, Bill Nicholson (1.8 MGB), 73.44 mph; 2, Aubrey Brocklebank (2.0 Morgan SLR); 3, John Webb (1.8 MGB). **Fastest lap:** Nicholson, 1m 15.8s, 76.37 mph. **GT over 2000 cc:** 1, Green; 2, Hilton; 3, John Harper (3.0 Ferrari Breadvan). **Fastest lap:** Green, 1m 8.2s, 84.88 mph.

Modified Sports Cars (10 laps). Overall and over 3000 cc: 1, Robin Gray (3.5 Morgan +8), 11m 23.2s, 84.73 mph; 2, Tony Strawson (3.8 Jaguar E), 11m 23.6s; 3, Guy Bedington (5.3 Jaguar V12E), 11m 26.6s; 4, John Burbidge (3.8 Jaguar E), 11m 29.0s. **Fastest lap:** Gray, 1m 6.0s, 87.71 mph. **2001-3000 cc:** 1, Roger Andreason (2.4 Datsun 240Z), 82.60 mph; 2, Ed Stephens (3.0 TVR Tuscan). No other starters. **Fastest lap:** Andreason, 1m 8.2s, 84.88 mph. **1151-2000 cc:** 1, Chris Westell (1.3 MG Midget), 77.23 mph; 2, Graeme Dodd (1.3 MG Midget); 3, Raymond Kershberg (1.6 Lotus Elan). **Fastest lap:** C. Cooke (1.7 Morgan 4/4), 1m 8.8s, 84.14 mph. **Up to 1150 cc:** 1, Andy Bailey (1.1 AH Sprite), 77.87 mph; 2, Peter Richings (1.1 MG Midget); 3, Lewis Trickey (1.1 Triumph Spitfire). **Fastest lap:** Bailey, 1m 9.2s, 83.65 mph.

Historic Sports Racing Cars (10 laps). Overall and Over 2000 cc: 1, David Ham (3.8 Lister Jaguar), 11m 38.0s, 82.93 mph; 2, John Beasley (5.3 Lister Corvette), 11m 40.8s; 3, Bert Young (3.8 Lister Jaguar), 11m 41.8s; 4, Chris Drake (3.8 Lister Jaguar), 11m 43.6s. **Fastest lap:** Beasley, 1m 6.6s, 86.92 mph. **1101-2000 cc:** 1, Michael Wetherill (1.5 Lotus 15), 77.93 mph. No other finishers. **Fastest lap:** Wetherill, 1m 10.4s, 82.23 mph. **Up to 1100 cc:** 1 Ted Rollason (1.1 Lola Mk1), 73.42 mph; 2, Bill Friend (1.1 Lotus 11). No other finishers. **Fastest lap:** Rollason, 1m 11.8s, 80.62 mph. **Touring Cars over 2601 cc:** 1, Geoff Bloor (3.0 Aston Martin DB3), 69.02 mph. No other finishers. **Fastest lap:** Bloor, 1m 19.8s, 72.54 mph. **1601-2600 cc:** 1, Simon Phillips (2.0 Frazer Nash), 72.40 mph; 2, Robert Mansfield (2.0 Frazer Nash); 3, Chris Mann (2.0 AC Ace). **Fastest lap:** Phillips, 1m 17.2s, 74.98 mph. **Up to 1600 cc:** 1, John da S. Lucas (1.6 Porsche 356), 66.23 mph; 2, John Palmer (1.1 AH Sebring Sprite); 3, S. Standen (1.6 Porsche). **Fastest lap:** Lucas, 1m 23.8s, 69.08 mph.

Aston Martin OC versus Jaguar DC (10 laps): 1, Willie Green (3.8 Jaguar E), 12m 57.2s, 74.48 mph; 2, John Pearson (3.8 Jaguar XK120), 12m 58.4s; 3, Malcolm MacGregor (4.0 Aston Martin DBS), 12m 59.4s; 4, Tom Leake (3.6 Aston Martin DB4 GT Zagato), 13m 3.6s; 5, David Preece (3.6 Aston Martin DB4), 13m 10.6s; 6, Robert Cooper (3.8 Jaguar D), 13m 29.4s. **Fastest lap:** Preece, 1m 14.8s, 77.39 mph.

John "Metal" Pearson and Willie Green (E-Type) made a race of it for nine laps of the JDC/AMOC race but Green went ahead on the last lap for victory number two.



Crossle: pride of Ireland

JOHN CROSSLE talks to RICHARD ST JOHN YOUNG

Last season, the Crossle 25F, in its second full year of racing, proved to be the most consistently successful car in Formula Ford. This came as a surprise to many people, for, unlike many other racing car manufacturers, the Crossle Car Company does not seek publicity, and, in fact, appears to shy away from it, preferring to build racing cars in the peace and seclusion of its Holywood, Northern Ireland headquarters, to mounting any vast flag waving operations.

That the 25F is a very useful Formula Ford car nobody will dispute, Richard Morgan in particular, and there is no doubt that the small Ulster company has benefited greatly from Morgan's success in 1974. However, it must be noted that this successful campaign was the first in which Crossles themselves have been involved since their equally successful 1970 season with the late Gerry Birrell when the combination of the 16F, and Gerry's undoubted talent resulted in the European FF championship.

The interim period has seen a variety of models emerge from the Crossle factory, and while Jay Pollock was generally successful whenever he gave the works Atlantic car an airing, nothing very serious was done in that direction until last year when the names Crossle and Morgan became synonymous with success in FF. Is there a moral somewhere?

Part of Crossles' natural reticence is due to the fact that everybody in the small but modern factory is much too busy building cars, to bother looking for publicity, but thanks to that great institution, the lunch break, John Crossle, who along with Leslie Drysdale, and Colin Scott, does all the constructive thinking in the firm, was persuaded to answer a few questions . . . .

John Crossle – cool success.

The Crossle Car Company has been in existence for some years now, but what prompted you to go into the manufacture of racing cars full time?
One has to make a living somehow. I had built a few 1172 Ford engined cars for myself and various people wanted cars built along with other bits and pieces of engineering. Gradually making cars alone became a full time occupation.

Initial production runs were small. Which of the earlier 'Pre FF' models do you regard as being the most successful?
We were quite successful with our sports cars and single seaters between 1963 and 1968, but I suppose the most successful model must be the 12F with which Roger Barr won the S.C.C.A. Formula B championship in 1968.

The 16F really brought you to the notice of the motor racing world outside Ireland, although you had exported some 12F and 14F models before that, Were you surprised by the successes the car scored?
Not really. We felt at the time that Formula Ford was well within our capabilities.

You were the first FF builder to supply cars fitted with Avon cross plies, which appeared in FF with the 16F. Was the use of these tyres a conscious decision, or one of those fortunate accidents which happen from time to time?
Towards the end of 1968 when we were designing the 16F Gerry Birrell came over to discuss the set-up we had with Woolers. During his stay we were discussing tyres wondering how you design geometry for a radial tyre. Gerry had used Avons successfully in rallying and noted the rubber was quite soft. It all developed from that.

Have you tended to stick to one particular engine builder during the period you have been building FFs, or is the breed of engine left up to the individual customer?
We have supplied more Rowland engines than any other type, however, whilst we can make recommendations the final choice belongs to the customer.

After the Euro-Trophy win in 1970 you dabbled briefly with F2. Do you still have any ambitions in that direction?
In a way, yes. We would welcome the technical challenge. However with the cost of engines, tyres and travelling, and the comparatively small market for that kind of car, there is no way it makes economic sense for us. It just can't be done without massive sponsorship.

In addition to the F2 car which was something of a 'low key' effort, you also had a brief foray with an F5000 car. Why did you drop out of the formula and why, for that matter, did you get involved with it in the first place?
We dropped out because not enough people wanted to buy them. We got involved because Roger Barr had just won the "B" championship and wanted to do Formula "A". Looking back on it now we would have been much better employed making a good Formula Ford in 1968.

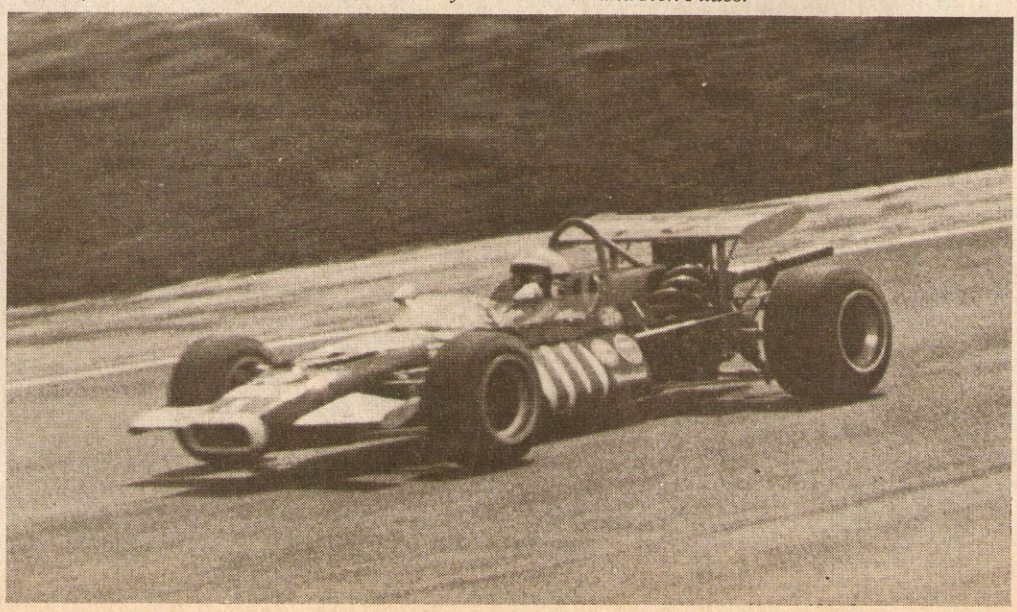
You have, during the past couple of years, produced a few very good F.Atlantic cars. Does Atlantic still feature on your menu, or are you going to stick with FF in its various forms?
We will be concentrating mostly on the Formula Ford 1600 and 2000 cars. Atlantic still interests us very much but, there again, the size of the market for us is not large. We will probably run a car in Atlantic from time to time to keep "tabs" on the formula.

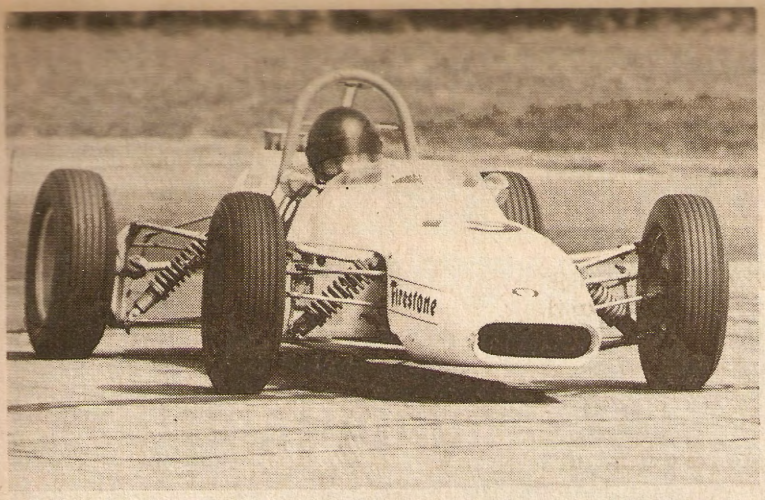
"I suppose we'd like to build a Formula 1 for John Watson. However, it's only a pipe dream . . . sentimental rubbish."

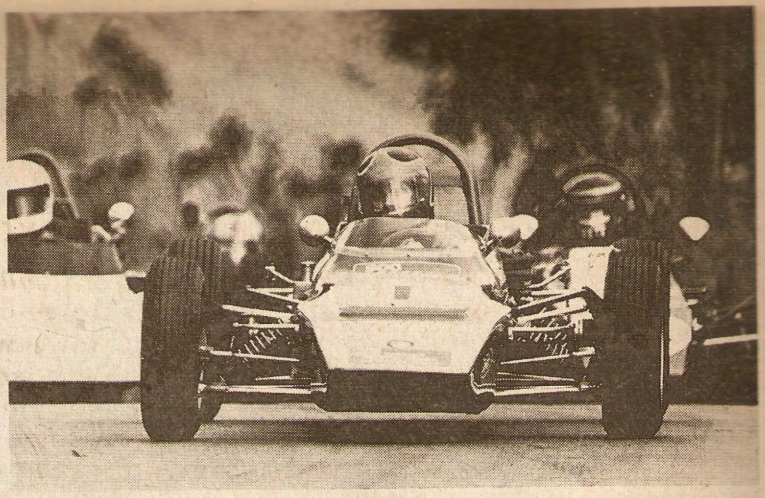
The Supervee car was moderately successful, and the continental market is obviously large. What made you drop Supervee from your range?
Lack of sales. As you say Supervee is strong in Europe but there are several manufacturers there dealing very capably with the market. New car sales in either U.K. or U.S. don't make anyone very rich.

With the exception of F1 and Formula Vee, you have built cars for just about every single seater formula there has been in the past few years, plus a few sports cars. Is there any car which, if unlimited finance were available, you would really like to build and run?
I like the sound of unlimited finance. What did you say we had to do to get it? I suppose we'd like to build a Formula I for John Watson. However its

Crossle fielded this F2 car in 1970/71, driven by Brian Nelson and Ken Fildes.







Most success at home in Ireland has been brought by Jay Pollock, here in a 20F. Right, Richard Morgan took his Southern Organs 25F to many victories.

only a pipe dream . . . . sentimental rubbish!

Has Clubman's/Supersports never interested you?

Yes it has interested us but the market is limited and very well catered for already.

Have you ever had any ambitions to build a road car?

No.

Who actually does the design work on new cars?

Leslie Drysdale and myself.

What percentage of your cars do you actually build yourselves?

That's very difficult to qualify but we probably do more than most other manufacturers . . . . certainly more fabrication and machining than, I understand, most others do.

How did you first become involved in the U.S. market?

In 1965 we sold a Formula "C" car to Brucke Klussmann in Pennsylvania. He subsequently had a 12F which he sold to Roger Barr who won the "B" championship. It developed from that.

You have always kept your eyes firmly on the North American and Canadian markets. Sometimes, it seems, to the detriment of that in Europe. Is there any basic philosophy behind this, or is it just the way things developed?

That's fair comment, in fact, it was the way the thing developed. We were kept quite busy supplying cars to America. To be honest we weren't really rated very highly in England until a year ago when we decided the time had come to change all that, so we started negotiations that led to Richard Morgan and Frank Hopper driving for us.

The FF deal with Richard Morgan was the first such arrangement you came to since the days of Gerry Birrell and the Euro Trophy of 1970. How did it come about?

We had the idea that we would like someone to run a three car team, and advertised to that effect. That didn't come off but John Macdonald put us in contact with Richard Morgan. Funnily enough, he wasn't our first choice . . . our first choice politely declined the offer.

"As to what really makes a 25F work, we didn't learn all the things we know overnight and nobody gave us free lessons, so we keep all the things that really matter to ourselves."

Are you going to run a "works" or semi supported car in 1975?

We're helping Mike Blanchet in 1600 and Derek Lawrence in 2000.

With the appearance of FF2000 there are now eight "customer car" formulae in existence in the British Isles. Do you feel this is too many?

No. FF2000 has certainly been born out of necessity. Any class which is not necessary will probably die from lack of support.

It has been said in the past that one FF is very much like another and that there has been very little development in the years that FF has existed. Old cars still do win races from time to time, but the 25F last year seemed head and shoulders above the rest of the pack. Why?

A lot of people would like to know that. It is a simple straight-forward car which doesn't require much maintenance or setting up. In fact within reason its not very critical on set-up at all. We have also, over the last few years, enjoyed in Brian Nelson and Jay Pollock, two very good test drivers. A lot of changes you can make round a racing car don't make very much difference. A good test driver tells you it hasn't made any difference, even though he knows you worked for a week making it. That way you get somewhere. As to what really makes a 25F work, we didn't learn all the things we know overnight and nobody gave us free lessons, so we keep all the things that really matter to ourselves.

With the 25F you have obviously paid considerable attention to simplicity. Do these extra considerationis reappear in the price?

I suppose they must. If you can make a component in two hours instead of five then that effects the price.

Your spares service has often been held up as an example for other constructors to copy. Do you, for example, keep parts for long defunct models such as the 12F?

Basically our policy is to keep full stocks for five years since we last sold a particular model. Thereafter we would manufacture to order if we didn't have it ex-stock. We do have most parts for 13F, even suspension parts for 6F dating from 1962.

And there are no spares problems for overseas customers, bearing in mind your geographical position?

No. We have no geographical disadvantage selling to the US. As far as the UK is concerned we have spares in London with Bert Ray at 65 North Street, Clapham. The important thing is to have spares in stock. We can get them to England within 24 hours usually.

Obviously, as Ulster people, you prefer working "at home" so to speak, but seriously, have you ever felt the call to move a bit closer to "where the action is?"

We have thought of it often and there are many arguments for and against it. We feel that we can enjoy the best of both worlds by putting the cars where the action is whilst enjoying the benefits of manufacturing here. Anyway, who else enjoys the use of a circuit half an hour's drive away, open six days a week, fifty two weeks of the year.

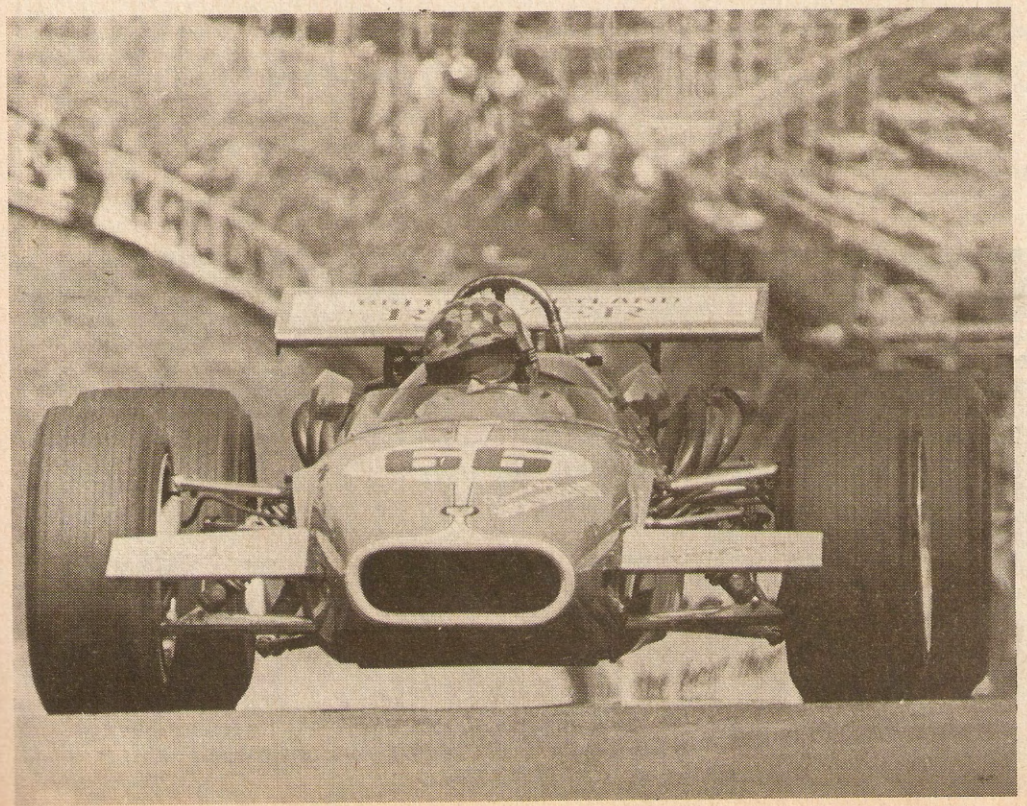
How do you see the future of racing? On the face of it, it seems that racing car constructors are going to have a hard time of it during the next few years?

OPEC permitting, racing will continue as long as there are young men who want to do it. Of course there are difficult times ahead, but that is not confined to the racing car industry. In fact, as an industry it has so far been doing rather better than most.

With the new factory now complete, there is no way you can be regarded as a "cottage industry" any longer. Now that it does exist, have you any plans for increased production, new models, etc?

