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2012 Event report 2. British Sprint Championship rounds at Snetterton and Pembrey

So, if you recall we decided to strip the car and inspect the clutch a 2nd time before the last round at Snetterton and make use of the gap between the 'hairy' Castle Combe round 1 in March and the Norfolk meeting on jubilee bank holiday weekend. Nothing unusual was found, but the bell housing will need some fabrication and machining over the winter to reinforce the hydraulic thrust bearing assembly.



Snetterton

So with car and trailer fully prepared, I took a half day holiday to beat the 4 day bank holiday rush and 3 hours later we were enjoying the cold overcast track walk!

It would be hard to get in the top 12 run off against a very good turnout of 28 British contenders including all the V8's. Colin Calder and Heather were determined to make up for the early baptism of fire at 'Combe in their new Gould, making the 15 hour journey each way from Thurso - more on that later! Mike Musson finally made it with his new 4 litre 720bhp 550 kg Pilbeam - following his trailer collapse incident on the last round. Several other cars sported new additions and winter tweaks.

Opening practice was without drama, it was a dry, cool day and no one threw it off the track early in the weekend. I still had intermittent clutch noises, but all was working and at least I knew the cause and was not unduly concerned.

The track is the 100 circuit, which is inside the main 200 circuit, despite this, it still has a great mix of corners and immaculate surface tarmac and the maximum speed I reached was 130.7mph. It had been lengthened by some 100m since the last time we competed so no comparison with PB could be made.



More trouble for Mike, (white car left), as his new car refused to start, still what can expect when you spend over £50k for a second-hand car! but with Stewart Robb helping - who has a similar Judd Pilbeam and some plug changes and ECU remapping of the throttle pot sensor, the beast eventually fired up and allowed Mike to get on the circuit and experience the 'sphincter twitching pleasure' of 1300bhp/tonne!

Colin Calder set the practice 1 pace with an 84 odd second run, but by second practice there were 3 V8's in the 81's, Heather on an 83 and myself lying 6th with an 85. Poor Tony Jarvis and Martin Webb blew the diff up and packed up for home in search of a new crown wheel and pinion in order to get the car out for next weekends Pembrey round.

Following the 2 day journey from Scotland, Heather set 2nd fastest time, then disaster! The min input shaft in the gearbox cried enough and sheared in two. With only 5 days to the next event repair and rebuild was not going to be easy or cheap. They went home.



Timed runs went well also, and I elected not to put the best tyres at this stage and qualified for the run offs in 6th place with an 84.06, some 6 seconds behind the 'big cars'.

We had a drama as I came back to the pits, with initially what I thought was the car on fire as it filled up with smoke in the cockpit. Several fire extinguishers appeared from nowhere pointing at me, but by this time I realised it was steam and I averted an accidental 'foaming'! It turned out that a 4mm bleed hose had spilt as I had fitted the wrong type. So I cut two lengths, fitted a new one and placed a spare alongside in case I had to do a mid Top12 change.

So pressure time for the double runs for the top 12, get the first run in the bag and post a score, then try even harder and see if you can shave some more time off - without exiting the tarmac as I did last year!

Steve Broughton had been knocked off his cycle earlier in the year and while recovering gave up his drive to Matt Hillam who normally drives the SBD works Westfield. Matt made the run off and kept the car on the road and warmed the tyres for Mark.

A safe run of 85 left me 5th, but Mark Smith in the works SBD car had spun, he is normally faster so I had to squeeze a little more next time out. Getting it all together on the last run saw me overtake the V8 of Terry Graves and finish 5th on 83.74, as Mark banged in an 83.35 and it was won by Stewart on 79.62.



Beers, good food and company at the circuit and despite the driving rain on the trailer, we had a good night. Based on the forecast, I put my wets on the night before in the dry, and opened the trailer door to the excitement of the same track, but in the wet.

In 2008, I won a top 12 run off in the wet, and I do like driving on the edge of coming off, finding different areas of the track to get traction, and it gives a slight edge on the large power cars as they cannot lay all their 700+ bhp down.

The rain was so bad, the meeting stopped a few times as they pumped the track on one particular corner, but we did get running eventually and many people spun or came off as you can see!



