

SCARCE Newsletter

Saddleworth Classic And Rare Car Enthusiasts

Tony Littlewood October 2010

OUR CHAMPION

It gives me great pleasure to announce that one of our younger members, my nephew Alistair has won the novice's cup for the best performance in his class racing a Merlin race-car at the final event of the season held at Silverstone in October .

With the help of Sally we have bullied Alistair into writing an article telling of his exploits for the SCARCE newsletter along with some great photos taken throughout the year's events. I know we are all very proud of him and I hope the following article will give some flavour of high speed racing round some of the most historic tracks in England:

My First Motor Racing Season Alistair Littlewood 21st Oct 2010

After going along to the HSCC Oulton Park Gold Cup race meeting in September '09, my father finally gave in and agreed for me to start motor racing.

The championship I chose was Historic Formula Ford 1600, which is run by the Historic Sports Car Club. This was due to the championship having a section for drivers with no previous race or kart experience, which I would be in. The novice drivers run in the same races as other drivers, but there is a separate points system, with an award for the best novice driver at the end of the season. The championship is seen as very fast and competitive, and attracts all ages of drivers, including ex grand prix drivers.

The cars use the Ford "kent" 1600cc GT crossflow engine, with single downdraft two-stroke weber carb. Permitted modifications to the engine are very minimal, so they are blueprinted to try and extract as much performance as possible (around 110bhp). The gearbox used is a Hewland Mk8/9, which utilises a VW beetle type casing, containing straight cut dog gears with swappable ratios. Four forward gears are allowed and must have a working reverse gear.

I had been told by a few people who were already racing in the championship that it is wise to buy a Merlyn car if possible. This is mainly due to the original manufacturing company still in existence, and supplying all parts, which is not always usual for a racing car that was designed 40 years ago. With the race season opener at Silverstone in March coming up fast, which I was determined to compete in. With around 10days to go, a Merlyn Mk20a popped up on Pistonheads, located at a classic Lotus dealer near Birmingham. The Mk20a is the last eligible Merlyn produced and is seen as a desirable model.

After viewing the car with Dave Brown, our very knowledgeable, experienced race mechanic, and now Scarce member, we bought the car. With around a week to go, Dave somehow managed to prepare and setup the car ready for Silverstone. All though in "race ready" condition, the car hadn't been raced in a few years and so it was best to give it a full once over before setting all geometry, tuning and making all necessary changes to bring the car up to current safety standards.

Having not driven the car or circuit before, 30mins before qualifying, I drove the car up and down the car park to familiarise myself with the controls. The time came for qualifying, and I was thrown out onto the track to see what I could do. I qualified 22/23, first in class, as there was only one other novice driver at the meeting out of the six which had registered. We were fairly happy with this, due to my non-existent experience. On the first lap, after overtaking a number of cars, I spun my car on entry to a corner, dropping me in last place. After my spin, I was determined to catch up the pack and I finished in 19th, with a class win and fastest lap in class.

The second race of the season was held at Cadwell Park, where I had done my ARDS race licence in late '09. Cadwell is an extremely hilly circuit, a motorbike favorite and is nicknamed the "mini nurburgring". Luckily the weather was good to us, as it was for the first meeting.

Special Interest Articles:

- OUR CHAMPION followed by 'My First Motor Racing Season' Alistair Littlewood

- Get to know SCARCE –

- Members Car Profile

Nov / Dec Events

4th Nov Pie Night

14th Nov NEC Classic Car Show

Dec – Xmas gathering to be arranged

Check the website

Dave made a few technical adjustments to the car and sent me out for qualifying. Due to hanging at the back of the pack, and not knowing corner entry speeds etc, I qualified 23/23, 2nd in class, which I was a little disappointed with. Dave made more refinements to the car before the race and gave me some encouraging advice. I put everything together in the race and felt much more at home in the car. As I passed the chequered flag at full throttle, I felt a fuel pick up problem, which indicated very good fuel calculations! I managed to finish 13th, first in class, which was a great result for us.