We already have our new models and, as I said earlier we shall concentrate mainly on these. We certainly have increased our production potential, but in the end it really depends on the market. We'll have to wait and see.

Fred Saunders campaigned a Rover powered Crossle in F5000 in 1972, but the car wasn't competitive.



Mick Bird is one of the successful Airey Tuning rallycross team, seen here at Snetterton.

Airey: bigger and better

New Cheriton Garage Team – it sounds innocuous and from a look at the small Hampshire village garage where the cars are prepared, one would hardly expect it to give professional international rallycross drivers much cause for concern.

Yet events have proved otherwise. Since the end of last year this small band of men – who are really joined only by similar aims and a trade team licence – have set a devastating pace. Team leader Tom Airey, Mick Bird, Nick Brice, and David Potter are the team's regular rallycross contingent and a formidable quartet they are too.

Their record in the past two months speaks for itself — N.C.G.T. members have recently dominated three British rallycross championships. David Potter, from Kent, who drives Tom Airey's re-built 1500cc Cooper S which he bought, led the Scottish series after the troubled first round of the Scottish series at Knockhill. The cancellation of the second timed runs at that meeting had little effect on the New Cheriton domination, although had they been retained Mick Bird would have taken BTD with Tom Airey second.

In the Snetterton winter series, Mick Bird, a mechanic from Midhurst in West Sussex who drives a 1400cc Cooper S, shared the leadership with team mate Nick Brice, a technician from Paulsgrove, near Portsmouth who drives a 1400cc S, after two of the three rounds.

The team is also dominating its "home" championship, the Thames Estuary Auto Club Winter Series at Lydden Hill – a 300-mile round trip from home.

The Airey-Bird role was reversed at the February 8 televised non-championship meeting on the same circuit when Bird led his team-leader to the flag to take BTD.

Such successes are not new found – it is something which has existed, albeit at a lower key, since Tom Airey won the Rallypoint Championship at Long Marston in 1973.

Last year the pressures of running his family-owned village garage at New Cheriton, near Alresford in Hampshire, brought a severe cut back in his normally active personal participation.

But the team really moved into top gear with Mick Bird's ninth place in the penultimate British round of the European Rallycross Championships at Lydden last autumn.

The mark was well and truly made in the final, again at Lydden, when Tom Airey made a come-back to set the fastest time with Bird close behind in fifth place.

This 'Jack the giant-killer' reputation is the sort of thing that attracts spectators to a sport. Here were two drivers in their home-made Minis putting mud on the windscreens of works-backed and other financially better-off drivers — and not for the first time. All the team members are effectively privateers – they all own the cars they drive, paying for their own preparation, upkeep and expenses. The only help they get is Tom Airey's offers of technical advice, tuning service, and workshop space.

Undoubtedly much of Tom Airey's success lies in his overwhelming confidence in British Leyland machinery – even though the makers of the popular and economic production version have failed to recognise or capitalise on this reviving more exotic machines, yet Tom Airey's determinatio, development, and driving skill have shown that even after 17 years the Mini is still a winner.

The driving force behind the team, Tom Airey started autocrossing in 1963 with a Mini-van and has had the bug ever since, winning the Association of Central Southern Motor Clubs' Autocross Championship in 1971 and 1972.

The A.C.S.M.C. title is still held by the team – Nick Brice notched-up the hat-trick with a 998cc Cooper after joining in 1973 and last year it was the turn of another team member, Graham Allen, from Fareham, near Portsmouth. Graham concentrates on autocross in which he drives a 1650cc Anglia, but he too may turn to rallycross. Tom's younger brother Bill is the only other member of the team.

Pressures of work and a brief period of ill-health have prevented him from being as involved in the sport as his elder brother, but he has shown considerable potential in both autocross and rallycross. Last year he drove at several meetings using either a 1340cc S, which he built in two weekends with Nick Brice who now drives it, or a fascinating 3.5-litre Rover V8-engined Anglia which is still being developed.

Development is the key to the team's success and Tom Airey is the man who has pioneered much of the work which has made the New Cheriton Minis faster than the works versions.

When he started rallycrossing six years age he used a 1400cc Cooper S like so many others at the time. Then as others tried Ford 'transplants' or deserted the Mini completely, he worked on, trying to increase still further the power output of the little engine.

The 1400cc capacity was produced by increasing the bore from 70.6mm to 74mm. For the 1500cc version he increased the stroke.

The walls between the bores are thin and the Cooper S gearbox, with its limited crankshaft clearance, is retained. Yet since the first time he took the 1500 out in December 1972 – beating John Taylor and Rod Chapman in Escorts in the dry to take BTD at Lydden – he has had few problems. He places the credit for this reliability on help from Downton, who work the team's five-port cyclinder heads – he uses two Webers – and manifolding, and on the assistance he has received from Gordon Allen, from Slough, who has played a major part in their crankshaft development.

The only real trade help he has enjoyed has come from Duckhams with their usual arrangements.

Development work is still forging ahead. Gordon Allen has produced a new, experimental, solid billet steel crankshaft which should increase the stroke to about 91mm - 10mm more than with the standard 1275cc Cooper S crankshaft.

The result is an engine capacity of 1610cc – which must lay claim to being perhaps the biggest capacity ever produced in an 'A' series block, certainly with the Mini gearbox still tight underneath.

But work on the cars extends to far more than the engines. All the team Minis are considerably lightened with rear bulkheads removed and rear floorpans replaced by aluminium panels.

Suspension is critical. At the rear the trailing arms are retained, attached to a fixed 'beam', with coil spring units mounted on the substantial roll cage which is a major characteristic of the team cars.

The improved handling with this set-up is remarkable and one of the benefits of the team's success, both at home and abroad, has been a succession of foreign currency-earning orders for Airey Tuning "Lydden replica" rolling shells.

Currently Nick Brice and Tom Airey are working on a new ultra-lightweight shell which will ultimately carry the new 1600cc engine if all goes well.

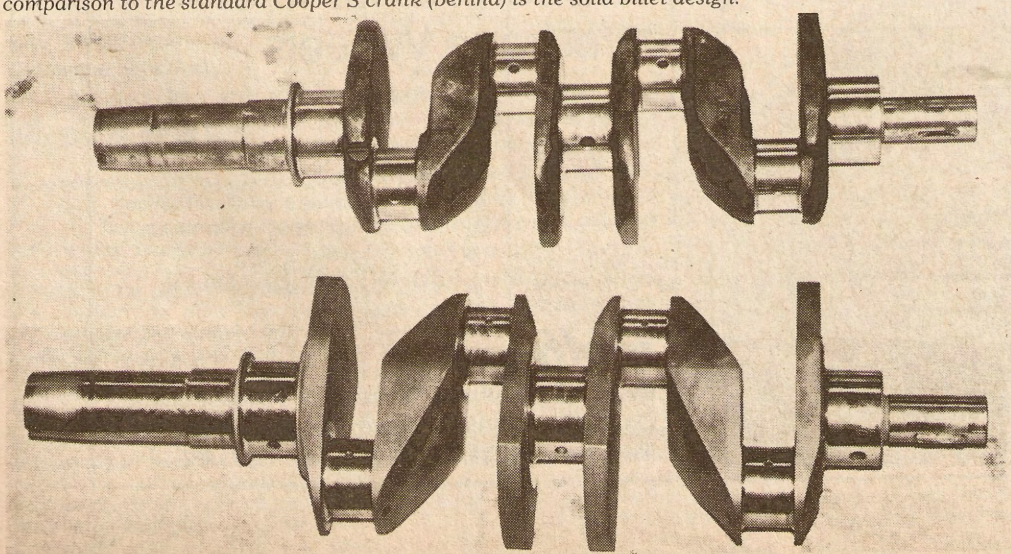
Apart from the usual aluminium rear floorpan and fibreglass back panel, this car is being built with fibreglass roof and doors. The front stays all-steel to protect the wheels and engine – and keep the engine in place.

Perhaps counteracting some of its weight-saving is a complex Airey-designed – and proved – roll cage system which, as with the earlier models, provides mounting points for the rear suspension.

This Forth Bridge-like webb of tubing may appear cumbersome, but it gives the cars strength and rigidity. Should the worst come to the worst, it should also ensure that which ever New Cheriton driver is inside, he will suvive to race another day.

GLYN WILLIAMS

Gordon Allen's crankshaft (foreground) increases the capacity of the engine to 1610 cc. Most marked in comparison to the standard Cooper S crank (behind) is the solid billet design.



Wet . . . .

I would like to express my wholehearted support for your *Editorial* of March 13. The "prima donna" attitude is becoming far too prevalent throughout motor sport. For this to have spread to the club racing level is a poor reflection on the type and attitude of the drivers currently engaged in competing in this sport. I feel sure that not all drivers are so inclined, but it is always the vociferous few who attract attention.

Drivers have to accept that the final whether to race or not, must be made by the officials at a meeting. By all means, seek and consider drivers' opinions, but competitors should realise that they go to meetings to race cars, not prance about like fairies.

It seems to me that the people involved in this sort of activity are not really interested in racing, because they do not really want to go racing, or that their ambition is to use racing for some petty form of personal ambition for power.

I think that this attitude can be likened to that of socialists, drag everybody down to their own low level.

It is a very bitter pill to swallow, to hear about this sort of thing going on, when, but for £.s.d., one could be out there racing. I am sure that drivers would like to have the chance to race in Formula Atlantic, and they must have similar feelings.

In case this is seen to be unqualified criticism, I have raced under similar and worse conditions and regard those occasions as a valuable part of my experience while participating in one of the best and most exciting sports.

TONBRIDGE, KENT. MICHAEL GREENWOOD.

. . . . prima donnas

I heartily agree with the comments made in the *Editorial* in AUTOSPORT recently, regarding certain racing drivers' attitudes to racing in the wet at Mallory Park the previous weekend. There are certain drivers, myself included, who, believe it or not, quite enjoy driving in the wet. Perhaps the most unpleasant things about wet weather motor racing in single seaters are sitting in a stationary car waiting to get out on the track, and then having to clean the bloody thing afterwards. Once you're out there on the track it's great.

I would also like to comment on a couple of things in connection with the Atlantic race at Mallory Park. Firstly, the apparent inability of quite a number of the competitors to prepare the engines and ignition systems of their cars to cope with wet weather without spluttering to a halt within a couple of laps. Surely adequate water-proofing is possible these days.

Secondly, the apparent wisdom of Goodyear in producing two types of slick tyre and only one wet tyre for use in Atlantic. With the first two Atlantic races this year having been held in the wet, having two slick compounds on hand seems an unnecessary extravagance. Perhaps they should have produced a really demon wet tyre for soaking conditions, included the present wet tyre for ordinary wet conditions, and an intermediate which could be used in drizzle or on the odd occasions when it's dry, and then forgotten about slicks altogether.

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND. DOUGLAS N. THOMSON.

Stratos asides

We were interested to read last week's *Parc Ferme* in which Ian Sadler was discussing the role currently being played by the Lancia Stratos and the possibly detrimental effects that such a rally supercar could have on the future of rallying.

Far be it for us, as newcomers to this branch of motor sport, to offer any really constructive criticism on the subject. However, one of Mr Sadler's thoughts, and here I quote, "Might we find that, ten years hence, there is a globe trotting formula one type rally circus carrying with them all the money and expertise – the multinationals rallysport," hopefully will never come to fruition. It is precisely this sort of situation that has driven us out of motor racing (where the private entrant can no longer compete on equal terms with the "works") and the relative lack of it that constitutes one of rallying's most attractive features.

With regard to the widely publicised figure of £30,000 that The Chequered Flag is reported to be spending on the Lancia Stratos, this is basically correct, although I would like to point out that this is a maximum projected budget for the year and includes purchase of the car, setting up a rally team from scratch and running it for an entire season. A proportion has, of course, been allocated to PR and promotion.

The impression Mr Sadler gave was that the purchase price of the car alone was £30,000 and this is just not the case. Also the comparisons made with Carreras and Escorts seem way out if the figure of £13,000 that we were quoted for fully prepared factory cars of either make is correct. Should this be so, then our "Supercar" is indeed modestly priced in comparison, without taking into account the performance, reliability and past rally successes of the Stratos.

As leading Lancia Dealers in London, our choice of the Stratos has at last enabled us to enter competition once again with a *marque* of car that is sold in our showrooms, a situation that has not applied since we raced Elites and Elans in the early sixties. Obviously the charisma that surrounds the Stratos will ensure an acceptable degree of media exposure and that is understandably of vital importance to us.

However, I hope nobody will lose sight of the fact that The Chequered Flag are motor sport enthusiasts, who have actively supported racing for many years and are now transferring their support to rallying. We are certainly not doing this in an attempt to dominate the sport, although we are naturally keen to try and win. The whole process of winning is never easy and we are under no false illusions. It will take time for us to find our feet and we only hope that the ability of our crews and the reliability of the car will make our task that little bit easier.

If our involvement increases the publicity for rallying, gives spectators an added interest and variety in the cars they see and makes us a large circle of new friends in the rallying community, then we shall be extremely pleased.

RICHARD BANKS
THE CHEQUERED FLAG, LONDON, W4.

Ban hangers on

In reply to Denny Hulme's comment about the amount of people on the grid before the start of last Sunday's Race of Champions, perhaps as GPDA president, he could do something about the amount of passes issued to people having nothing to do with the actual running of the teams.

Every person in the pits had either an "A" or "B" pass (if you could get them to produce one), and as pit marshals, we usually find the "hangers on" the most difficult and rude people to deal with, *ie* smoking in the pits and taking afternoon strolls down the rear pit road which has to be used, in the event of an accident, for rescue vehicles and, of course, generally making you feel like you've just crawled out of a hole in the ground if you have to speak to them.

Lastly, how about banning monkey-bikes from the pits before someone is seriously hurt?

D. JONES, I. PATTERSON, C. MASLIN, S. PATTERSON
CLIFTON, BRISTOL 8.

Kiss off, baby

Having read Sid Everard's letter in *Correspondence* I am forced to put pen to paper in reply.

First of all regarding the sale of FF 2000 cars. Yes, sales are a little short, but so is money. I seem to remember another formula that was a little slow first year, it's called FF 1600. Look at it now, damn good races at most circuits, most weekends.

As for entering F3 or SuperVee, I suggest Mr Everard checks the running and purchase costs of both classes for a season – far higher than an FF car.

As to the racing "romanies" of the '60s', that situation finished some time ago, when start money was reduced and the continentals fielded their own cars, rather than buy a complete field of British cars and drivers.

Another fact I suggest he digests is, that the old F3 records of the '60s are, in many cases, below the current FF records, and given some time to sort itself out, FF 2000 will be even quicker. So don't mock the FF cars "bumping around," they are faster than you think!

May I suggest, Mr Everard, that you note the following points:

1, Good old Ford and MCD have done more for British motor racing than most – so get off their backs.

2, If you think that FF is a bit of a bore, then hire a car for a single race, then perhaps you can write with some authority.

3, FF has produced such drivers as Fittipaldi, Scheckter, Pryce, Hunt, etc, so it can't be as bad as you seem to think.

4, Most of the weekenders provide the backbone of British motor sport, they are, in most cases, average Johns trying very hard, in a very demanding sport: in ten years of racing I don't think I have met more than one or two who feels the sports owes him a living – so kiss off baby! You are wrong!

TONY BROSTER
(Newbridge Racing Developments)
ROMSEY, HANTS

Too much space?

It is regrettable that Miss Galica's excursion at Brands Hatch could be relied upon to provoke the sort of comment made by Mr. Willberton in AUTOSPORT (13/3/75). Obviously such a response was anticipated by you as can be seen from the caption given to that letter.

It is, of course, unfair to criticise Miss Galica merely for having apparently wealthy parents as surely no amount of hard cash can provide the guts and natural skill needed for international competitive skiing events.

It is, however, far from unfair to criticise AUTOSPORT for allowing this lady's sponsors so much space in your magazine. These sponsors are not, in this instance, in the least interested in motor racing. Professional racing must be about winning and if these people wished to go motor racing they would not have hired an 'unknown' *i.e.* Miss Galica, when there are innumerable successful club drivers crying out for even the smallest degree of sponsorship, let alone the amount lavished on Miss Galica.

When I buy AUTOSPORT I want to read about racing. When I go to a circuit I want to see it, hear it and even smell it. I am not in the least interested in non-motor racing whether emanating from inexperienced, though glamourous, young ladies from 'other-sportsman' or from disc-jockeys and pop-singers. If crowds are needed then let the organisers hold special 'non-motor-racing meetings' when these people can enjoy themselves. If reports of such events are necessary then let the gossip columns give them, but please, not AUTOSPORT.

One other problem also bothers me and that is the conflict of interests between spectators who wish to be as close to the action as possible so that they can see, and drivers who want as much space as possible between themselves and anything solid in case they lose control of their vehicles. As such a thing as centrifugal force exists, why on earth should all spectators not be placed on the inside of circuits with run-offs on the outside?

A. S. ANDREW
LONDON, N5.

Exchange and . . . .

Would the kind soul who visited my car while I was watching the F5000 race at Brands on Saturday please contact me when I will supply the following:

1, The operating instructions for the radio/cassette player which was removed.

2, The plans for the console, which was damaged on removal, in order that a repair may be effected.

3, Cleaning instructions for the suede jacket which was removed.

4, The case for the polaroid sunglasses which were removed.

Let us hope that others may benefit by my misfortune and perhaps be more vigilant.

COLIN DICKEY
BASINGSTOKE, HANTS.

From the studio that brought you the TR7.....

British Leyland's "winner"

by JOHN BOLSTER

British Leyland have a winner! Of recent years, far too many British cars have given disappointing results on road tests and it is a pleasure to be able to praise a new design that is not foreign.

The new product from Austin Morris — it's also sold as a luxury car under the Wolseley badge — replaces the old four-cylinder 1800 and the six-cylinder 2200. Those earlier models were excellent family cars, but their appearance was oh-so staid and ordinary. The new body shell has just as much interior space but its shape is ultra-modern, without any of the less attractive features of Italian design, which has recently been going through an off-period. The excessive angularity, which has marred the Italian-inspired products of various countries, is not found in the 18-22-series.

STYLING

This is not surprising as no outside consultant advised the styling team. British Leyland inspired their own Harris Mann to make a really beautiful car, insisting only that it would pass any conceivable safety regulations and impact test requirements of the future. Taking the sports/-racing car as his starting point, he blew it up to the required size, shaped it in the wind tunnel, and produced a low-drag envelope that would give improved fuel economy at medium and high cruising speeds.

It was necessary to add nine inches to the length to have a margin for "crushability" tests, but the extra space has been used to provide outstanding accessibility all round the engine-transmission unit. What is so surprising is that the new cars, in spite of their extra length, are actually lighter than their predecessors, which were by no means heavy for their size. It would not have been possible to design such a light and rigid structure without extensive use of the Cowley plant's ALPHA computer.

CHASSIS

Engineers are beginning to regard the sub-frame as the coward's way out of road-noise problems, which itself tends to blunt crisp handling characteristics. In the 18-22 series, the front suspension units are mounted back-to-back in a cross tube which is integral with the bulkhead, thus containing the suspension loads and giving immense rigidity. It will be understood that the forged upper suspension arms are in the form of bell-cranks, to operate the Hydragas units. The rack and pinion steering gear is power-assisted in six-cylinder cars, a refinement which is optional for 1800 models. From lock to lock, the assisted steering is very quick at 3.26 turns, compared with the more usual 4.57 turns of the plain gear. The rear suspension is by trailing arms and Hydragas units.

The tyres designed for this car have a round-shouldered, flat-topped profile and though they are of large section they are mounted on rims of moderate width. The nominal size is 185/70 SR 14 and their characteristics complement those of the inter-connected suspension system.

The servo-assisted disc/drum braking system meets all present and projected safety requirements. Each front-brake caliper has four pistons, which permits an L-split of the dual-circuit hydraulic system, giving braking on both front and one rear wheel in the event of a failure. Such a fault would illuminate a bright red warning light, which has its own switch for daily testing.