I qualified in 5th, but we had three major retirements of Tom Potter, (above in blue car), who again blew up his turbocharged bike engine - running less boost this year to get more reliability and Scott and Dave Pillinger went home with loom and fuel pump issues. Martin Pickles new Jedi campaign was not helped by a constantly blowing fuse in the auto gear shifter and a night on the trailer floor as the blow up mattress constantly deflated! Talking of bad nights, Bill Gouldthorpe, who at 74 has more beans and energy than I have now, has given up camping having had a bad night in his new tent and went to hotel for Saturday night. It worked as he came 11th in the run off in the wet!

A safe first run left me 5th on a 107, surprisingly ahead of Mark and some V8's. Stewart was not a happy bunny as he put the big Pilbeam into the wall, being over ambitious in the braking zone for the Oggies hairpin. So now with a score counting I threw caution to the wind and nearly crashed in 5 separate places, still recording 126mph in the wet and a 101.65 and finished a surprising 3rd, just 1.3 secs off the winning time from Terry Holmes.

I would like to post a video - as we have a new 1080p HD camera this year (and new matching HD monitor in the trailer or course!), but Snetterton fine you £25,000 if they find any footage on the internet - so sorry!

Pembrey

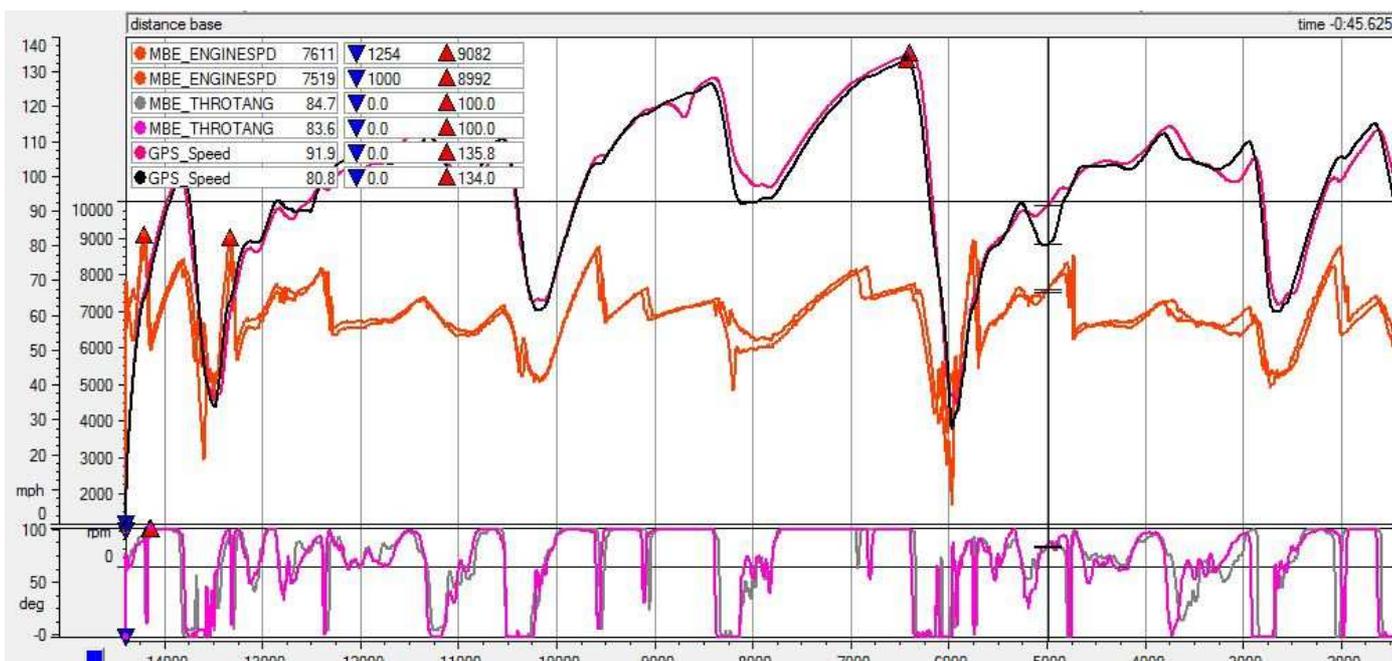
Storm force gusts and driving rain across Wales on the Friday was not a good combination as my satnav took me over the top of the Brecon Beacons at altitude!