Feeling much more confident, I entered my third race, at Snetterton, in Norfolk. I had a great start in the race, making up a number of places in the first lap. While trying to pass a slightly slower car on the second lap, who was making it a little difficult for me, the other driver locked up his inside rear wheel while turning into a fast bend. This sent his car into a spin directly in front of me which left me with nowhere to go. My front right wheel hit his right rear wheel, and this sent me up into a double somersault and tumble over the tarmac. My car came to rest upside down with me stuck inside. A large number of marshals rapidly made their way to rescue me from the upside down car, which was leaking petrol all over me. They tilted the car over which allowed me to slide out. I was put onto a stretcher and transported to the medical centre via ambulance. After a thorough checkup and the doctors approval, I was allowed to leave the medical centre, accompanied by Dave. I had escaped with no major injuries, although later, the severe whiplash and back pains set in. This happened to be the only race meeting so far that my father hadn't joined me on, so you can imagine to phone call to him. When the car was released from post crash scrutinizing, Dave and I examined the damage. While doing so, fellow racers came over to make sure I was ok and to view the video footage from my onboard camera. A driver from a car which was behind me in the race said that he had a good view of me upside down while fairly high up in the air.

For the interested, the onboard video footage is available online. Visit "[vimeo.com](https://www.vimeo.com)" and search "hff accident".

The damage of the car seemed fairly extensive. Various chassis tubes were bent or cracked, three wheels bent, three corners were damaged including wishbones, radius rods and steering components, however, very little damage to the bodywork. The owner of Merlyn CRD happened to be at the race meeting and came over to assess the car. He agreed to take the chassis away with him for repair, if Dave and I stripped the car down. So, 2 hours after the accident, we had the car down to the bare chassis, with just the fuel tank left riveted in place. I towed the remaining components home on the same day as the accident.

Many people would give up after such an accident so soon, however, I had a chat with Dave to see if he would help me prepare the car for the next meeting, which was exactly 14 days after my accident. This was a fairly big task, as it required a full car rebuild within 5 days after I drove down to Essex to pick the chassis up from repair and a big box of replacement components. Did I mention that Dave also has a full time job and a family? Anyway, with no messing around, we finished the car on the Friday night before Mallory Park. My father and I set off to Mallory Park, with Dave meeting us there on race day. Causing a fair amount of amazement that myself and the car made the next meeting, I qualified 17/24, 1st in class and also quicker than a few much more experienced drivers, who simply asked "how did you do that?!". I very happily finished the race 16th, with a class win, all down to myself and Dave's hard work building the car.

The next race meeting of the season I attended was the Nostalgia Weekend, held at Croft circuit and was a doubleheader for my championship. Described as a Goodwood Revival style event, with period dress, classic cars, military vehicles and aircraft on display and in action. Qualifying started out dry but turned fairly wet. Dave called me into the pits, knowing that I had already set my fastest lap, and sent me back out on wet settings, to gain some experience driving the track in the wet. I had qualified 17/22. The first race was on a very wet track, with pretty much every car spinning off at some point. On the second lap, I spun my car on a relatively slow corner, although, a fairly inexperienced driver behind me must have panicked and all I saw was him spinning towards me. The damage wasn't extensive, but put us both out of the race. Dave managed to source the required parts in no time at all from other racers. We then repaired the car in preparation for the second race which took place on the following day. Due to not finishing the first race, I started at the back of the grid. I finished the race 16th and first in class, after chasing down my rivals.

Next on the calendar is my favorite race of the season, the Oulton Park Gold Cup. With the likes of Sir Stirling Moss racing at the meeting, a good weekend was promised, and thankfully, the weather was great for race day. For the first time, we had entered into some test sessions at the circuit, two days prior to the race, this gave us more track time before my race to experiment with settings. On bank holiday Monday, I qualified 22/35 and first in class, which we were all very happy with, given the high level of driving talent on display. I had a very enjoyable race and finished 20th, with a class win.