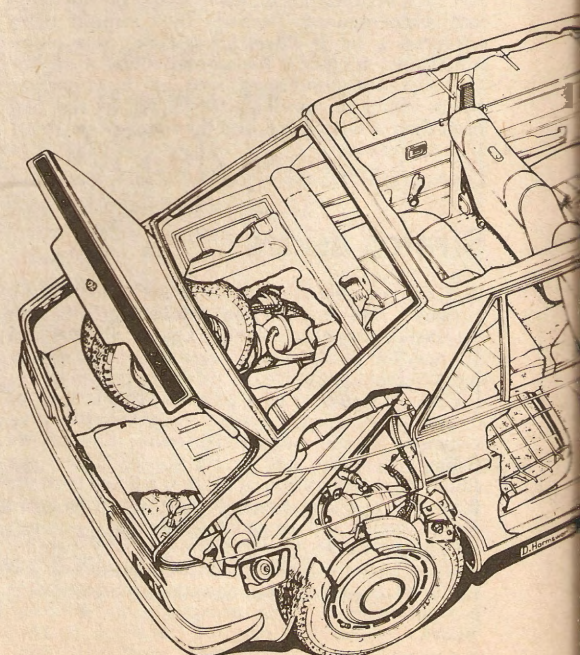
INTERIOR

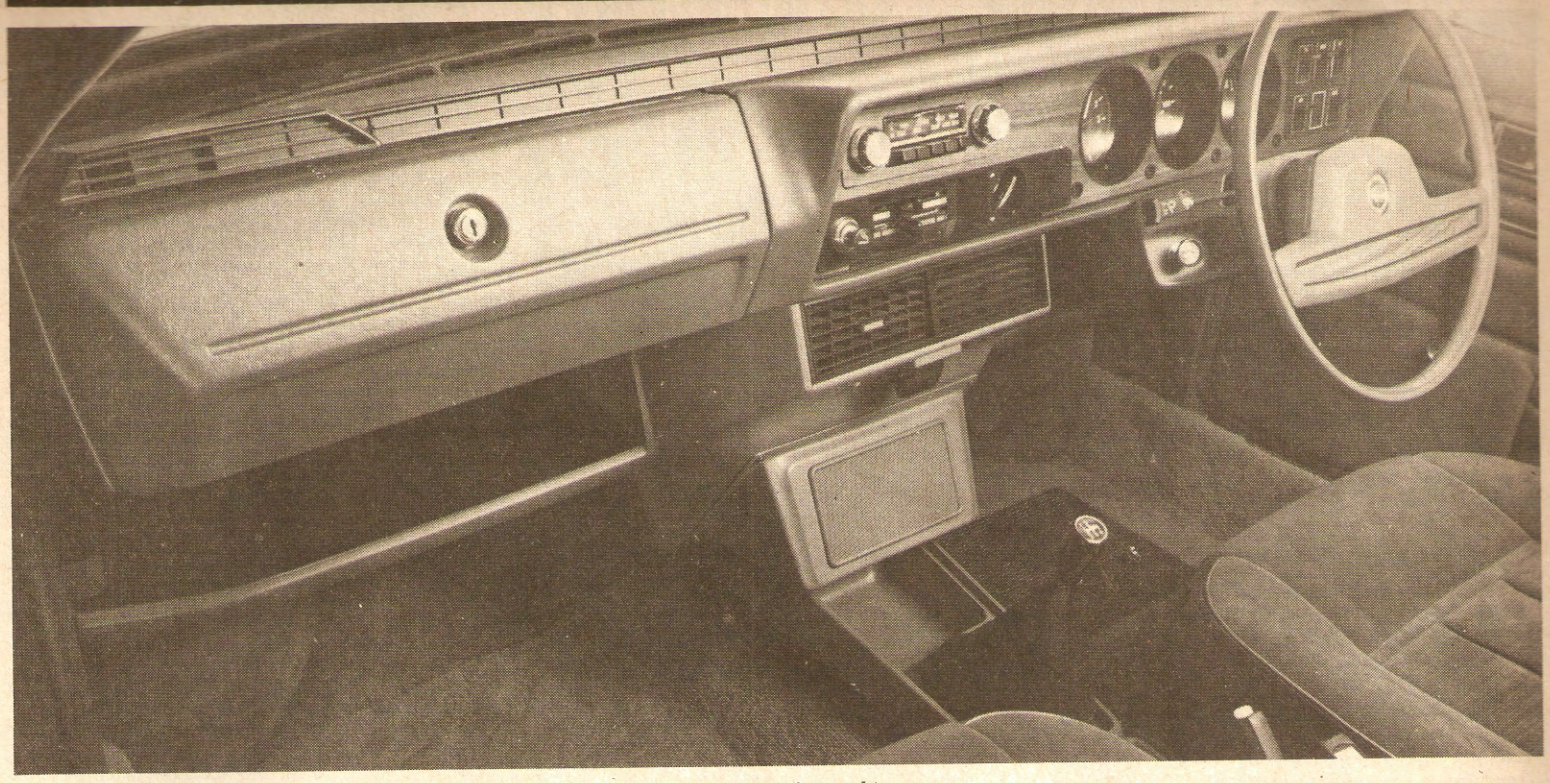
A new heating and ventilation system, which has also been developed for future Rover and Triumph models, has a powerful 3-speed fan which turns exceptionally slowly to give quiet operation. Though fresh air is normally supplied, an instant change to re-circulation can be made, to avoid exhaust fumes in traffic. As the plenum chamber is pressurised by the fan, cool breathing air is plentiful at the lowest speeds and there is ample warmth for the feet of the rear passengers. A separate ram-air system can cool the feet of those in front in tropical climates.

The 4-cylinder 1798 cc engine has had its cylinder head re-worked in anticipation of future pollution requirements but though slightly smaller inlet valves have been adopted, it has proved possible to fatten the power curve, with benefit to flexibility and hence fuel consumption. The 6-cylinder 7-bearing engine, of 2227 cc, has been endowed with twin SU carburettors of the latest anti-pollution type. It has a chain-driven overhead-camshaft and develops 110 bhp at 5250 rpm, compared with 82 bhp for the 4-cylinder unit.

In both cases, the engine carries the clutch on its flywheel and drives the gearbox primary shaft through a train of helically-toothed spur gears. The conventional 4-speed synchromesh gear cluster is beneath the crankshaft and is controlled through a rod-linkage by a floor-mounted gearlever. The drive to the differential is by spur gears and thence by constant-velocity driveshafts to the front hubs. The power unit is transversely mounted on four pot-type rubbers, the cross-flow radiator being located in the nose of the car with a thermostatically-controlled electric fan. A Borg Warner automatic transmission can be accommodated.

Prices: Austin Morris 1800, £2,116.53; 1800 HL, £2,214.81; 2260 HL £2,424.24. Wolseley, £2,838.42.





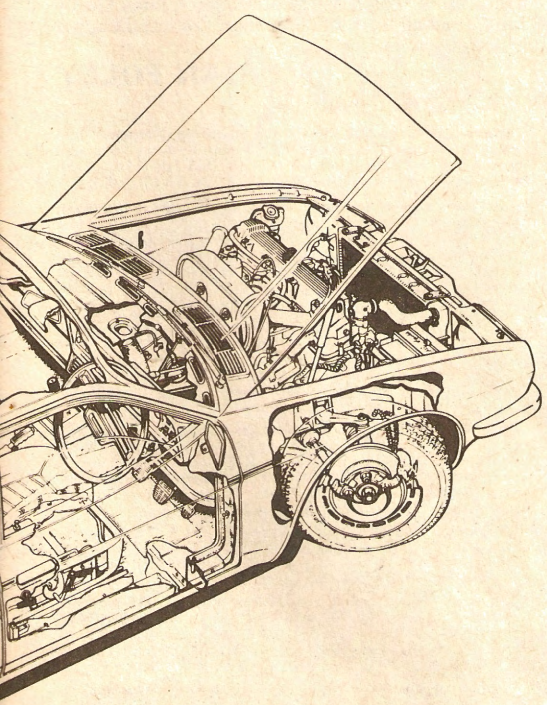
The interior is very spacious and the seats are calculated to complement suspension and tyres.

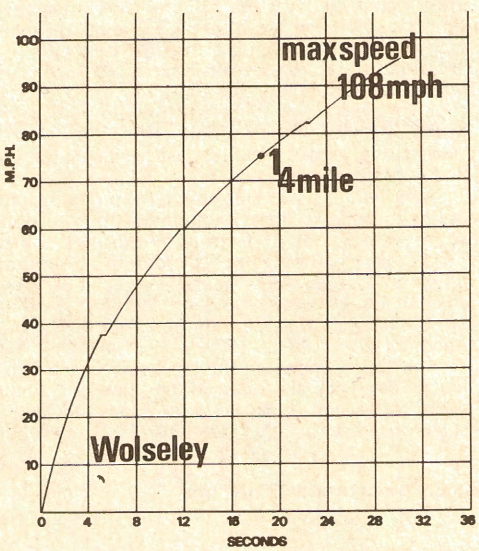
ON THE ROAD

Though I only had the new car for one weekend — an experience which I hope to extend considerably in the future — I was able to put it through an abbreviated version of my normal road test procedure. As befitted my status as the mature tester of a senior motoring journal, I was offered the Wolseley, the super-luxury car of the range, but the performance should not differ from that of the other versions of the six-cylinder.

It's a big car, with a very spacious interior and more luggage room than the earlier type had, while the four wide doors make entry and exit easy. The seats embrace one and their characteristics are calculated to complement those of the suspension and tyres. Some may query the diameter of the steering wheel, but I liked it and can see no advantage in a boy-racer wheel for this sort of car, necessary though it is in the narrow confines of a single-seater. The driving position suited me, but there was room for a taller man and a small female *pilote* was equally at ease.

The rigid structure unveiled.





PERFORMANCE

On the road, one is immediately impressed with the acceleration through the gears. Quite why the new car is so much livelier than the old 2200 it's difficult to say, but as the difference in weight is not great, the efficient shape of the body must have something to do with it. I took a few performance figures, which were considerably better than those claimed by the makers, but was most impressed by the good traction when starting on damp roads and the way the car was still accelerating past 100 mph. Gearchanges were clean and quick, which has not always been the case with transverse-engined cars.

The small six-cylinder engine spins like a little dynamo and remains smooth throughout its range. There are no boom periods and the top-gear pickup is clean from below 10 mph. The transfer gears make an audible hum at idling and town speeds but there is no chatter and the sound disappears when the Wolseley gets into its stride. There is virtually no wind noise and the level of road noise is low, except for some thump over such things as cats-eyes.

RIDE

The ride feels quite firm at the lowest speeds but is level and comfortable at cruising rates. The cornering power is remarkably high for so roomy and comfortable a car; indeed, the way it can be forced through curves, with all four wheels scrabbling for a grip, is reminiscent of a competition vehicle. The quick steering gives confidence and is not over-assisted, but makes parking easy for madame. The excellent adhesion of the tyres assures stability under braking and no fading was experienced during the admittedly short test.

DEBITS

If I must be critical, I would ask for warning lights to indicate that the parking brake and the choke have not been fully released. In exchange, I would give up the flashing lights concerning seat belts, which I soon succeeded in immobilising.

The 18-22 series will be a great success among men who prefer big cars, but must study economy. After all, with performance like this from 2200 cc, why bother with a V-8?

SPECIFICATION AND PERFORMANCE DATA

Car tested: Wolseley 4-door saloon. Price £2,838.42.

Engine: Six-cylinders 76.20 x 81.28 mm (2,227 cc). Compression ratio 9 to 1. 110 bhp DIN at 5,250 rpm. Chain-driven overhead camshaft. Twin SU carburettors.

Transmission: Single dry plate clutch. 4-speed synchromesh gearbox with central remote control, ratios 1.0; 1.38, 2.06, and 3.29 to 1. Helical spur gear primary and final drives, ratio 3.72 to 1.

Chassis: Combined steel body and chassis. Hydragas suspension by wishbones in front and trailing arms behind. Power-assisted rack and pinion steering. Servo-assisted disc/drum brakes with L-split dual circuit operation. Bolt-on ventilated steel wheels, fitted 185/70 SR 14 tyres.

Equipment: 12-volt lighting and starting. Speedometer. Clock. Voltmeter. Fuel and temperature gauges. Heating, demisting and ventilation system with rear floor heating and rear window demisting. 2-speed windscreen wipers and washers. Flashing direction indicators with hazard warning. Reversing lights. Cigar lighters front and rear. Radio.

Dimensions: Wheelbase 8 ft 9.24 ins. Track 4 ft 10 ins/4 ft 9.4 ins. Overall length 14 ft 7.35 ins. Width 5 ft 7.84 ins. Weight 2677 lbs.

Performance: Maximum speed 108 mph. Speeds in gears: Third 83 mph, second 60 mph, first 37 mph. Standing quarter-mile 18.5 s. Acceleration: 0-30 mph 3.8 s, 0-50 mph 8.5 s, 0-60 mph 11.8 s, 0-80 mph 20.9 s.

Fuel consumption: 22 to 28 mpg.

Stee Griffin's Mini (right) nips inside Tony Brennan's similar chased by David Hall's Imp. The hidden Escort of Rosemary Smith won.

MONDELLO PARK

Manley's eventful success

Icy winds blew their way across the flat plains of County Kildare, from the snow capped Dublin-Wicklow Mountains, to bring absolutely frigid weather to Mondello Park for the opening meeting of the Irish speed season, staged by Irish Motor Racing Club. But despite the cold and the absence of several regulars, who should all be out for the Easter Monday meeting, the racing was close with lots happening to keep the good spectator attendance happy throughout the afternoon of St Patrick's Day, March 17. The two most interesting new cars were the F. Atlantic Chevron B29 of Patsy McGarrity and David Manley's very smart Mallock U2 Mk17. True to form, McGarrity scored his customary win in the opening round of the £1000 BP Formula Atlantic Championship of Ireland; but young Manley raised quite a few eyebrows in the first round of the £1000 Shellsport Supersports series, which he won after an eventful drive.

Trevor Templeton (Lotus 69F) won the first £750 Shellsport Formula Ford Championship round; John Gale's flying Aldon-Midget was uncatchable in the Duckhams Modsports Championship race; and in the Duckhams Special Saloons Championship round, Rosemary Smith's Escort-FVC eventually got the better of Stee Griffin's well handled 1.3 Rolo-Mini.

Tony Brennan and Stee Griffin in a pair of hot 1.3 Minis deced it out furiously for the first two laps of the special saloon race, with David Hall in close company with his 1.0 Imp and Rosemary Smith well back in the Escort-FVC. Griffin nipped in front of Brennan going into BP Bend for the second time, but Rosie was challenging hard after disposing of Brennan and Hall, and on lap 9 she took Griffin at Shell to go on to win by 2 s in the heavy Unwins Seeds-sponsored Ford, — no "Garlicking" about with this fast Irish bird of race and rally fame!

Showroom, as-you-can-buy, Group One saloon racing produced little excitement, but a hard chase throughout of George Windrum's 3-litre Ford Capri by Alan "Plum" Tyndall in a Vauxhall Magnum Coupé. Jody Carr tried hard to take Tyndall, having a big late braking slide at Shell on an occasion, but at the flag the black BeeM was down 0.4 s.

John Gale dominated the modsports race from flag to flag with his Aldon Midget, beating Arnie Black by 2 seconds. Autocrosser Denis McCarthy celebrated his racing debut with a steady drive into third, beating the more experienced Ed Mahon by 6 s.

The first rounds of the BP Formula Atlantic and Shellsport Supersports series were run together, as quite a number of each were not out for this opening meeting. Des Donnelly in his rebuilt March 73B, only just returned from England, led Patsy McGarrity for five laps; but once in front it was the same old story of McGarrity dominating the pace, to win by a healthy margain first time out with his new Chevron B29. But the old story would surely have been different had not Donnelly's gear lever broken off on the third lap to force him to drive the remaining dozen laps in third!

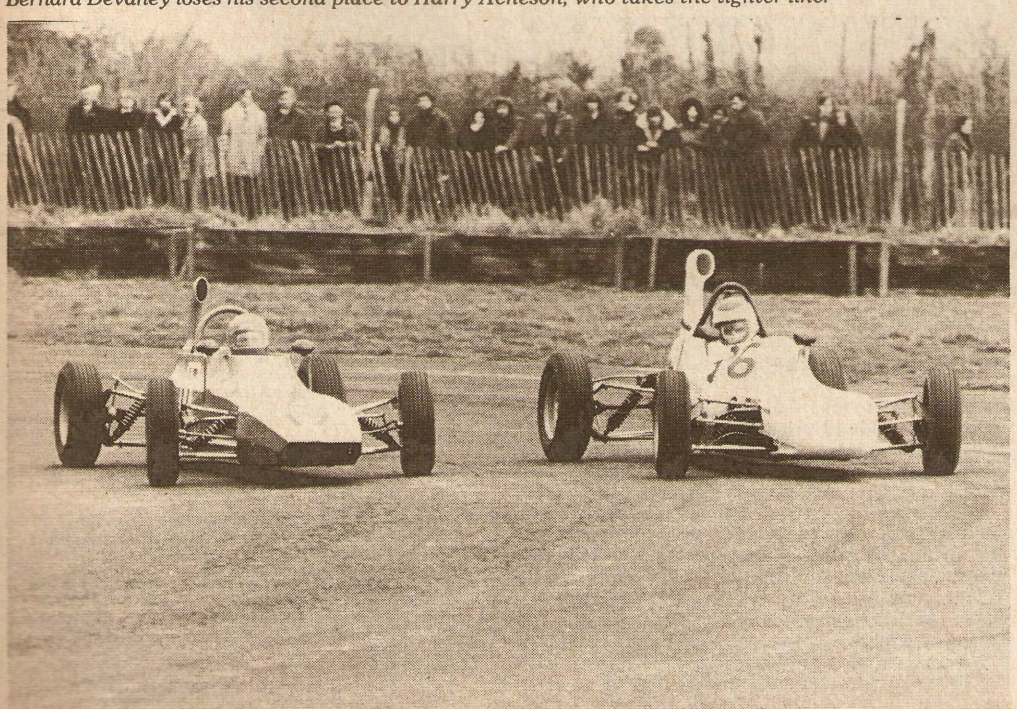
David Manley made a demon start with his new Mallock-U2 Mk 17, actually chasing McGarrity hard for the first two laps. The experienced Ken Fildes, his Lotus 69 now sponsored by Encyclopaedia Britannica, spent several laps trying to find a way past the sensational Manley; while the other Atlantic, the ex-McGarrity Chevron B25/7 of Pat Woods retired on lap 3. On lap 9 Manley spun at Castrol, and the Supersports category was led by Mike Martin in the U2-Sizzler with John Keaney literally on his rear wheels with Eddie Regan's Steering Wheel Pub Gryphon C73/4. Manley recovered to challenge the Martin-Keaney duet, but did it again on lap 14 at Castrol, a deflating rear Goodyear causing him no end of trouble. Then Keaney bumped Martin at Dunlop on the last lap, and as the two spun Manley shot through to win the class. Martin recovered before Keaney to finish in that order, and the only other finisher was reigning champion Richie Heeley whose Gryphon suffered gear selection and clutch troubles.

Fourteen Formula Fords make an impressive Mondello grid, and a big traffic jam into the first corner. At Shell there was much locking of wheels, but all got around in the right direction with the Crossle 25F of Michael Roe suffering a bent nose in the traffic. Trevor Templeton dominated the race from the start, pulling away in his Lotus 69F from Bernard Devaney in the Mondello Racing School/John Murphy Hawke DL12 and Harry Acheson in a new Crossle 30F. David Haughton and his Lotus 69F were knocked out of action at Shell on lap 5 by newcomer Jim Purcell (Lotus 61M), and a yellow flag was held stationary for the remainder of the race as the car could not be moved out of the danger area. On the last lap Acheson took Devaney coming out of Shell and Devaney tried to go autocrossing his way into BP Bend but had to give way and drop to third. Michael Roe, making his racing debut after a few seasons in autocrossing, finished an impressive fourth to give notice of better things to come.

Hot curries and more potent beverages were the big demand in the clubhouse for the last race, a handicap in which a trio of Honda Civics led by Jim Campbell went quicker than the handicapper had anticipated.

BRIAN FOLEY

Bernard Devaney loses his second place to Harry Acheson, who takes the tighter line.



Blackwood Hodge JCB Vintage Car Handicap (7 laps): 1, Tom Bishop (MG N-Type), 10m 47.4s, 46.23 mph; 2, Aubrey Brabazon (Ford Spl), 11m 02.4s; 3, Patrick Dowling (MG-TD), 11m 12.0s. **Fastest lap:** Tony Dowling (ACJ Spl), 1m 27.2s, 51.19 mph.