But unfortunately it dried out for Saturdays competition as I was hoping for another wet event following the last success. Indeed it stayed dry all weekend.

Steve Broughton was still not up to driving and this weekend SBD's engine specialist Craig Sampson shared the works car - boy is he quick! And against all odds, not to mention £6k of new bits, the Calder's arrived late in the night with a working car, not in the best of shape after 12 hours sleep in the last 3 days.



Qualification was by no means certain as there were almost 30 fighting for the fastest 12 places available. In fact, after practice I was only 7th fastest and after 2 timed runs, this was 9th. I decided to put the best tyres on just to attempt to ensure qualification. This still didn't get under my best time from last year of 96.80.



The first run off over 1.75 laps of the track was a safe banker at 97.65 to leave me 7th. Tom Potter had qualified, but this week, the gearbox exploded in the process so packed for home. Heather had clutch issues and posted a slow time, Stewart Robb broke the course record for a bonus point and was on a mission chased by Terry and Colin.

In the second run, I dug deeper, had some moments on this 138mph course, thought it was good but ultimately 0.02 seconds slower and Heathers improvement pushed me to 8th overall - still behind my PB.

Food, beers, car prep, BSC forum discussions and watching F1 qualifying in the trailer was great prep for the followings days attack on the PB.



The hoped for rain never seriously materialised and I sat out Practice 2 due to a light shower that was never going anywhere. At the end of the 2 timed runs, I was lying 10th - this time on old tyres and with a 97.81, the cut off for the top 12 was 99.7.

The key scary corner for me (right hander after paddock bend) that all weekend I told myself not to brake as I turned in, I managed on the last timed run to lift my right foot off the throttle, hover it over the brake without touching, then gently squeeze the power on again. So having done it once, I was now confident to go partial throttle and carry the speed and ignore self preservation instincts. It worked. Run off 1 was a 96.96 and then with a score on the door and the last run fresh in my mind I let rip on the final run of the weekend, squeezing earlier on the corners, carrying the speed and generally enjoying myself I must confess to a few whoops inside my helmet on the run - but I nearly came off in a few places as you can see on the HD video link - [click here](#). 9th place and a new PB of 96.48 was the reward and an ear to ear grin!

Stewart from Colin then Terry at the sharp end with another record of 89.02 and both Mark and Craig in the mid 93's - impressive.

The next round is this weekend in Northern Ireland and there is a big contingent travelling over. Follow the @moleracing Twitter feed for updates from the circuit.

Steve



2 Litre Class 2012 after round 5 of 11		
Mark Smith	SBD Reynard	229
Steve Miles	Van Diemen RF96mm11	215
Scott Pillinger	DSP SBD	165
Dave Pillinger	DSP SBD	155
Tony Jarvis	Reynard FVL	108
Martin Webb	Reynard FVL	105
Colin Birkbeck	Dallara F301	89
Craig Sampson	SBD Reynard	88
John Graham	Dallara F397	78
Matt Hillam	SBD Reynard	74
Steve Broughton	SBD Reynard	49

British Sprint Championship 2012 Top 12 after round 5 of 11		
Terry Holmes	3.5 Lola-Judd ERH	56
Stewart Robb	4.0 Pilbeam-Judd MP88	51
Mark Smith	2.0 SBD Reynard	44
Graham Porrett	3.5 Lola-Judd ERH	35
Steve Miles	2.0 Van Diemen RF96mm11	30
Colin Calder	4.0 Gould GR55	28
Terry Graves	3.5 Gould GR37	27
Heather Calder	4.0 Gould GR55	20
Colin Birkbeck	2.0 Dallara F301	18
Craig Sampson	2.0 SBD Reynard	14
Graham Porrett	3.5 Lola-Judd ERH	35
Scott Pillinger	2.0 DSP SBD	13
Tom Potter	1.6T Jedi Mk4	12

Remaining Events 2012		
30 June	Kirkistown - BSC	N Ireland
1 July	Kirkistown - BSC	N Ireland
21 July	Blyton Park	Gainsborough
22 July	Blyton Park	Gainsborough
28 July	Kames - BSC	Ayrshire
29 July	Kames - BSC	Ayrshire
4 August	Goodwood	Chichester
8 September	Madeira Drive	Brighton
6 October	Anglesey	N Wales
7 October	Anglesey	N Wales

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