The final meeting of the season was held at Silverstone, on the National circuit, where we met for the season opener. After finally deciding that the old tyres, which we bought with the car, were ready for the bin, a new set of the Avon control tyres were purchased in time for the meeting. We booked onto the testing day which was on the Friday before my race, which enabled me to get more experience of the track and to run in the new rubber. The tyres made a massive improvement to the car, improving grip and feel. I managed to qualify 12/31, first in class, and 0.2s off an ex world karting champion. We knew that I needed to finish second in class to secure the championship,

so put together a race strategy. Dave would be displaying a lapboard on the pit wall showing the time gap between myself, and the 3rd place novice. As I didn't need to beat the closest novice driver to me, I saw no point in trying to. I drove comfortably at around 80% pace (lapping at over 1 second slower than my qualifying time), while still pulling away from the 3rd place novice at a rate of almost two seconds per lap and finishing second in class. Post race scrutinizing weighed the car in at 422.5 kg, the control weight for the cars is 420 kg. Emma and Tom (Dave's very helpful son and daughter) went to race control where the clerk of the course confirmed that I had won the championship. We will all be attending the annual HSCC award dinner at Whittleberry Hall Hotel, close to Silverstone circuit, where I will receive my award.

Overall I am very pleased with my first year racing, and must say that it wouldn't have been possible at all without my father's funding and support and all Dave Brown's help, there was a lot of it! Also, we have been very impressed with the reliability and performance of the car. Looking through the receipts, for example, the engine was last rebuilt in 2003, while most competitive drivers have there's rebuilt annually. Since 2003, the rules have allowed a steel crankshaft which allows the engine to be reliable revved higher, which gives more performance.

I will be back racing next year, after a full rebuild of the car including engine & partial sponsorship from MB Precision Engineering. Hopefully, Dave will be racing himself in the Historic Formula Ford 2000 championship and we are also looking into running my father in Historic Road Sports, as he is feeling left out! I can only describe this as 'the best thing I have ever done'.

Alistair Littlewood

2 hours after the accident



Cadwell Park



Outon Park



After Snetterton Accident



Malory Park



Malory park 14 days post accident



Silverstone Pit Lane



Silverstone Pits



What a Treat – Tribute to Rolls

I was pleased to attend the tribute to Charles Stewart Rolls who die 100 years ago held at the Midland Hotel this week. As many of you may know it was there that Rolls and Royce met and agreed to form the Company that was to become such a huge concern in the 20th Century. Together with Henry Royce he created an empire that is still world famous as one of the top 3 brands recognized throughout the world. I believe the first place has been regained by Aston Martin after giving way to Coca Cola for a short time.



A bronze statue was presented to the Hotel, now a member of the Q Hotels Group, and I was thrilled to have a look around one of the remaining 1920's Silver Ghosts which had somehow been hoisted onto the top step of the entrance foyer to the Hotel. The collection of Rolls Royces arranged to be in attendance by the RREC then proceeded to the Town Hall for a photo session before driving on to the Science and Natural History Museum.

Tony Littlewood



SCARCE

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Rare Car Enthusiasts

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.scarce.org.uk

COMPETITION Update

We are still on 'update' with this. We're awaiting final design of the images. As soon as they are complete will make a full announcement.

Sally Harrison

Club Secretary

Member Interaction Corner

Our appeal for articles for the newsletter and photographs for the website is paying off. Thank you to Alistair for this month's fantastic account of his racing experiences. I have also received several sets of members' pictures of their cars, we still want more please and any information you feel would be great to share with our members, please send it over and we'll put it on the website.

We are still looking at

raising money for a local charity. The event details are yet to be decided. All suggestions from members are gratefully received.

There was a fantastic turn out to the October Club meeting at the Kingfisher, it was lovely to see those of you who attended.

Finally, we have had four new members join our club this month. Welcome to those who are new, I hope you enjoy being a part of us.

As always, any suggestions for the website, newsletter, events, anything at all are most welcome.

Thank you for your participation.

SCARCE Committee