Duckhams Special Saloon Championship, Round 1 (10 laps): 1, Rosemary Smith (1.8 Ford Escort-FVC), 11m 17.2s, 65.92 mph; 2, Stee Griffin (1.3 Mini), 11m 19.2s; 3, Tony Brennan (1.3 Mini), 11m 29.6s; 4, David Hall (1.0 Imp), 11m 29.8s; 5, Fintan Newport (1.3 Mini), 11m 34.2s; 6, Fred Cooper (1.3 Mini), 12m 26.8s. **Fastest lap:** Smith, 1m 5.6s, 68.05 mph.

Group One Saloons (10 laps): 1, George Windrum (3.0 Ford Capri) 13m 04.4s, 56.91 mph; 2, Alan Tyndall (2.3 Vauxhall Magnum Coupé), 13m 05.6s; 3, Jody Carr (2.0 BMW Tii), 13m 06.0s; 4, Frank O'Rourke (1.9 Opel Ascona), 13m 18.0s; 5, Fintan Newport (1.6 Ford Cortina 1600E), 13m 57.2s; 6, Roger Faulkner (2.3 Vauxhall Firenza), 13m 59.8s. **Fastest lap:** Carr, 1m 17.0s, 57.97 mph.

Duckhams Modsports Championship, Round 1 (10 laps): 1, John Gale (1.3 MG Midget), 11m 23.6s, 65.30 mph; 2, Arnie Black (1.3 MG Midget), 11m 25.6s; 3, Denis McCarthy (1.3 MG Midget), 12m 03.4s; 4, Ed Mahon (1.3 MG Midget), 12m 09.4s; 5, Liam Walker (1.3 MG Midget), 12m 28.4s; 6, Joe Magee (1.3 MG Midget), 9 laps. **Fastest lap:** Gale, 1m 6.4s, 67.23 mph.

BP Formula Atlantic Championship, Round 1 (15 laps): 1, Patsy McGarrity (Chevron B29), 14m 35.4s, 76.49 mph; 2, Des Donnelly (March 73B), 14m 40.0s; 3, Ken Fildes (Lotus 69), 14m 44.4s. **Fastest lap:** Donnelly and Fildes, 57.0s, 78.32 mph.

Shellsport Supersports Championship, Round 1 (15 laps): 1, David Manley (Mallock-U2 Mk17), 15m 19.2s, 72.85 mph; 2, Mike Martin (U2-Sizzler), 15m 20.6s; 3, John Keaney (Gryphon C73/4), 15m 20.6s; 4, Richie Heeley (Gryphon C73/4), 13 laps. **Fastest lap:** Manley, 59.2s 75.41 mph.

Shellsport Formula Ford Championship, Round 1 (15 laps): 1, Trevor Templeton (Lotus 69F), 16m 31.6s; 2, Harry Acheson (Crossle 30F), 16m 33.2s; 3, Bernard Devaney (Hawke DL12), 16m 34.8s; 4, Michael Roe (Crossle 25F), 16m 52.2s; 5, P. Mooney (Merlyn Mk.20A), 17m 05.6s; 6, R. O'Reilly (Crossle 20F), 17m 17.4s. **Fastest lap:** Devaney, 1m 4.8s, 68.89 mph.

Handicap (10 laps): 1, Jim Campbell (Honda Civic), 12m 45.6s, 52.48 mph; 2, Gerry McGarrity (Honda Civic), 12m 49.8s; 3, Jim Wilson (Honda Civic), 12m 50.2s; 4, Joan Dobbs (Datsun 240Z), 12m 58.0s; 5, Peter Faulkner (BMW 200 Tii), 13m 12.4s; 6, Patrick Faulkner (Vauxhall Firenza), 13m 21.6s.

Editorial staff (and friend) clowning on vacation in the South of France.

And now the rotor car

CHRIS WITTY recalls 10,000 miles in an Mazda RX4 Coupe.

It all relates back to my first ever encounter with a Mazda. If my memory serves me correctly, I can remember several wet laps around Goodwood in an 818 Coupe which served to entertain the few who were present for something a little more serious. The 818 is, in fact, the piston engined version of the RX3 rotary. As a car I enjoyed what it had to offer, especially for the price.

From the windswept lowlands on the Duke of Richmond's estate, my next encounter was with the larger 2.3-litre RX4 rotary engined Coupe. A journey southward, across the Channel and down to the depths of Southern France to Albi for an F2 race, provided an experience that just had to be savoured once again.

Upon leaving a previous employ, I sadly parted with a 3-litre Ford Capri which had served me relatively well. It's not often that you find a car that can combine off-road capabilities with powerful motorway performances. The Mazda RX4 was to come surprisingly close. I would relate it to a Japanese 3-litre Capri, both in performance, handling and economy.

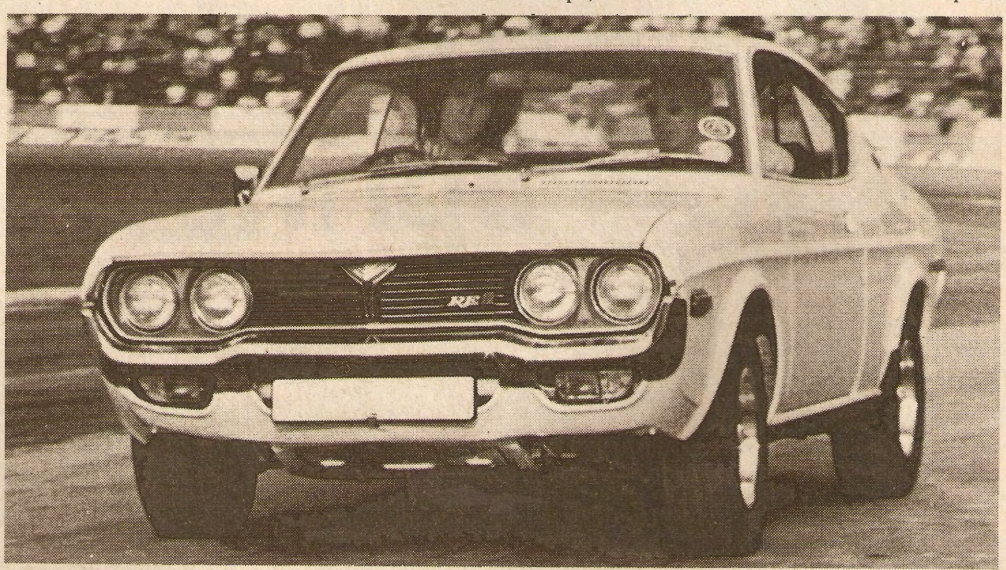
Therefore, I made it one of my prime objects at the beginning of last year to prise one of these RX4 Coupes out of Mazda for an extended road test. It was a marriage that lasted for almost a year. We had our trials and tribulations but more often than not, my noble white steed came through more or less unscathed. Our relationship took us over 10,000 miles of European roads and it was only towards the end of last year, when John Peyton began to feel the squeeze of the oil prices and increased the cost of petrol at an alarming rate, that the RX4 began to prove an uneconomical asset. But more of that anon.

Speeds in excess of . . . .

It was almost a year ago this week that David Palmer, Mazda's PR manager, graciously allowed me to take charge of an RX4 on long term test. At that stage I happened to be employed for a racing team not far from Mazda's British importers who were then situated in Oxted. Being a racing enthusiast, David thought it an excellent idea to have an RX4 present at virtually all the international Formula 2 meetings.

It wasn't long before we were *en route* for Dover and then onward towards the Belgian autoroutes bound for Germany. From my previous experience of this particular rotary engine, I found it more economical to cruise at around 100 mph rather than let the car have its head. Inquisitive people are surprised to learn that the car is genuinely capable of speeds in excess of 120 mph. Apart from fuel and a pint of oil, nothing else was required on that particular journey.

A change in fortunes saw our partnership broken for a few weeks and when the car was reunited with the author, it had undergone one significant change that was to prove the whole point of the long term test. Under instructions from David Palmer "to put as many miles on the car as possible," I subsequently found out that in fact Esso had taken the twin-rotor engine and stripped it completely. They had rebuilt it suitably lubricated with Uniflo and were anxious to carry out a long term test on the advantages of this particular type of oil in a rotary engine. Therefore I was briefed to only use Uniflo and that's exactly what happened.



An RX4 Coupe at speed.

In appearance the RX4 leaves the voyeur in two minds. From some angles it is indeed quite an attractive coupe. A far cry from previous Japanese exports which have tended to be influenced greatly by the gimmickey American market. Still, if the outward appearance was tailored a little more towards the European taste, the gadgetry was still very much evident as the RX4's interior lay-out would show.

It was a bit like getting into a light aircraft. All the instrumentation is angled toward the driver while various interior light switches are mounted above his head on the roof. It is perhaps a little garish and heavy but, like so many things, one becomes accustomed to it after a time. You can't fault it for not having the right dials and guages. Perhaps an altermeter?

One item that I could find little fault with over the year was the interior ventilation and heating. On either side of the dashboard were two eye ball vents. Below them was an aperture which directed the air either out through the top or onto the feet. Then, centrally mounted, were the remaining heater controls with a three speed fan which more than often proved its worth. Perhaps the only criticism was, due to the rake of the windscreen, the demister wasn't strong enough to clear the upper regions which, for the taller driver, is a slight hinderence. The rear window had an automatic heater filament which kept it reasonably clear. There again, being a coupe, the rain and dirt tended to cloud it up. An ideal compromise was the addition of the side mirror mounted on the door. Up until now, I've never realised just how useful this mirror can be.

It was only when I yumped the car on a particularly notorious humpback bridge at speed that the heater faulted itself. What in fact happened was one of the plastic ducts popped out and flopped into the compartment below the glovebox. By not bothering to replace it and as the climatic conditions changed, that particular side of the windscreen remained fogged.

One other way to keep the interior ventilation circulating, and there is nothing more infuriating than not being able to see passed the rear quarter, was to lower the rear window which conveniently solved the problem. While we're talking of windows, the pillarless doors gave out a lot of

The Mazda convoy on last year's Tour of Britain with the RX4 at the tail.

wind noise at high speed but I suppose that's inevitable. All round vision was adequate.

The driving position was pleasant, but there again it's a question of what you become used to. The seats could be adjusted to suit any purpose and on long journeys; it's pleasant to be able to adjust the rake and ease an aching back. Gearlever, handbrake, light, wiper and flasher stalks; everything that mattered was easy at hand. Even items like a dipping rear view mirror served its purpose on several occasions.

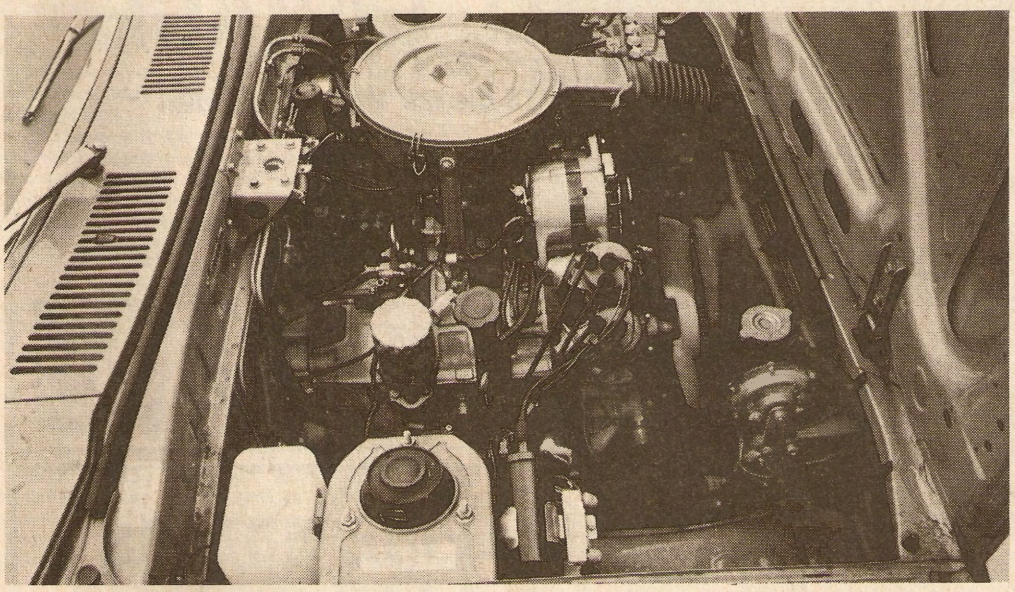
One thing I found out about quite early on was the amount of water collected in the door sills. This only came about after a particularly violent rain storm and as I was closing the door, I heard water slopping about. Fortunately Mazda have a rubber plug fitted at the bottom which allows the excess water to drain itself off. From then onward I kept it unplugged all the time.

The all synchromesh gearbox was nice and loose and combined well with the free running rotary engine. Possibly due to some hard wear beforehand, prior to my taking charge, the synchromesh on 2nd gear proved a little notchy and this remained all year without getting any worse. It was something I had expected to deteriorate quite frankly.

The dual headlights were capable of giving a reassuring spread of light night. It's a little disconcerting to find some 120 mph plus cars only have lights capable of far less speeds.

Mazda have reputedly produced well over 300,000 units of their Wankel-derived rotary engine. The two versions in current use are the 2-litre and 2.3-litre equivalents. It's advantages are size in relation to performance. The 2.3-litre twin-rotor unit fitted to the RX4 and, of late, the RX3 (which is why they are able to race them in G1), delivers around 130 bhp (SAE) at 7000 rpm. Considering it is two-thirds the size of a normal piston engine, is 30% lighter and has 30% fewer parts, it delivers almost twice the horsepower per cubic inch than a six cylinder reciprocating engine. But it is very thirsty. This is, perhaps, the Achilles heel of the rotary engined car. Certainly any uncomplimentary remarks made about the unit in view of its current uneconomical design concept should not condemn the manufacturer. We understand they are carrying out extensive tests to improve the units efficiency which, at the present, puts the car on par with slightly more expensive high performance machines.

In over 10,000 miles the engine performed extremely well considering the thrashing it incured. It always remained loose and free running and retained its almost uncanny quietness all the time.



The rotary engine fits easily into the engine bay.

The first problem encountered came on a long trip south to the French Grand Prix at Dijon. It just happened that Grand Prix driver to be, Mike Wilds, was in the driving seat, having just taken over for a two hour stint of French autoroute driving. We'd been cruising at around the 100 mph mark as this proves the most economical way, returning about 18.5 mpg. With the large 14 gallon tank, it allows a maximum cruising range of around 210 miles per tankful. Anyway, just as Mike backed off, there was a loud bang from the exhaust. I thought a gasket had in fact blown but it subsequently turned out to be the actual exhaust system itself. Where the two down pipes from the manifold join the main part of the system, the bolts had vibrated loose. All that was required was a quick twiddle on a spanner.

However it happened again, only this time several months later. Once again it was the bolts vibrating loose and although the noise wasn't as bad as before, the car became difficult in starting. Eventually I took it to a garage where it was fixed but constant running with a half open exhaust had put paid to the silencer box which needed reskinning.

Oil consumption was particularly good at around 400 miles per pint as the rotary engine oil seals are notably suspect. This was one factor Esso were particularly interested in. A suspected water seal did start to blow toward the end of the test as the car started to use a little more water than normal. Then the second stage of the single downdraught, two-stage four-barrel carburettor broke a spring which effectively ruined any performance over 60 mph. This ailment would effectively flood half of the carb. It was a simple job to fix although I found that by opening the choke, it effectively acted as the second stage.

After about 5,000 miles, the car was taken back to Mazda for a routine overhaul. The front struts were replaced as, being a press test car in its early days, they had seen hard times. The front discs were also replaced as I'd gone through the original set of brake pads and just scored a disc. A dealer told me it was impossible to have gone through a set of pads in 25,000 miles! The brakes themselves were adequate although nothing terribly startling. Again I would have to relate them to a 3-litre Capri.

The front suspension lay-out incorporates independent struts with coil springs. At the rear is the good old-fashioned semi-elliptic leaf springs with gas filled hydraulic double acting dampers.

The ride is somewhat rather harsh. It's dampened a little by the wide 5½ J attractive steel rims which are clad with Japanese Bridgestone radials. They're fun in the wet and relatively reassuring in the dry. The amount of rubber displayed upon the road makes the car relatively stable under most conditions which, yet again, I have to compare with a 3-litre Capri. The rear end becomes rather light in the wet but it's still very controllable. It's predominately an oversteering machine, but, there again, all cars with a similar configuration share the same characteristic.

Even though it's marketed as a coupe, the RX4 can hold four adults, although for those in the back, the sloping roof line, combined with undulations on the road, brought cries of protest on more than one occasion.

In conclusion, I would say the rotary engined RX4 arrived at the wrong time. It has now become an expensive car for the average man to run although it still manages to retain a competitive price against its fellow competitors. Perhaps it has a better future fitted with a conventional piston engine which is what it is now being marketed under. It is attractive. It is quick. It is functional. It's relatively trouble free but, until the rotary engine becomes more acceptable from a petrol consumption point of view, then my experience over the past few months will just remain a memory.

"Did you hear the one about the Englishman, Irishman, Scotsman and Welshman who all went rallying?"

RICHARD St JOHN YOUNG

Who is the best of all? Settling the question . . .

Did you hear the one about the Englishman, the Irishman, the Scotsman and the Welshman who all went rallying? Well, nobody could decide who was the best, and the controversy went on and on for years and years, because nobody ever got around to inventing a system whereby their performances in different types of events could be properly compared.

To make matters worse, they just will not conform to their respective national reputations (where rallying is concerned anyway), and the results of rallies over the past few years have tended to confuse, rather than confirm, opinions, and have prevented the story even being finished.

The Scots, they say, are only good in forestry events, but people like Andrew Cowan and Willie Crawford have very impressive records on tarmac rallies.

The English, apart from Roger Clark, who must now be regarded as International (it must be that Russian hair spray he uses) were reckoned to be particularly good on the shorter, slower, twistier type of stage, but then along came Tony Pond, Will Sparrow, Tony Fawkes et al and debunked that one.

The Welsh are, traditionally, road rally exponents, and are never, for some reason, expected to go particularly rapidly on stages at all, while the Irish are traditionally supposed to be totally lost on anything but a smooth, fast tarmac stage. Tell that to Billy Coleman, Cahal Curley, Adrian Boyd . . .

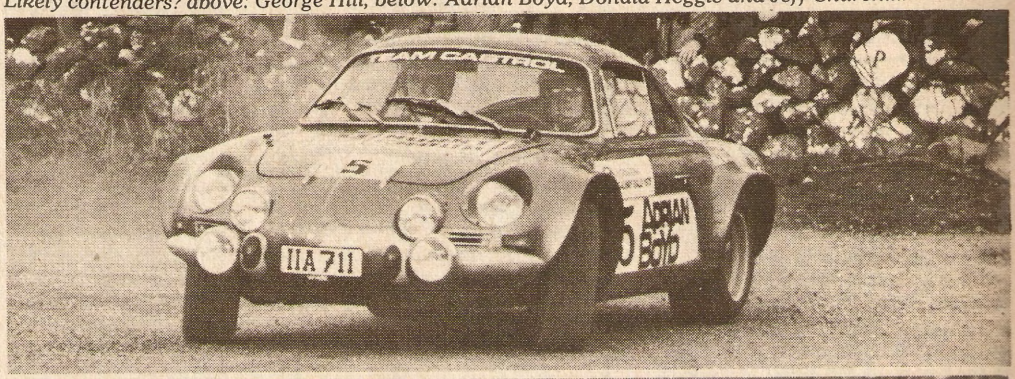
Each region has its own national championship, and while there is a certain amount of to-ing and fro-ing among the "stars," and a lot of chest-thumping as to which country produces the best drivers, nobody has, until now, come up with a means of proving somebody's claim, one way or the other.

Credit, or blame, for the idea which follows, must go to semi-works Avenger driver Robin Eyre-Maunsell, who, when he is not rushing about the countryside in pursuit of trophies or total disaster, is by way of being a bit of a thinker. His idea is (loosely) based on Rugby's Triple Crown contest, and would consist, basically, of a season-long team championship to be run in conjunction with the "home" Internationals. Ideally, rounds would be divided more or less equally between forest and tarmac events. Say, the Circuit of Ireland (tarmac), The Welsh (forest), the Scottish (forest), the Circuit of Donegal (tarmac), the Manx (tarmac), and, finally, the RAC (forest, sewage farm, public park, stately home and seafront).

I have included Donegal partly to bring the number of tarmac events up to level pegging with forests, and partly because it's such an enjoyable event to do. The Galway or perhaps even the Cork "20" would do instead. The Manx is, if Dennis Easthope and others will forgive being left out of the contest (come to think of it, there's no reason why they shouldn't field a team as well), neutral territory. Perhaps, if the idea became established, it would be possible to persuade organisers to reduce entry fees a bit for championship teams.

In the interests of getting an accurate result, or, at least keeping the whole thing reasonably fair, Group One cars only would be involved, with each country (perhaps Ulster and Eire should have a team each 'a la' Ken Wharton autotest event) nominating a "team" of six cars either through the relevant Association of Car Clubs or, in the case of Southern Ireland, through the national body.

Likely contenders? above: George Hill, below: Adrian Boyd, Donald Heggie and Jeff Churchill.



I say "nominating", because this should ideally be a contest involving honour only, with no great pots of gold at the end of it. If someone were to offer the gold, well and good, but for the moment, honour must suffice, and it would help to keep everything clean! Six cars per team should give all teams a chance of getting three or four cars to the finish of each event, and the highest placed four in each team could then win marks based on their finishing positions relative to the other championship contenders.

For example, if there were six teams competing in an event, there would be 36 cars all looking for places, but only the first four finishers in each team could actually score. If for example, team "A" were to bring all its cars home in the first six places, team "B" could only hope for seventh place points for its leading car. Reliability would thus be almost as important as outright speed, and team management would also count for something. Further, if a team only managed to bring three cars to the finish, some kind of penalty could be built in for that non-finishing fourth car.

In the interests of keeping it a "clean" competition, I would suggest only one "star" driver per team, the rest to be made up of genuine private entrants. I will leave it up to greater brains than mine to define a "star" driver in this context!

There would also, I suppose, have to be penalties for any team which let its national fervour get out of hand. Rallying has enough problems!

Obviously the scheme would have to be refined a bit to make it a workable proposition. Perhaps the teams should be split between Groups one and two and their sports car equivalents. Perhaps . . . well, it's just an idea, but one which, if not taken too seriously, could, I think, provide quite a lot of amusement and, perhaps, provide an answer to that question!

Four men in with a chance of victory at Thruxton this weekend are, from left to right, Hans Stuck, Jean-Perre Jabouille, Jacques Laffite and Brian Henton.

Easter previews

THRUXTON

After a break of a year, Formula 2 racing returns to the Thruxton race circuit this Easter Monday when the second round of the European Championship gets underway. The meeting has received generous support from the large Wella hair cosmetics company who will also have a vested interest in the actual F2 race because they sponsor American driver Ted Wentz as well.

Thruxton, which is situated just off the A303 to the west of Andover, is the home of the BARC who just happen to be organising the meeting. They have long been staunch supporters of F2 and have been working overtime in arranging the large international entry (of which 33 will start) listed in the accompanying panel.

Here is a chance to see the Grand Prix drivers take on the young pretenders. Perhaps the most exciting addition is that of Swede Ronnie Peterson who is a last minute entry in a March-BMW. Other Grand Prix drivers entered are Vittorio Brambilla, Hans Stuck, Jean-Pierre Jabouille, Gerard Larrousse and Jacques Laffite, winner of the first round at Estoril three weeks ago. Quite how the two new works March recruits, Michel Leclere and Patrick Tambay will fair poses an interesting question. How will Wentz go in his converted Atlantic Lola? Can the young Japanese driver Masami Kuwashima (who missed Estoril) continue his sparkling form from last season? Will Britain's Brian Henton show them all the way or will Peterson gain his third Thruxton F2 victory?

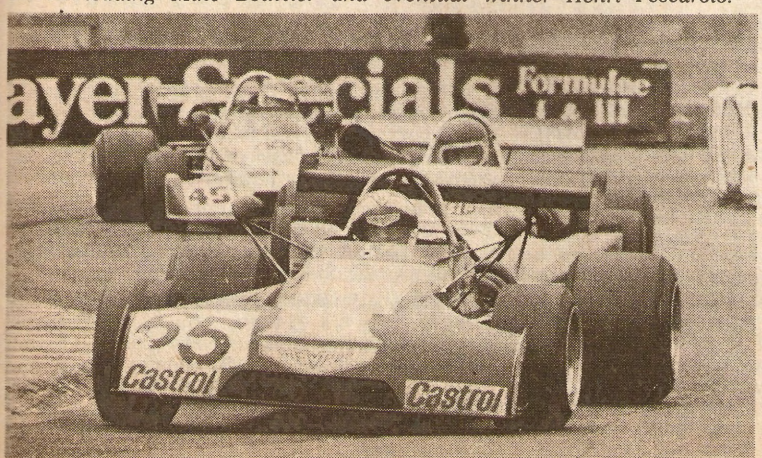
Supporting the Wella F2 race is the opening round of the new BP Super Visco International Formula 3 Championship. After a poor season last year, F3 has received a tremendous boost over the winter months from various divisions within the sport and we are glad to say that the entry for the first round looks extremely encouraging, despite a clashing race at Nurburgring on Sunday.

We expect the race to feature a four way battle for the overall honours between the two works March-Toyotas of Brazilian Alex Ribiero and Swede Gunnar Nilsson, Danny Sullivan's works Modus and Australian ace Larry Perkins in Ron Tauranac's brand new unraced Ralt. However one can't discount people like British FSV champion Chris Barnett or Ian Taylor's works GRD. Then there's a host of others who've risen from FF and these include Graham Hamilton, Rupert Keegan, Bob Arnott, Richard Hawkins, Doug Bassett and Stephen South to name but a few plus the regular F3 campaigners.

Following the rigours of Oulton Park on Good Friday, the SO/RAC G1 touring car circus motors south to contest the fourth round of the series. Stuart Graham or Richard Lloyd in their Camaros? We've a sneaking suspiscion that Andy Rouse's Broadspeed Dolomite might be even closer to them than in the past while here's hoping the two works Mazdas are cured of their niggling cutting out problems and can give the Dolomites a run for their money.

To begin and close the meeting, there's a British Air Ferries FF race plus a Historic event, this being a round of the *Classic Car* championship. All details are in the accompanying panels.

Memories of the last F2 race at Thruxton back in 1973 with the late Gerry Birrell leading Mike Beuttler and eventual winner Henri Pescarolo.



WELLA INTERNATIONAL FORMULA 2 TROPHY

Project 3 Racing with March	Ronnie Peterson	March-BMW 752
Jagermeister Team March	Hans Stuck	March-BMW 752
Elf Team March	Michel Leclere	March-BMW 752
Elf Team March	Patrick Tambay	March-BMW 752
Bang & Olufsen Team Michel Vaillant	Claude Bourgoignie	March-BMW 752
Bang & Olufsen Team Michel Vaillant	Bernard de Dryver	March-BMW 752
Scuderia del Passatore	Giancarlo Martini	March-BMW 752
Scuderia del Passatore	Lamberto Leoni	March-BMW 752
Team Obermoser Eurorace Germany	Hans Binder	March-BMW 752
Wella International Hair Care	Ted Wentz	Lola-Ford T360
Masami Kuwashina	Masami Kuwashima	March-BMW 752
Cucine Elba Racing Team	Gabriele Serblin	March-BMW 752
Trivellato Racing	Alberto Colombo	March-BMW 752
Brissago Blauband Racing	Jo Vonlanthen	March-BMW 752
Lista Racing Team	Marcus Hutz	March-BMW 752
Warsteiner Racing Team	Willi Deutsch	March-BMW 752
Brian Henton	Brian Henton	March-Ford 752
Project 3 Racing with March	Vittorio Brambilla	March-BMW 752
John Lepp	John Lepp	March-Ford 742
Scuderia Vesuvio	Cosimo Turizio	March-BMW 742
Jolly Club	Carlo Giorgio	March-Ford 742
SAR	Jorg Siegriest	March-BMW 742
Ambrozium H7	Loris Kessel	March-BMW 742
Roland Binder	Roland Binder	March-BMW 742
Max Bonnin	Max Bonnin	March-BMW 732
Ardmore Racing	Ray Mallock	March-Ford 75B
Equipe Elf Switzerland	Jean-Pierre Jabouille	Elf-BMW 2J
Equipe Elf Switzerland	Gerard Larrousse	Elf-BMW 2J
Ecurie Elf	Jacques Laffite	Martini-BMW Mk. 16
Fred Opert	Hector Rebaque	Chevron-Ford B29
Peter Williams	Peter Williams	Chevron-Ford B27
Racing Organisation Corse	Xavier Lapeyre	Chevron-Chrysler B29
Racing Organisation Corse	To be nominated	Chevron-Chrysler B29
Harald Ertl	Harald Ertl	Chevron-BMW B27
Bob Marsland	Bob Marsland	Chevron-Ford B27
Osella	Giorgio Francia	Osella-BMW PA2
Osella	Duillo Truffo	Osella-BMW PA2
Ippokampos Racing	To be nominated	Motul-Ford M1

THRUXTON TIMETABLE OF EVENTS
OFFICIAL PRACTICE — SATURDAY, MARCH 29

Formula Ford Cars	9.00- 9.30 am
Formula 2 Cars	9.40-11.10 am
Formula 3 Cars	11.25-12.00 am
Historic Cars	12.10-12.40 pm
Group 1 Touring Cars	1.45- 2.45 pm
Formula 2 Cars	3.00- 4.30 pm
Formula 3 Cars	4.45- 6.00 pm

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS —
EASTER MONDAY, March 31

12.30 pm	Formula Ford race	10 laps
1.15 pm	Formula 2 Race — part 1	30 laps
2.15 pm	Group 1 Touring Cars	23 laps
3.10 pm	Formula 3 Race	15 laps
3.45 pm	Formula 2 Race — part 2	30 laps
5.00 pm	Historic Cars — Race	12 laps

BP SUPER VISCO STATIC FORMULA 3

March Engineering	Alex Ribiero	March-Toyota 753
March Engineering	Gunnar Nilsson	March-Toyota 753
Rallye Autosport Amersham	Danny Alderton	March-Toyota 753
Chris Barnett	Chris Barnett	March-BMW 753
MacDonald Shand/Eairie Ecosse	Graham Hamilton	March-Ford 753
Bang & Olufsen Team Michel Vaillant	Herve Regout	March-BMW 753
Bang & Olufsen Team Michel Vaillant	Pierre Dieudonne	March-BMW 753
Lista Racing Team	Oscar Pfister	March-BMW 753
British Air Ferries	Rupert Keegan	March-Toyota 743
Tony Roles Racing	Mike Tyrrell	March-Ford 733
Bob Arnott	Bob Arnott	March-Ford 743
Derek Edwards	Mick Jones	March-Ford 743
Pyfed Roberts	Dyfed Roberts	March-Ford 743
Jo Simons Racing	To be nominated	March-Ford 743
F. S. Ratcliffe Springs	Richard Hawkins	March-Ford 743
Eric Dugdale Group Racing	Peter Dugdale	March-Ford 733
Steve Pettitt	Steve Pettitt	March-Ford 733
Gary Clare	Gary Calre	March-Ford 733
GRD Ltd.	Ian Taylor	GRD-Ford 375
FPA Pitchmastic	Doug Bassett	GRD-Ford 374
Imado Watch Co. Ltd.	John Lain	GRD-Ford 375
Leonard Smith	Len Smith	GRD-Ford 373
Marcos Moraes	Marcos Moraes	GRD-Ford 374
Team Modus	Danny Sullivan	Modus-Toyota M2
Team Modus	Fritz Stehlin	Modus-Ford M2
Wisharts Garage	Peter Clarke	Modus-Ford M1
Dick Parsons	Dick Parsons	Modus-Ford M1
Shellsport Racing with Lola	Patrick Neve	Lola-Ford T350
Robert Joubert	Robert Joubert	Lola-Ford T350
Team Cowangie	Larry Perkins	Ralt-Ford
Stephen South	Stephen South	Ray-Toyota 75
Mike Wrigley	Mike Wrigley	Royale-Ford RP11
Dr. Joseph Erhlich	Tony Rouff	Erhlich-Ford ES5
Ken Silverstone	Ken Silverstone	Hawke-Ford DL15
Thorpe Bay Autopoints	Andy McGregor	Brabham-Ford BT41
Team Alexis	Simon Kirkby	Alexis-Ford Mk 20
Safir Engineering	To be nominated	Safir-Ford RJ3

OULTON PARK

The easter racing programme kicks off at Oulton Park in Cheshire with the second round of the Shellsport F5000 championship on Good Friday.

Perhaps of more interest than the racing itself at this meeting will be the brand new 1.654 mile circuit which will be in use for the first time. In addition to the new link from Cascades to Knickerbrook all the other amenities have been improved. Hundreds of yards of new spectator terracing have been added included opening up Druids bend to the public for the first time.

The entry list for the F5000 is in the accompanying table. Following the rain ruined first round the entry still poses a lot of questions. Is the Ford V6 engine really as competitive as it was at Brands? Oulton's new track should suit its characteristics and backing up David Purley's efforts this time will be Tom Walkinshaw, back again in the Modus.

Ian Ashley is bound to be a strong contender, having won the first round, but expect stiffer opposition from Vern Schuppan, Peter Gethin, Teddy Pilette, Guy Edwards, Chris Amon and Brian Redman.

Supporting the F5000 event will be the third round of the Southern Organs/RAC saloon car championship. Outright wins in the first two races have been shared by Richard Lloyd and Stuart Graham in their Camaros. This is Graham's home circuit and he should be favourite although Lloyd and the ten other Camaros entered should make life difficult for him as well as Tony Lanfranchi's Chrysler Hemi Cuda.

The next class of Capris and Opels are finding life tough at the moment and will undoubtedly find the incredibly quick British Leyland Dolomite Sprints mixing it with them. Andy Rouse, number one for the Piranha Broadspeed team, has two victories so far and will be looking for a third. Roger Bell and John Hine complete the BL challenge while Barrie Williams and Brian Muir will head the Japanese Mazda attack.

In the small class Win Percy should be out again in the rebuilt Mallory winning Toyota and trying to keep the Avengers of Jenny Birrell and Bernard Unett out of the points.

Other races on the programme include rounds of the new Allied Polymer FF2000 championship and a *Daily Mail* Trophy race for Special saloons.

Racing starts at 12.30 pm.

SNETTERTON

The opening race of the season at Snetterton in Norfolk is an International on Sunday with the third round of the John Player Atlantic Championship heading the bill.

The first two rounds turned up different winners, Tony Brise and Richard Morgan. The third round is likely to be between these two and Jim Crawford who have all shown themselves to be one cut above the rest of the field in the early races. Crawford, by virtue of two second places, has a narrow lead in the championship from Morgan and Brise and the heat will really be on for all three drivers to improve their positions.

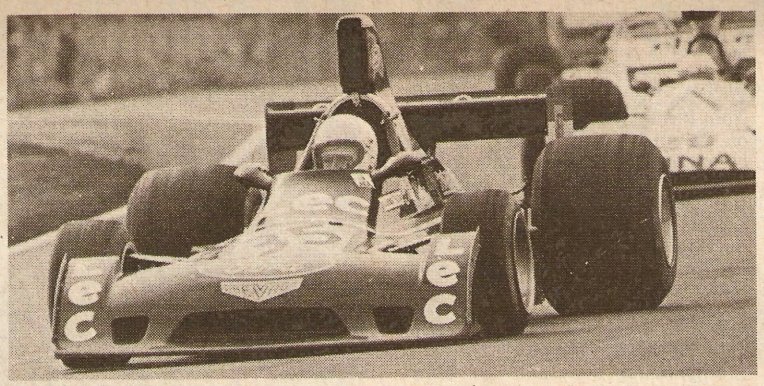
Other entries include Ray Mallock, Cyd Williams, Steve Choularton, Peter Wardle, Val Musetti and Bobby Muir.

The APG FF2000s are also out again with Syd Fox, Ian Taylor, Damien Magee, Derek Lawrence and Frank Hopper, continuing their fight to establish a winning combination in Britain's newest formula.

The Simoniz Special Saloon car race will provide another opportunity for a Gerry Marshall versus Nick Whiting confrontation, previous rounds of which have created public interest and controversy. An interesting entry in the big class is that of Alex Poole in the ex-Meek Skoda which could just upset the status quo.

In the small class the Minis of Peter Baldwin, Terry Harmer, Rob Mason take on Tony Mann's Anglia and Susan Tucker Peake's Escort and Jeff Ward's incredible Imp.

Racing starts at 2 pm.



Will David Purley's Chevron-Ford be a match for the Lola-Chevrolets? F5000 races take place at Oulton on Friday and Brands on Monday.

OULTON PARK (Friday) AND BRANDS HATCH (Monday)
SHELLSPORT EUROPEAN F5000 CHAMPIONSHIP RACES

Racing Team VDS	Peter Gethin	Lola-Chevrolet T400
Richard Oaten Racing	Ian Ashley	Lola-Chevrolet T330 or T400
Racing Team VDS	Teddy Pilette	Lola-Chevrolet T400
Encyclopaedia Brittanica	Guy Edwards	Lola-Chevrolet T332
Sid Taylor/Theodore Racing	Vern Schuppan	Lola-Chevrolet T332
Brian Redman	Brian Redman	Chevron-Chevrolet B28
D.I.R.T.	Mike Wilds	Surtees-Ford V6 TS17
Brian Robinson	Brian Robinson	McLaren-Chevrolet M19
Southern Organs International	Damien Magee	Trojan-Chevrolet T101
Tony Dean	Tony Dean	Chevron-Chevrolet B24
Brian McGuire	Brian McGuire	Lola-Chevrolet T332
Chris Featherstone	Chris Featherstone	McRae-Chevrolet GM1
McKechnie Racing/Durex	Richard Scott	Lola-Chevrolet T400
LEC Refrigeration/Southern Organs	David Purley	Chevron-Ford V6 B30
ShellSPORT Team Modus	Tom Walkinshaw	Modus-Ford V6 M5
Reed Racing	Gordon Spice	Lola-Chevrolet T332
Mick Hill	Mick Hill	March-Chevrolet 74A
Kaye Griffiths	Kaye Griffiths	McLaren-Chevrolet M19
John Turner	John Turner	Lola-Chevrolet T330
George's Haulage	Dennis Leech	Chevron-Chevrolet B24
Brooklands Garages	Gerry Amato	Lola-Chevrolet T330
Thursdays/RAM	To be nominated	Chevron-Chevrolet B28
Chris Amon	Chris Amon	Talon-Chevrolet MR1
Radio Luxembourg	Tom Belso	Lola-Chevrolet T330

BRANDS HATCH

After the trials of Oulton on Friday the F5000 circus will have just two days to prepare themselves for a gruelling 60 laps round the Brands club circuit. The races on this circuit always turn out to be very close and exciting. Once again the big question will be the Ford versus Chevrolet battle. Brands, of all the circuits in the championship, should favour the Ford. The entry is the same as at Oulton (see table) and one of the best races of the whole weekend is promised.

The Radio One Production saloon car championship is also on the agenda. This has become one of the most competitive and well contested championships in the country and should provide great entertainment. In the big class five Chevrolet Camaros will battle for outright honours. The prospects are even for John Brindley, Derrick Brunt, Brian Rice and Bob Ridgard while in the next category Mike Smith, Ivan Dutton, Marc Smith in their Capris will be hoping to keep Gerry Marshall's Vauxhall Magnum at bay.

The other two classes will have a separate race. Outright winner will undoubtedly come from one of the Mazda RX3 of Jock Robertson, Jean-Pierre Aux, Pete King, Barry Andrews, Cozy Powell, Wendy Markey or Eric Cook although Bill Sydenham and Derek Wileman will put in a strong Avenger GT challenge. Danny Alderton's Honda Civic will battle with Tony Stubbs' Lada, Simon Watson's Imp and Ivan Dutton's Simca for the bargain basement award.

Providing a good variety of the programme will be the LEC Clubman's Supersports championship challengers. The oversubscribed entry list has all the top names including Frank Sytner, Creighton Brown, Geoff Friswell, Steve Russell, Noel Stanbury, Barry Foley, Vernon Davies, John Davies, Nicky Allen and Chris Greville Smith.

Other races on the programme include a round of the *Kent Messenger* 1000cc Special Saloon championship and a Shellsport Celebrity race for lady drivers.

Racing starts at 2.30 pm.

SILVERSTONE

The BRDC are in charge for a full programme of championship races at Silverstone on Monday.

As an extra added attraction Jim Crawford, perhaps the most promising of Britain's young drivers, will demonstrate a JPS Lotus 72 F1 car, which will be his first appearance in public in such a car.

The second round of the Brush Fusegear FF series heads the racing line-up with no less than 70 entries. The first round was a real cracker and the 12 lap final should be a repeat this time. Geoff Lees, Lee Wroe-Johnston, Stu Baird, Jim Walsh and Chris Woodcock are among the star names entered.

The first sports car race of the year in this country has a number of good entries including John Jordan's CanAm McLaren, Iain McLaren's Chevron, Tony Charnell's Lola, John Cole's Chevron and Nick Overall's Chevron.

The Esso Unilflo Special Saloon series is proving to be as popular as ever and will be run in two parts. Entries for both races include Tony Strawson's V8 Capri, the rapid Minis of Bob Fox, Dave Hancock, Peter Baldwin and Tony Dickinson and the Imps of Ray Payne, Jeff Ward and Basil Dagge.

The meeting also features the opening round of the Monoposto championship with a full field including 1974 champion Alan Baillie.

Concluding the programme is a round of the Jaybrand *Libre* championship. As well as many of the sports cars coming out for a second time, a number of potent single seaters are also entered, such as John Wingfield's F2 Brabham, Frank Sytner's F2-engined U2, Bobby Bell's F5000 Trojan, Michael Connor's F5000 Surtees and Nick May's FA Lola.

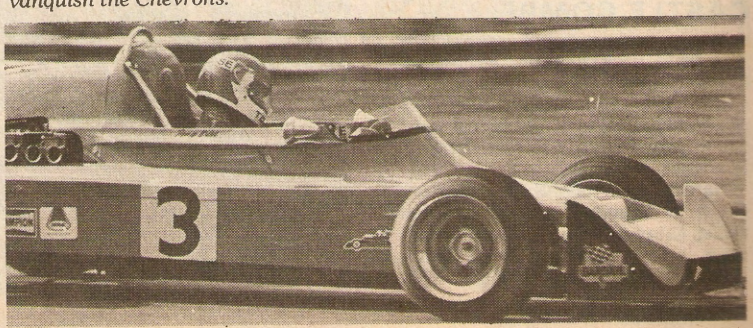
Racing starts at 2 pm.

RUFFORTH

The only meeting to be held on Saturday over the Bank Holiday weekend is the BRSCC Northern centre's meeting at Rufforth. This six race day has one national series event, that for Escort Sports, this series sponsored by *Penthouse*. All the usual runners are entered. In the *libre* race, there's a brace of F5000s for Willie Wood (Trojan), and Tony Dean (Chevron), along with Iain McLaren's Chevron and Phil Barak's Brabham.

Clubmen's challengers for the Northern champagne series include Tim Wood, Barry Joel and Ray Edge, while the special saloon entry is of the highest calibre with Keith Bowmaker and Doug Niven (Escorts),

Tony Brise will be out at Snetterton in his Formula Atlantic on Sunday to vanquish the Chevrons.



Jim Evans' Escort turbo, Graham Walker's Firenza and Malcolm West's Camaro.

The D. C. Cook production sports car series looks more healthy than of late, with Morgans for John Britten, Charles Morgan and Bob Stewart, Chris Meek and Linda Cunningham in Europas, Paul Harker in a Lotus, and a number of Jaguars and Midget. Finally, the Tate Trophy Formula Fords include Kelvin Hesketh and Mick Starkey, which should make for a good race even if no one else turns up.

Racing starts at 2 pm.

MALLORY PARK

More than 100 cars are entered for the BRSCC (Midland Centre) seven race championship programme at Mallory Park on Monday.

The National Organs FF championship will have to have a couple of qualifying heats before the points deciding final to sort out the masses of runners. With the current leaders racing elsewhere Kenny Gray will have an excellent opportunity to make up the leeway.

Providing Snetterton the previous day does not claim too many serious victims, the Simoniz Special Saloon races should both have capacity grids. In addition to those entered at Snetterton Alan Minshaw will be

Alan Minshaw – first race in the Daf at Mallory Park.

having his first race in the lovely little Daf-Rover.

The VW Silver Cup Super Vee championship gets under way here with a good entry of 20 cars. John Morrison ought to be the man to beat in his SuperNova, although there will be keen competition from Peter White, Mike Young, Mark Litchfield and Bruce Venn.

The BRSCC's Midland Centre Modsports Championship has attracted a great deal of interest and entries include Robin Gray (Morgan +8), Harry Phillips (Corvette Stingray), Richard Jenvey (Elan), Kenny Allen (Clan) and Barry Wood (Ginetta).

Racing starts at 2.30 pm.

CASTLE COMBE

The little west country circuit at Castle Combe opens its season with a good programme which includes Miglia Minis, Special Saloons, F Vee, Clubmen's, Formula Fords, Renault 5s and a *Libre* event.

Names here include Sid Marler, Peter Wimhurst, Terry Hird, John Hazel, Brian Cutting, Richard Longman, Len Brammer, Tony Dunderdale, Keith Norman, Neil McGrath and Roger Orgee.

Racing starts at 2.00 pm.

CROFT

The BRSCC Northern centre move from Rufforth on Saturday to Croft on Monday with many of their competitors following them. The *Penthouse* Escort Sport survivors stay north for Monday, as do the special saloon people and the production sports car field. Willie Wood has his Trojan in the *libre* event, with Derek Cook's March and Phil Barak's Brabham. Mick Starkey and Kelvin Hesketh resume battle in the Tate FF event, and the Troy Tire championship sees Graham Wenham, Hugo Shipley and Chris Tyrrell among others, out in their Mini Sevens.

Racing starts at 2 pm.

LLANDOW

Motor racing returns to Wales on Monday for a healthy programme of club racing which includes saloon races, Formula Fords and *Libre* cars.

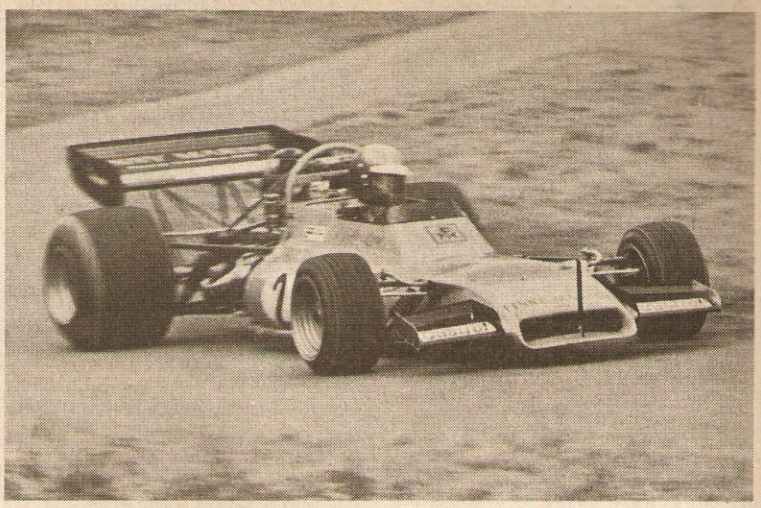
Tony Broster, Tony Pollock and Sean Roos are in the FF event, John Bird (Imp), Alan Parfitt (Mini) and Dave McLoy (Boss Mustang) feature in the saloon races while Guy Bedington's V12 E-Type will attempt to carry off the *Libre* event.

● The opening round of the 1975 RAC Hillclimb Championship takes place on Monday at Loton Park near Shrewsbury. Among the leading contenders for this year's championship are Chris Cramer, John Cussins, Roy Lane, Martyn Griffiths and Ken MacMaster.

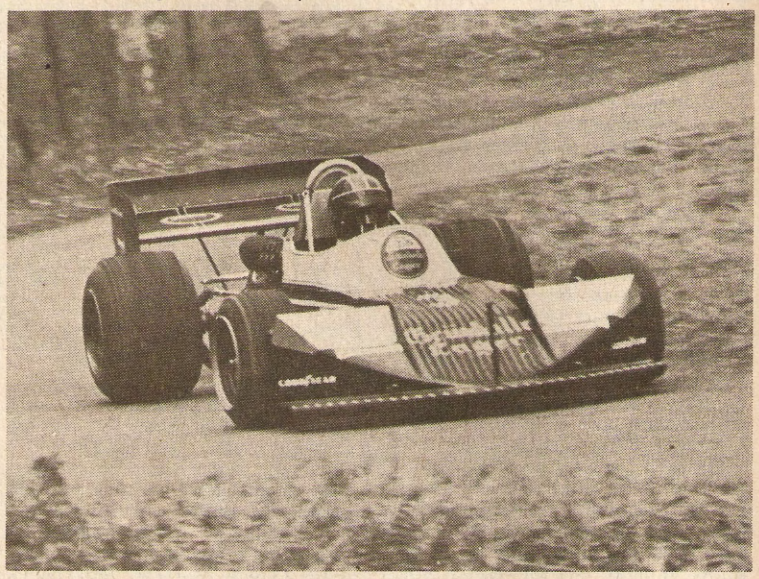
● Among the extra attractions at Thruxton on Monday will be an on-course betting tent run by famous bookmaker Joe Coral. Lovers of horse racing will be able to place their usual amount there too. There will also be an Astrobounce spacewalk for children and, on Monday, there will be an aerobatic display by the Tiger Club. For lovers of historic vehicles, there will be a parade of some sixty cars.

DRAG

Good Friday sees the first major drag event of the season at Snetterton, scene of the NDRC's finest event last year, and with numerous improvements to the track including more banking, better public address and most of all a resurface over the notorious dip in the right hand lane,



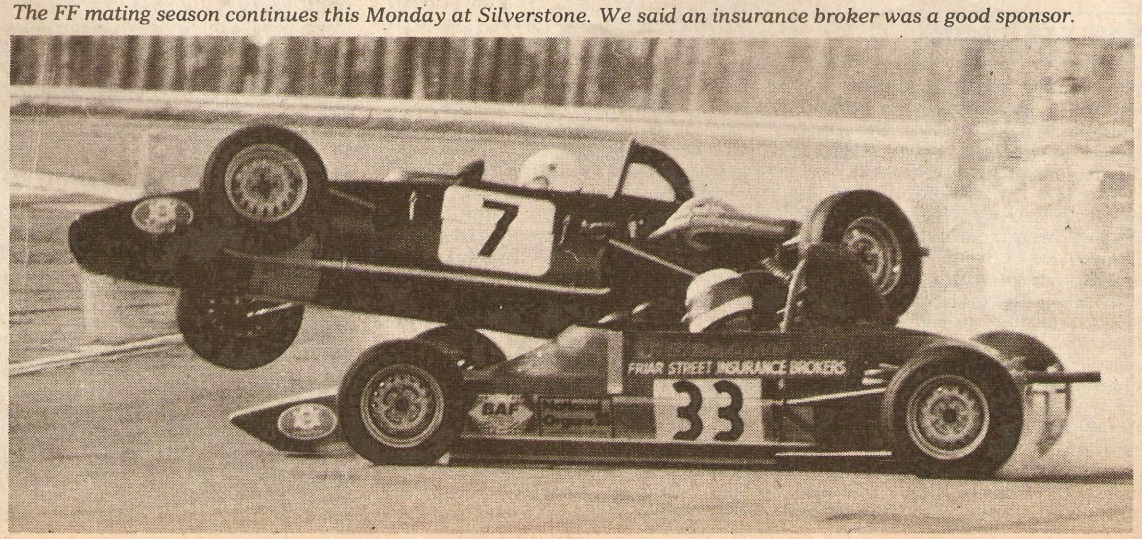
First hillclimb blood to Roy Lane (above) or Chris Cramer (below)? They're both at Loton Park again on Monday.



it promises to be a tremendous start to the year. Entries in Top Fuel include Dennis Priddle, Roz Prior, Liz Burn making her first appearance in Skilton's GTX car now owned by the Burns, and Trevor Young, new owner of "Revolution Three." There should be at least two funny cars including Skilton's new car, which has an imported chassis, Donovan power and a new body built by Pat Cuss. The Stones hope to have their altered ready to join their other two cars, while many of the new or improved cars built over the winter months will get their first airing. Action starts as usual with qualifying at around 10 o'clock, with eliminations staring early in the afternoon.

On Sunday and Monday the Santa Pod season starts in earnest after its initial rain-out (a fate that also befell the NDRC Long Marston event on the 16th), the two day event traditionally being the biggest in terms of attendance of the year. This will be the first time that two drag events have taken place on the same weekend, but if all goes well the meeting will attract most of the same entrants, plus the two Funny cars and dragsters from the 'Pod camp.

The FF mating season continues this Monday at Silverstone. We said an insurance broker was a good sponsor.



After an early excursion the Samson brothers fought hard all day and climbed from 30th place to 10th place by the finish.

HACKLE RALLY

Donald Heggie's Hackle despair is Brian Culcheth's BL delight

By IAN SADLER **Photos by PETER NEWTON**

GAELIC
THE SCOTSMAN
RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Perseverance paid off for British Leyland's resident rally driver, Brian Culcheth. After the promisingly reliable Mintex Dales showing, Culcheth's Castrol Team Unipart Dolomite Sprint ran the entire Hackle Rally without the slightest murmur of trouble to win the third round of the Gaelic Oil/"The Scotsman" Rally Championship. Culcheth's win was by a narrow margin of only 21s from the Royal Bank of Scotland Escort RS of Bill Taylor. Victory might not have fallen so easily to British Leyland but for yet another niggling fault bringing Donald Heggie's Broadspeed built IDEM Escort to a premature halt. Of the seven stages completed by Heggie and Dean, six were completed with the honour of fastest time and the other was an equal fastest. A clutch engagement problem side-lined the car on a road section from Ladywell to Kindrogan. Bill Taylor's second place now gives him the lead in the series with 28 points, from Jim Howden on 23 and Alasdair Findlay with 22 points.

The 55 Car Club's Hackle Rally is always a popular and well conceived event and this year's was no exception. The rally ran without hitch or any timing anomalies. It was, however, most unfortunate that Forestry Commission road building in Craigvinean and elsewhere knocked some superb stage mileage out of the event which correspondingly increased the road mileage in relation to stages and consequently red-lined the rally from RAC National status. There was still plenty of action for the crews during the course of the day and the rather tedious road mileage was little to pay in order to visit the remaining superb Fife and Perthshire stages on the agenda.

Starting at 8 am from Rossleigh's Kirkaldy premises, the Hackle commenced without drama and all the top crews were as-per the entry list, with Bill Taylor/Ian McIver first away with the Royal Bank of Scotland Escort RS ahead of the Bothy Leisure Centre example of Arthur Jasper and Bill Crabb. Donald Heggie and George Dean started at three and behind them was the only non-Escort in the top ten — the Special Tuning Triumph Dolomite Sprint of Brian Culcheth and Johnstone Syer. Subsequent starters were the Samson Brothers, Alasdair Findlay, Neil Metcalfe, from down south, Jim McRae, Ian Milne and Bob Jeffs.

First stage of the day was the short thrash over Cullaloe where Donald Heggie immediately established his commanding lead. Bill Taylor found his first problems here with badly set rear brakes, while Ian Wilson, the then championship leader, with the Scopel Tuning Open Kadett, had a taste of things to come with a plug lead detaching on the stage start line. Wilson's troubles continued with the front anti-roll bar breaking, a rocker stud shearing, the clutch release lever snapping and, to add to the icing, a roll on Pitmedden III. All credit to Ian Wilson for making the finish; though, unfortunately so far down the results that he has been deposed from first to sixth place in the series. Sadly, Arthur Jasper was forced into a repeat performance of his Valentine trouble, and had to call it a halt after the first stage with ill-health.

Stages followed at Blair Adam and Glen Devon on the drive up-country. Over Blair Adam Heggie excelled in the slippery conditions and streaked through the forest 14s ahead of nearest rivals, the Samsons. Brian Culcheth negotiated the

Determined to keep going, Ian Wilson overcame a multitude of problems to finish.

Alastair Brearley and Mike Smith brought their McKenzies of Stirling Opel home 12th overall.

Dolomite into the top times here — a position he repeated on every subsequent stage. Brian was reported to be finding the very loose and slippery conditions (it was dry for the rally but had rained hard in previous days) not best suited to the comparatively heavy Dolomite. To keep the car on the straight-and-narrow Culcheth had to keep his driving extra tidy. Too much sideways momentum would apparently make the car lazy to respond back to straight ahead.

Bill Taylor's next problem was when he clipped a rock, bending a track control arm and strut, on Glen Devon just before the stage finish. Repairs took some time to sort out and his car was never quite "right" afterwards. Taylor also lost precious time with his engine stalling and suffered a slight

Jim Robson took the ex-Wylies Drew Gallacher Escort to fourth place in dramatic fashion.

off on Drummond Hill. The Pitmeddon stages, tackled next, saw Charles and Alec Samson off the road losing more than four minutes and, of course, their top-five placings. The Samsons set-about making up some of the deficit during the rest of the day, and climbed spectacularly 20 places, to finish tenth overall and fourth equal with Jim Robson in the series. Samson had the bit between his teeth from the second Pitmeddon on, and on that stage caught Gavin Waugh's White Horse Avenger. Waugh retired after lunch with a broken throttle cable. It was on this long stage too that Neil Metcalfe rolled his Escort. Though he completed the stage and handed in his card, the shell was too badly damaged to continue.

The next, and only really significant retirement, was that of the IDEM car after only six stages. Donald Heggie and George Dean must have been the most disappointed crew on the rally. Their performance until that time had been, without doubt, the best of the rally, pulling nearly a minute clear of the Dolomite Sprint over those first few stages, and subsequently easily maintaining their supremacy.

Positions at lunchtime showed Culcheth to be leading by 34s from a hard-trying Alan Arneil, with Bill Taylor in third position ahead of the Escorts of Jim Robson and Alasdair Findlay. The only change in the leading bunch during the afternoon was Bill Taylor overhauling Arneil, who suffered a repeat "off" in Keillour (after a similar morning brush with the ditch) and closing the gap on Culcheth — the BL driver undoubtedly the steadiest of the day. Robson, with the Escort's exhaust welded-up after the halt, continued in exhuberant style, retaining his fourth position behind Arneil. Alasdair Findlay finished in fifth position after another steady run with his less-powerful Escort RS, losing 30s with a slight excursion on the second running of the, by now, very badly cut-up Pitmeddon stages.

As a blow to Donald Heggie, the Hackle must have been his most disappointing yet in a miserable year, by the same token, the Hackle gave the Special Tuning Castrol Team Unipart Dolomite its best ever result. Leyland were, at first, reluctant to take the car all the way up to Scotland for a non-RAC round. Somewhere within the giant organisation, however, somebody *did* take what turned out to be just the right decision. The Dolomite suffered no trouble of any kind and Brian Culcheth drove it faultlessly throughout. As a "normally non-resident" of Scotland, Brian Culcheth, like Andy Dawson after the Snowman, could not claim any points. Only the Samsons have given the Scottish contingent a win in their own series this year; though it is common knowledge that, once the IDEM car shakes off its gremlins, it will be "the sooner the better."

Gaelic Oil/The Scotsman Rally Championship—Round Three Hackle Rally — Overall Results.

1, B. Culcheth/J. Syer (Triumph Dolomite Sprint) 65m 59s.
2, B. Taylor/I. McIver (Ford Escort RS) 66.20.
3, A. Arneil/J. McNicoll (Ford Escort RS) 67.12.
4, J. Robson/P. Grant (Ford Escort RS) 68.11.
5, A. Findlay/D. McHarg (Ford Escort RS) 68.17.
6, A. Robertson/J. Lindsay (Saab V4) 68.37.
7, I. Milne/J. Thorburn (Ford Escort RS) 68.46; 8, A. Kesson/T. Christie (Ford Escort RS) 69.31; 9, J. Howden/I. Marwick (Ford Escort RS) 70.35; 10, C. Samson/A. Samson 70.38.

SS1 Cullaloe
1, Heggie 2.23; 2, Arneil 2.26; 3 Taylor 2.27; 4, Samson 2.30; 5, Stewart 2.31.
SS2 Blair Adam
1, Heggie 6.43; 2, Samson 6.57; 3, Taylor 6.58; 4, Arneil 7.00; 5, Culcheth 7.03.
SS3 Glen Devon
= 1, Taylor, Heggie Samson 2.38; 4, Culcheth 2.39; 5, Metcalfe 2.40.
SS4 Pitmeddon I
1 Heggie 2.26; 2, Culcheth 2.28; 3, Taylor 2.31; 4, Metcalfe 2.33; 5, Robson 2.33.
SS5 Pitmeddon II
1, Heggie 7.24; 2, Culcheth 7.31; =3, Samson, Arneil 7.35; 5, Findlay 7.37.
SS6 Keillour I
1, Heggie 3.54; 2, Culcheth 3.55; 3, Taylor 3.57; 4, Milne 4.01; 5, Robson 4.02.
SS7 Ladywell
1, Heggie 4.43; 2, Culcheth 4.52; 3, Findlay 4.57; =4, Samson, Arneil 4.58.
SS8 Kindrogan
1, Culcheth 5.54; 2, Arneil 5.57; 3, Milne 6.05; 4, Samson 6.08; 5, Findlay 6.09.
SS9 Errochty
1, Taylor 8.15; 2, Culcheth 8.26; Samson 8.31; 4, Arneil 8.34; 5, Findlay 8.39.
SS10 Drummond Hill
1, Samson 8.05; 2, Taylor 8.07; 3, Culcheth 8.10; 4, Arneil 8.16; 5, Robson 8.25.
SS11 Keillour II
1, Culcheth 2.30; 2, Robson 2.33; 3, Robertson 2.34; =4, Samson, Milne 2.36.
SS12 Pitmeddon III
1, Samson 5.20; 2, Taylor 5.21; 3, Arneil 5.22; =4, Culcheth, Finlay 5.23.
SS13 Pitmeddon IV
1, Samson 2.32; 2, Arneil 2.38; =3, Taylor, Culcheth 2.39; 5, Robertson 2.44.
SS14 Edensmuir
1, Samson 1.45; 2, Taylor 1.48; 3, Culcheth 1.53; =4, Arneil, McKenzie 1.54.

Verini's Fiat coasted to an easy victory on the Firestone Rally after an early challenge from the Alfettas of Andruet and Ballastrieri.

FIRESTONE RALLY

Verini beats British challenge

Story and photographs by HUGH BISHOP

Maurizio Verini further increased his lead in the European Rally championship by winning convincingly last weekend's Firestone Rally in northern Spain. He and his co-driver Franco Rossetti completely outpaced the opposition in their 16 valve Fiat 124 Abarth. Billy Coleman and John Davenport brought the old 2 litre Escort into 2nd place 14 m in arrears and 6m ahead of Chris Sclater/Martin Holmes in the twin-cam Datsun Violet. Both Coleman and Sclater were handicapped by a lack of studded tyres and wet racers.

What should have been an excellent entry for this well organised event was reduced to 72 starters by a spate of non-starters, the no. one spot becoming vacant when last year's winner Walter Rohrl failed to appear due to lack of an engine for his Euro Handler Opel Ascona. Rohrl deciding instead to go to the postponed Rally of Portugal. Lars Carlsson also non-started in the other Ascona due to lack of money, while Ingvar Carlsson who was to have brought his 16 valve Schnitzer engined BMW 2002 from Sweden, was unable to get hold of enough spare parts. Jacques Henry, having won the Ronde de Giraglia in his Alpine the week before, had no time to practice and also absent were the three Portuguese cars of Figueiredo (240 Z), Antonio Borges (Opel), and Pedro Cortez who has replaced his 240 Z with a Datsun 120. Only other notables missing were Franz Wittman (BMW), Jean-Francois Mas (Porsche Carrera RS) and Jorge Bagration, his Stratos not yet delivered.

Verini and Rossetti therefore headed the entry list and together with Fulvio Bacchelli/Bruno Scabini they represented the Fiat factory in their identical 16 valve 124 Abarths. Also from Italy came a team of three Alfa Romeos, comprising two of the purposeful looking Gp. 2 Alfetta GTs for Jean-Claude Andruet and "Biche" and Amilcare Ballestrieri/Enrico Gigli. While a Gp. 1 Alfetta GT appeared in Jolly Club colours for the Italian girls Anna Cambiaghi/L. Vanzi. Two 'works' Seats (Spanish built Fiats) were entered for Antonio Zanini/Jorge Sabater and Salvador Canellas/Daniele Ferrater. Both these cars were 1850 cc engined 1430s (similar in appearance to the Fiat 125) giving some 165 bhp in G2 form, though they are still much less sophisticated than their Italian counterparts. Only other factory entries were the Polski Fiats, Jaroszevicz/Wojtyna turning out again in the Castrol supported 8 valve Abarth that he used on the Lyon-Charbonnieres, while Marek Stawowiak and Jan Czyzyk and Komorniki/Szulc both had 125 Ps. Making up the British quartet were John Lipton/David Booth with their elderly 2.2 Porsche 911 and Sandy Lawson/Dorothy Selby-Boothroyd. The 11 car strong French contingent was led by the ex-Gabon Porsche Carrera of Jean-Pierre Rouget/Christian Delferrier, Jean-Pierre preferring to keep the RSR for pure road events.

The hard working officials of the Automobile Club in Bilbao worked miracles to keep the event on at all, with an industrial dispute at the Firestone factory in Bilbao forcing them to move the start to the more acceptable town of Santander, where scrutineering took place on the Friday morning. Many cars were sent scurrying to fit mud-flaps and towing hooks which are compulsory on this event. After the usual pre-rally parade the first car rolled down the start ramp at 9.00 pm and headed for the first group of three stages; stages which would be repeated as were all but the final test. All the stages in the first etape were loose surfaced, the first of these 21 kms of smooth dirt claimed no less than five cars. The FASA (Renault Spain) Alpine 1800 of Juan-Carlos Pradera/Juan Petisco falling foul of a patch of ice just on the crest of a hill, which sent them off into a wall. Canellas tore the front suspension off his Seat. The engine of Bacchelli's Fiat failed as did that of Estanaslao Reverte's BMW. Verini was quickest here and on the next five tests leading up to the neutralisation halt at Medina. However he almost did not make it that far, for the 22 km. test from Incinillas to Soncillo had some very nasty patches of frozen polished snow on the downhill section to the finish, and one fresh-air corner (which had already claimed three cars on the first run) very nearly had Maurizio off the second time round. In fact this corner eventually claimed no less than six cars including Komornicki's Polski Fiat which had no sooner settled in the trees when the Lancia Fulvia of the Frenchman Serge Verdy also left the road, bounced off the Fiat and rolled down the hill. Juan-Carlos Onoro inverted his Simca 1000 here, while three others also investigated the undergrowth. Earlier in the same test Jean-Pierre Rouget put the Porsche so far off it was not even visible from the road.

After Medina came stages at Criales and Rio Losa where the snow that had fallen before the start of the rally now lay frozen by the cold night air. Fiat and Alfa, of course, fitted full-studs where the unfortunates like Billy Coleman and Chris Sclater were forced to struggle through on studless Dunlops and Goodyears respectively. Jean-Claude Andruet really began to get to grips with the car here and was fastest on both tests both times. As dawn broke just Ordunte (twice) and Alen (twice) were left to be completed before the half-way halt at Castro Urdiales where Verini led by just three mins from Andruet, Ballestrieri, Zanini (who had already had two slight offs), Coleman (with a cold-stricken John Davenport in the co-driver's seat) Jaroszevicz, and Chris Sclater going well in seventh spot, despite deranging the steering by hitting a gully on Ordunte 1. Stawowiak in the Polski Fiat also had trouble here, a metal tow-rope in the boot shorting on the battery and starting a fire and on Alen 2 a steering arm broke and he had to struggle to the finish passing, in one short stretch, two stricken Porsches, the Carrera RSR of the German champion Hans Schewe with a broken gearbox (having been without one or two gears for some time) and the 2.2 911 of John Lipton which had seized its differential. This final test before the

Chris Sclater was slowed with a lack of suitable tyres, but a steady run paid handsome dividends.

half-way was very twisty and very narrow, Zanini hitting a wall but only losing a few seconds. The unfortunate Ballestrieri who had hit a private car on the Incinillas test when he had been distracted, also hit the wall with the right rear wheel, puncturing the tyre and bending the De Dion rear axle and mounting. He was able to continue with it welded up but retired on the third test in the second night when the axle broke.

The re-start saw the commencement of the tarmac section of the rally, and this was also the indication for the heavens to open. Torrential rain made the ever slippery tarmac roads absolutely treacherous. Andruet, who had started gently, now began to put on the pressure, setting fastest times on two stages, but overshot a downhill hairpin on which there was some gravel and became lodged on the edge of the road. The crew were just struggling to lift the car back on to the road when Zanini slid into its back and pushed them right off the road. This left Zanini in second place ahead of Coleman, who now had no wet racers, and was having to use part worn rallycross tyres. Chris Sclater, too, had no wet racers but had moved up to 4th when Jaroszevicz dropped back in the 124 Abarth when he broke three throttle cables, having to drive five kms on one stage operating the carbs by hand and a piece of wire. On the ninth tar test, a hill-climb up to a monastery, Zanini's head-gasket failed letting Billy up to 2nd position and Chris 3rd. Three more stages brought competitors to a much deserved respite at Torrelavega before setting off for the final five stages including two times up the mountain to Polombera, where horrific drops coupled with snow, ice and fog saw the leaders backing off somewhat, and indeed on the second run the ex-Clarke & Simpson Gp. 2 RS 2000 that had been sold to "Pancho" set fastest time, but on the following test he missed a gear, over-revved the engine and retired. While the other C & S car, 000 97M of Arroita, was rolled.

Andruet put up an impressive performance with the Alfetta GT holding second place during the first half but retired off the road soon after the re-start.

Verini coasted to an easy victory, Billy Coleman having never really got to grips with pace-notes, this being only his third rally on them. Having made them in a Seat hire car he found they didn't really match up to his 230 bhp. Non-availability of tyres also slowed both Coleman and Sclater in the Violet. Fourth and Gp. 1 winner was the BMW 2002 TII of the French husband and wife team of Marc and Marie-Christine Etchebers who specialise in rallying in Spain. They live just across the border in Biarritz and now lead the Spanish championship. Fifth in an ex-works Alpine 1800 were Ignacio Sunsundegui and Ignacio Larrinaga ahead of Jaroszevicz and then came the first finisher on Firestone tyres (Firestone having now developed a tarmac racer), Jaime Castellanos in a BMW 2002 TII. Just 27 cars finished out of the 72 starters and even the Coupe des Dames was won by the Italians, the sole surviving Alfa of Anna Cambiaghi winning from Sandy Lawson.

Verini now has a most substantial lead over Simo Lampinen in the championship.

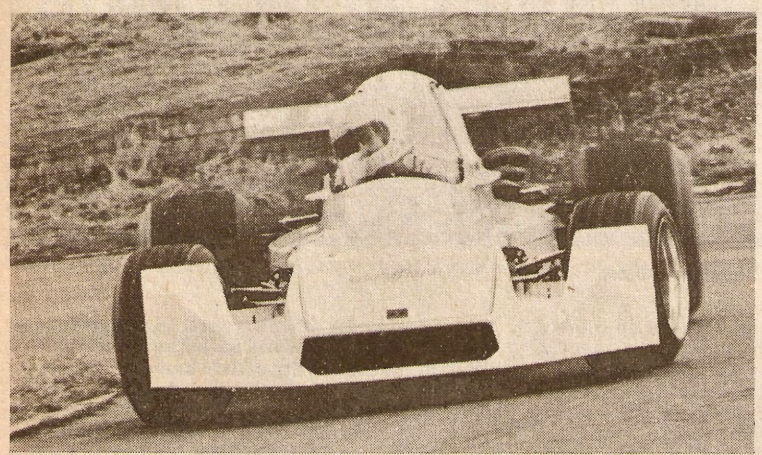
IX Rallye Firestone 21st-23rd March 1975

1. M. Verini/Rossetti (Fiat 124 Abarth) 14,531.2 penalties;
2. B. Coleman/J. Davenport (Escort RS 1600) 15,417.5 (winner G2);
3. C. Sclater/M. Holmes (Datsun Violet) 15,784.8;
4. M. Etchebers/M-C Etchebers (BMW 2002 Tii) 15,889.3 (winner G1);
5. I. Sunsundegui/I. Larrinaga (Alpine) 16,146.1;
6. A. Jaroszevicz/J. Wojtyna (Polski Fiat 124) 16,167.0; 7. J. Castellanos/J. Mabems (BMW 2002 Tii) 16,779.6; 8. M. Stawowiak/J. Czyzyk (Polski Fiat 125) 16,775.0; 9. F. Gomez/Toca (Porsche Carrera) 17,217.1; 10. C. Gardavot/"Ynad" (Alpine) 17,345.2 (winner G3).

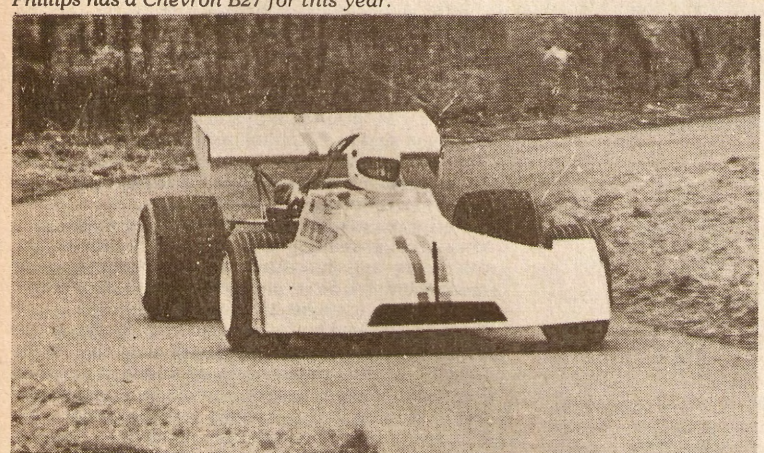
Hill climbers' trials

With the RAC Hill Climb Championship beginning on Easter Monday at Loton Park, several of the championship chasers took advantage of last Sunday's timed practice session at the venue. Roy Lane, despite a spin, recorded extremely encouraging times on the partially resurfaced hill with his Fenny Marine GM1 Chevrolet, now sporting fuel injection and a change in name in deference to his sponsors with a climb of 54.95s. After a rebuilding session in the hands of Mike Pilbeam the now 2.2 litre Brabham BT38 of Alister Douglas-Osborn looked most impressive and was within half a second of Lane.

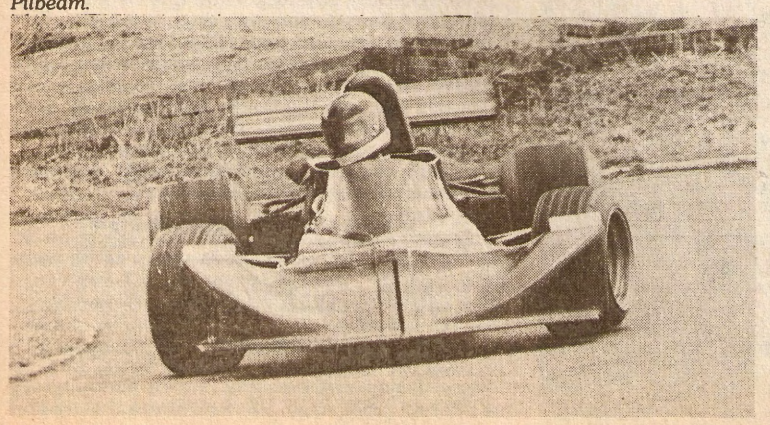
Another man now sporting a 2.2 litre engine is Chris Cramer who has stroked his Brian Hart engine over the winter and runs his lightened but otherwise basically unchanged March 74B under the Grünhalle Lager banner and despite a series of misfortunes such as a broken wing stay and binding brakes he still emerged third fastest. This time was just ahead of the superbly prepared Waring and Gillow Chevron B32 of John Cussins who used his Alan Smith Chevrolet to great effect in his first time at the wheel to record 57.48s. Having carried out a few suspension and gearing tweaks in the winter, Geoff Rollason was in great form with his DFV powered Brabham BT37 and headed the second Waring and Gillow car, the Brabham Repco of Malcolm Dunworth while incredibly, seventh fastest was a very happy John Stuart with his Mallock U2 Mk15. The brakeless McLaren M10B of last years Leader's champion Martyn Griffiths was next while in his first outing with his new Modus, Ken MacMaster looked good only just failing to beat the minute as also did the 2.2 litre Chevron B25 of Reg Phillips.



Ken MacMaster gave his new 2.0 Modus-Hart its first outing. Below, Reg Phillips has a Chevron B27 for this year.



Alister Douglas Osborn's Brabham BT38 has been much modified by Mike Pilbeam.



Briant goes nap

Mick Briant and John McKerrell went nap in the Welsh rally championship on Saturday night when they again proved masters of the series so far by gaining an almost eleven minute win on the Virgo Galaxy rally run by the Port Talbot MC.

Initially challenged by Brian Thomas/Derek Tucker (Mexico), whose engine blew up before the rally was at one thirds distance, the Briant/McKerrell RS2000 opened up a seven minute lead by the petrol halt. With fastest times on all three selectives on the second half, they went on to their fifth comsecutive victory on 29m 52s.

Second overall, after being joint third with two other crews at half way, were Jeff James and Colin Francis (Escort TC) on 40m 23s, squeezing past the early runners-up, Howard Davies/P. G. Jones (RS2000) who finished 12s behind.

Les Crawford/Rod Hanson (Escort TC), also third at halfway on 25m, finished fourth almost a minute up on Ian Lindsay/Alan Bryer (Mazda) who had their best placing so far. The Midget of Pat Jerome and Lee Vincent was lying sixth on 26m at half distance, but retired when the clutch went on the first of the selectives.

1, M. Briant/J. McKerrell (RS2000), 29m 52s; 2, J. James/C. Francis (Escort TC), 40m 23s; 3 H. Davies/P. Jones (RS2000), 40m 35s; 4, L. Crawford/R. Hanson (Escort TC), 42m 37s; 5, I. Lindsay/A. Bryer (Mazda), 43m 31s; 6, G. Evans/M. Thomas (RS16000), 44m 23s.

Beever recovers to win

Although tney went off on the fourth stage — into a ploughed field where they spent three minutes in the mud — George Beever and Stuart France recovered extremely well to win last Sunday's daylight stage David Brown MC Elcar trophy rally. At the end of a 190 mile route, which embraced 51 miles on 14 different stages, they won the event in their RS2000 by a mere 22s.

Second overall and best semi-experts were "Yuk" Hudson and Bill Lumb in a Cooper S who beat another RS2000 driven by Pursglove and Neil Gledhill by 25s.

At the halfway stage, Mick Curry and Graham Beardmore had established a lead of nearly two minutes in their RS1600 but they were forced out with engine failure subsequently. The 1973 winners, Ron Aitken/Eric Cowcill had problems all day with their Escort and did not feature.

A notable achievement was the fastest time on the fourth stage by the Range Rover of Ralph Thonber and Andrew Fletcher who were one of the seven four wheel vehicles and who finished 23rd overall.

1, G. Beever/S. France (RS2000), 630s; 2, Y. Hudson/W. Lumb (Cooper S), 652s; 3, K. Pursglove/N. Gledhill (RS2000), 677s; 4, D. Kitchen/D. Rawlinson (Avenger GT), 678s; R. Webster/D. Langdon (RS1600), 693s; 6, S. Smith/Miss G. Watson (Cortina), 719s. **Novices:** J. Wood/D. Harpin (Saab 96), 765s.

Tuscan's sprint victory

Driving the most powerful car present—a 4.9 litre TVR Tuscan—Maurice Gates had no trouble in setting BTD at the BARC (Surrey Centre) sprint at Blackbushe Airport last Sunday. His best run of 35.8s was 1.5s quicker than the rest of an entry of 75 cars.

Second quickest was the modified 1300cc Cooper of Mick Davies who did 37.2s to take his class with ease, and another extremely rapid performer was David Beams in his standard Ginetta G15 who won the up to 1300cc class for prodsports in 38s. This time was only equalled by Brian Curd (Elan Sprint) and John Gillam (Morgan Plus 8), winner of the over 2000cc class only bettered this time by 0.3s. The father and son battle in the up to 1300cc prod saloons went this time to Laurie Marriott who beat his father by almost one second in the family Cooper S.

BTD: M. Gates (TVR Tuscan), 35.8s.
Class winners: L. Marriott (Cooper S), 38.7s; D. Harvey (RS2000), 42.4s; M. Chenery (Mini), 39.1s; M. Davies (Cooper), 37.2s; T. King (Morris Minor), 38.4s; D. Beams (Ginetta G15), 38.0s; B. Curd (Elan Sprint), 38s; J. Gillam (Morgan Plus 8), 37.7s; T. Bean (Midget), 38.3s; N. Hutchins (Mallock U2), 37.5s. **Ladies:** Mrs P. Connor (Cooper), 42s. **Best Surrey Centre:** J. Lewis (Lotus 7), 37.8s.

Kent's tough rally

Last Sunday's Monte Minor Rally, run by Bexley Light Car Club turned out to be one of the toughest navigational exercises put on in Kent for a long time and all but one of the crews in a field of some 80 competitors, had to cut controls to stay inside maximum lateness. The rally, over a 175 mile route all in Kent, involved tough navigation at the start and again at the end and this caused colossal scores for the majority.

Winners, and extremely worthy ones at that, were the Boro 18 club members Dave Wilkins and Jim Anderson who got round with the loss of 74m 21s to score their first win on an event which was being run for the 15th time.

The second and third placed crews, Alan Metham/Mick Town (Mexico) and Mick Rushbrook/Bob King (Allegro), both put up four fails and the fourth, fifth and sixth crews all collected six fails. The top novice crew of Alistair Clark/Geoff Taylor did extremely well in their Triumph 2.5PI to finish 10th while the best semi-experts Brian Jupp/Cliff Brookes (Mexico), were 12th overall.

1, D. Wilkins/J. Anderson (Escort GT), 74m 21s; 2, A. Metham/M. Town (Mexico), 4F 59m 33s; 3, M. Rushbrook/B. King (Allegro), 4F 77m 44s; 4, J. Riddell/G. Richards (Datsun 240Z), 6F 72m 27s; 5, G. Lobb/R. Crowther (Ascona), 6F 76m 21s; 6, G. Jackson/R. Harris (Mexico), 6F 84m 55s. **Novices:** A. Clark/G. Taylor (Triumph 2.5), 8F 78m 40s.

A rest does you good!

Returning to the championship after a six weeks absence due to business and a holiday, Reg Allen scored his second RAC Sporting Trials Championship success of the year last Sunday down at Hertford when he took the Jacobean Trial, run by the London Car Club.

From a field of 40 who contested the event over three rounds of 10 sections in a gravel quarry which had been mainly laid out by the Rent-a-hill squad, Allen took his Kincraft to his first scoring win with only 27 marks dropped. He led the trial all day with some consistent driving whereas most of the other top contenders were erratic. John Benson brought his Jabs into second spot after having a poor first round.

Benson started indifferently but really came to life on the second and third rounds where he had the day's lowest combined score of a mere six marks. Jack Pearce, for once, was not his dominant self and he never challenged for more than a place after dropping 28 marks on the first round and then stopping at a 10 marker on the second when a clean was 'on'.

The other Kincraft front runner, Tony Harrison, was second initially but faded to fourth a long way behind and he was only three ahead of Julian Fack (Impunity) who came good on the last round.

Sixth was Gordon Jackson in his Ibex who had a very poor third round which dropped him from a potential best placing of the year. John Fack failed to appear following a road accident in his towing Mexico.

1, R. Allen (Kincraft), 27 marks lost; 2, J. Benson (Jabs), 31 marks; 3, J. Pearce (Kincraft), 38 marks; 4, A. Harrison (Kincraft), 51 marks; 5, Julian Fack (Impunity), 54 marks; 6, G. Jackson (Ibex), 65 marks.

Gerry Marshall checks out what the lady's wearing on top. The answer won't be revealed on LBC!

LBC back Marshall

Gerry Marshall is in the news. Well, it's not often that he isn't but this time it's with a difference. His Hamilton Motors, Sanyo, London Car Radio Centre sponsored Vauxhall Magnum, in which he contests the Radio One production saloon car championship, has received the backing of the London Broadcasting Company.

The London Broadcasting company is a London commercial station broadcasting news and sport throughout the day. They have a motoring spot on Saturday and Monday evenings, broadcasting all that has happened throughout the weekend. Marshall will be adding his comments to these, and his car will carry the company's radio waveband, 261, as his race number.

Close for Valentine

North Wales CC attracted 43 competitors to the foothills of Snowdonia last Sunday for their Cyril Bold championship production car trial run over 32 sections. In an extremely closely fought contest, Colin Valentine brought his Sunbeam Stiletto home to take outright victory from Mike Stephens (Mexico). Lowest score of the day was achieved by Geoff Spencer, who, for once, had very keen class competition.

Valentine won the event thanks to a good post lunch two rounds for at the break he had only a two mark lead over Ken Jones (Imp), with Colin Mack (Imp), in close contention. However, Valentine pulled out all the stops and ended the day on 65 marks.

It was a similar story in two of the other four classes for Spencer (Cooper) and Kevin Caley (Mini) were tied on 36 marks in Class I with Alf Williams (Mini) breathing heavily upon the pair of them and Stephens, on 44 marks, had Peter Higgins (Mexico) and Dennis Wells (Skoda), only four behind him.

Spencer only managed to draw away to the extent of three marks in the afternoon with Williams coming through to pip Caley by a couple of marks and Stephens only pulled three marks ahead of Higgins with Wells being beaten by power on the last section of the day.

Best of only three sports cars was Mike Harrison whose Midget easily beat the efforts of Malcolm Brown (Sprite) and it is sad to report that Bill Moffatt (Ginetta) was alone in the big capacity rear engined class.

Overall: C. Valentine (Stiletto), 65 marks lost.
Class winners: G. Spencer (Cooper), 58 marks; M. Stephenson (Mexico), 72 marks; M. Harrison (Midget), 82 marks; C. Mack (Imp), 77 marks; W. Moffatt (Ginetta), 65 marks.

● The first round of the Esso Uniflo Welsh Speed championship takes place at Talbenny Airfield, Nr Haverfordwest this Sunday. The event is a pursuit sprint and starts at 2.30 pm. Entries include the Morris brothers, David and Billy, and last year's champion Peter Waldron.

Hinde by miles

Former RAC production trials champion Mike Hinde travelled down from North Wales to Paignton last weekend to paralyse the opposition and win the March Hare Trophy at the Haldon MC's restricted event. In an 875 Imp, he dropped 80 marks on 31 sections and this score was almost exactly half that achieved by Cecil Taylor (Chamois) who took the rear engine class.

Mike Hinde – no contest

Barry Score and Richard Singleton tied the front engined FWD class in their Cooper Ss, both dropping 101 marks, Score getting the verdict on the greatest number of "cleans."

Overall: M. Hinde (Imp), 80 marks lost.
Class winners: B. Score (Cooper S), 101; M. Ellis (Popular), 103; C. Taylor (Chamois), 159; R. Bricknell (Anglia), 141.

Classic Es

Making a successful debut on Saturday at Silverstone was Willie Green in one of the two lightweight E type Jaguars that he currently prepares.

Green and Mike Fisher will be campaigning their cars in *Classic Car* events this year, and Green gave his car a couple of wins on Saturday. Both cars are decked out in blue and white Cunningham colours, as befits cars which originally raced for that stable at Le Mans.

Maginn loses out

Competing together in only their third restricted rally, Wayne Goble and Jim Bowie (Escort GT) scored a six minute win last Saturday night to win the Craven MC rally over a 160 mile route in Hampshire and Sussex. They were somewhat fortunate winners for Mick Maginn and Dave Otridge got stuck for about 10m some 30 miles from the finish when well in the lead in their Escort TC. The consistent Ron Neighbour and Graham Dore brought their Mk I Cortina into second spot a minute ahead of Maginn and Otridge.

At first petrol, after a fairly comfortable section, Maginn / Otridge had dropped seven minutes. Dave Sherwood/Doug Smith (Cortina GT) were second on eight minutes while Neighbour/Dore and the winners were third and fourth.

Shortly afterwards, Sherwood/Smith were out with a broken gearbox and other early retirements included Kevin Videan/Peter Valentine in a Midget which was nowhere near form.

1, W. Goble/J. Bowie (Escort GT), 39m; 2, R. Neighbour/G. Dore (Cortina), 45m; 3, M. Maginn/Otridge (Escort TC), 46m; 4, G. Mahler (Mini Traveller), 51m; 5, B. Pottle/P. Evans (Escort GT), 64m; 6, T. Arnold/V. Clark (Mexico), 65m.
Novices: A. Worman/M. Briggs (Cortina GT), 107m.

● The blonde bombshell of the Super Saloon Drivers Association, Terry Grimwood, has been forced to resign as chairman of the Association due to business and domestic pressures. No new chairman has yet been elected, but Terry would be grateful of any nominations as his successor.

Garlits again

At the February Winter nationals, USA, Don Garlits went on to record his 12th major National win in Top Fuel, although he had only qualified his brand-new car with a 6.074s run. Paul Longenecker was fastest with a 5.93s ahead of Gary Beck's 5.971s and Gary Read's 5.972s. Sixteenth was Dick LaHaie with a 6.098s. Oil in one lane from an early blow-up cost many their chance of a win, and even Garlits looked as he would go out the same way when he went up in smoke against Don Ewald, but Ewald later drifted over the centre line for an immediate disqualification — a fact seen by Garlits from behind who coasted through at 119mph in 7.9s clapping his hands in the air! Garlits went on to beat Dave Settles with an easy 6.23s as his opponent went up in smoke to a 14.0s.

In Funny Car, Don Prudhomme entered his brand new Monza bodied car, qualified second and eclipsed everyone with consistent times to culminate in a 6.24s win over Jim Green's Vega. With traction not up to standard at Pomona, times were not what they might have been, but Prudhomme, who has already run several 6.0s times, is expected to be the first into the fives with a funny car this year the first that he runs on a premium track.

● Oakfield MC are providing the ideal opportunity for rallymen to sort out their tyre problems when they hold a film night next month. As well as three films, Harry Gee of Goodyear will be visiting the Rams Head Hotel, Disley to discuss tyres. The event takes place on Tuesday, April 8, and proceedings begin at 8 pm, with provision for a late bar.

Oldie but Goodie

Long time followers of drag racing may recall that way back in the late sixties there was a unique Mini pick-up powered by an injected 392 Chrysler Hemi running in the altered class. The injection was home made, and the whole car was a very well-engineered construction, having a square tube frame with the engine and Jaguar gearbox mounted in the pick-up bed, the driver sitting more or less in the usual place. Various minor problems centred around the injection and problems with the rather involved shifter mechanism prevented the car from ever reaching its full potential, and if I recall correctly, it never ran better than 13 seconds. Like so many cars it disappeared from the scene to go from garage to garage around the country. But also like so many other drag cars, it has re-emerged in Dorking where Bob Hobbs is getting the car ready for this season.

The engine remains a 392, but will probably run on a single four barrel Holley unless some new injection can be found for the car — the original seems to have disappeared (and any information on its whereabouts would be appreciated), but long-term plans will include a switch to methanol and possibly an automatic gearbox.

One problem that may take some solving is the wheelbase and engine set-back. When the car was first built, interpretation of the rules was somewhat more liberal, and no one did anything about the fact that the set-back was somewhere over 35% instead of the allowed 25% measured from the front spindle to the first spark-plug. With a somewhat limited wheelbase to work with, there is little room for an automatic at present, and the engine may have to be moved forwards to get round both problems.

Mazdas catch on

Mazda-itis has caught on in the world of production saloon car racing at club level. Already there are about five cars, but some of these will be seen more often in the future, in new colours, and there's another car on the way.

Barrie Williams is to share the Southern Organs Mazda currently driven by Barry Andrews in Radio One events, contesting the Britax series. Tony Lanfranchi is soon to announce a record company as sponsor. Finally, joining the ranks, possibly, is Les Leston, although this has not yet been confirmed. "I may be coming out of retirement for the umpteenth time," he said, adding, "someone's got to show the lads the way home."

Four abreast

With the RAC's change of regulations, the Player's No 6 Autocross championship takes on new excitement for both drivers and spectators. The four abreast starts are to be used for the championship, competitors racing against one another and not the clock.

Morning practice sessions will determine whether drivers compete in division one or two for the meeting itself, and the faster drivers will score more points towards the championship. But every competitor will be assured of at least three races at each meeting.

The first event of the Player's series will be organised by the South of Scotland Car Club on April 20. At this, and subsequent rounds, prizes totalling £100 and a trophy for the overall winner will be awarded. The championship cup and additional awards for the top three drivers will be presented after the final meeting.

Foy's Reynard

Nick Foy, one of the last men to contest one of the original FF U2s in Formula Ford events, has changed *marque* to the ex-Jeremy Rossiter Reynard 74F.

Foy will again be sponsored by Robin Hood Coachbuilders of Park Gate, Southampton, producers of custom built commercial vehicles and trailers. One of their recent customers has been Jim Muller of Southern Organs.

Foy will use a Minister engine in the Reynard, and will be contesting the National Organs Ford Formula championship.

Scottish sponsors

Scotscircuits, who last week announced their plans for Ingliston circuit, have also been proud to announce that all their championships to be held at Ingliston this year, are to be sponsored.

They are pleased to welcome back Lombard North Central as their sponsors for the special saloon car championship. Once again, the Scottish *libre* championship has the backing of BP Super Visco; for the smaller single seater class, an ex-Formula Ford competitor steps into the sponsorship shoes for the Bernard Hunter Crane Hire Formula Ford Championship.

Radio Forth are sponsoring the production saloon car championship in Scotland, and another newcomer is Carlsberg who sponsor the special SuperSports championship.

The first modsports championship for four years is back in the form of the British Caledonian championship, which completes Scotland's comprehensive coverage of racing for 1975.

Ingliston's first event, on April 13, the Rossleigh Trophy meeting, hosts the opening round of the Tricentrol Super Saloon championship.

Elan men

Two ex-sprinters, Raymond Kershberg and Paul Berman, will be regular competitors in this year's Miller Electronics Modsports championship and other modsports events. Both will be driving outwardly identical Elans in this, their first season of circuit racing.

Kershberg will have a Richard Miles prepared 1600 cc engine while Berman's is an 1800 cc David Wood twin cam. The bodies will be prepared by Tuscan Fibre.

Turnbull fastest of 80

Rob Turnbull, with his 1600cc Brabham BT 35, was easily fastest at the combined MAC Shenstone & District sprint at Curborough, near Lichfield last Sunday. The meeting was the first of the season and the newly resurfaced section from the first left hander to the top loop, had settled well.

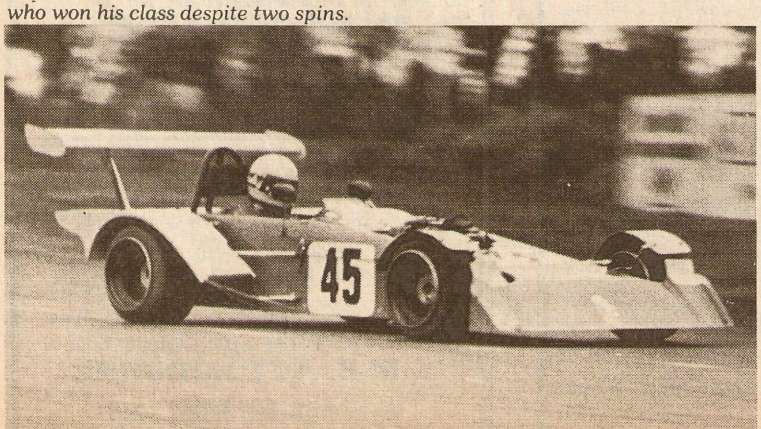
Turnbull's time was 33.8s and he was comfortably ahead of John Ravenscroft in his McLaren M10B which was still misfiring somewhat — a hangover from part of last season.

Nearly 80 cars were entered and the largest support was for the five different sections for standard cars which had 16 entries. Third best time of the day went to Mike Overton in his rapid Marcos who got down to 37.20s while a very rapid Cooper S in the hands of Dave Carvell did 37.40s to take the up to 1600cc modified class.

BTD: R. Turnbull (Brabham BT 35), 33.8s.

Class winners: C. Matthews (Imp) 43.2s; N. Harris (Lotus 7), 42.0s; M. Lock (TVR Tuscan), 39.8s; D. Carvell (Cooper S), 37.40s; M. Overton (Marcos), 37.20s; D. Booth (Spectre Mk I), 37.49s; J. Chilton (Mallock), 37.9s; T. Cameron (Joe Potts Special), 38.25s; G. Harris (Hydrastumper), 40.8s; P. Mawson (Jomo F3), 38.04s; John Ravenscroft (McLaren M10B), 34.62s.

Supersports sensation at Mondello was David Manley in this new U2 Mk 17 who won his class despite two spins.



Warren beaten

Trowbridge butcher Roger Brunt scored outright victory at the Weston-Super-Mare Sandocross on the beach at the West Country holiday resort on Sunday. In his 1275 Cooper, he blasted round the 1200 yard course in 2m 5.2s to beat the BTRDA autocross champion George Warren by 0.8s. The fifty odd competitors only had one run — an offshore wind brought the tide in early and the meeting had to be curtailed.

Best supported class — with 13 entries — was that for rally cars and Paul Northall scored a 3s win in his Triumph 2.5 PI, a time which was equalled by Bernard Rodemark in his Carrera who took the sports car class with ease. Local drivers Terry Sowden and Ivan Gill were first and second in a class of nine 1000 cc Minis, Sowden winning by nearly two seconds.

BTD: R. Brunt (Cooper S), 2m 5.2s.

Class Winners: G. Wooldridge (Lada), 2m 32.6s; P. Northall (Triumph 2.5 PI), 2m 20.4s; N. Webb (Mini), 2m 32.8s; C. Trueman (Escort 1300), 2m 23.4s; B. Rodemark (Porsche Carrera), 2m 20.4s; G. Buckingham (Imp), 2m 27.4s; T. Sowden (Mini), 2m 18s; G. Warren (Escort-BDA), 2m 6s; T. Gover (Cooper), 2m 10.8s.

● Making an appearance on Thames Television's Magpie on Good Friday, will be Mike Cannon, Colin Taylor and his son Christopher. They have a six minute spot on sporting trials. Magpie starts at 4.50 pm.

Midget changes

Things are happening in the Modsports Midget world, with one changing hands and one turbocharging. To be more specific, Nick Ramus has sold his Elan to Scotland and will be campaigning his Midget in turbocharged form.

Meanwhile, journalist Fred Game has abandoned his Midget for the season and will drive the Phil Whitehead lightweight Mini. Phil will drive the Midget.

● Sometime contributor to these pages, Jack Davidson, the former secretary of the Aberdeen and District MC, is going autocross in Scotland this year, with the sweet smell of fish and toiletries to accompany him. His sponsors for his ex-Bob Smith, 1328 Mini are Kenny's fish bars and Pennysave Toiletries of Aberdeen. He will contest some hillclimb as well as autocross events. The car is the original "Marigold Mini" specially built by Jim Dickson.

● The Lancs and Cheshire CC's race meeting at Oulton Park is on April 19 and not, as stated in the Blue Book, May 10.

Marshals are needed for this meeting and should contact Roger Wakefield, 2D Hazel Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, tel (evenings): 061 485 8380.

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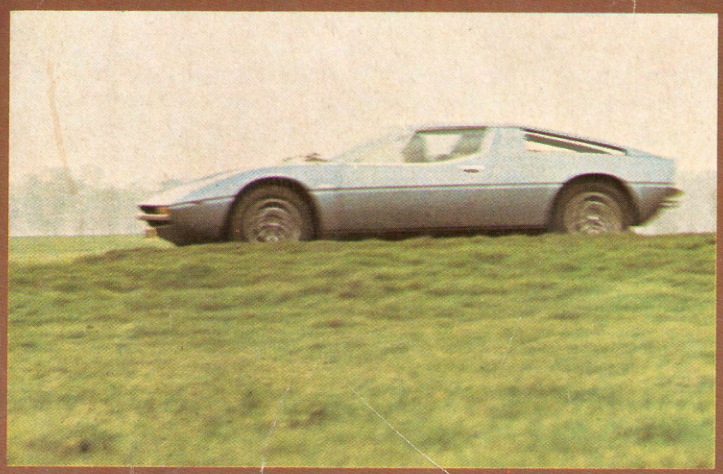

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