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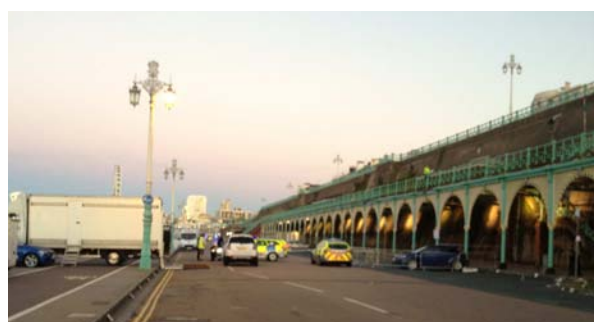
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2012 Final event report 4. Club meetings at Brighton Speed Trials and Brands Hatch plus the finale of the British Sprint Championship at Anglesey

Brighton Speed Trials

It was good to compete again after a 4 week break, although this was an event that nearly didn't happen. As we arrived around 6am, dawn was breaking on Brighton seafront, the red glow accompanied by many flashing blue police lights. It turned out that there had been a serious stabbing around 2am and despite someone being arrested, the forensics team had cordoned off the paddock. Brighton and Hove Motor Club recovered a tricky situation and the event started only 30 minutes late.



I was letting Bill Gouldthorpe share my car for this meeting as his engine had "let go" the previous weekend in Anglesey where he had sneaked in a practice round before the British finale in October. We had a little bit of cockpit adjustment to fit him in and a block of solid foam bolted to the pedal did the trick.



As this event is a straight 1/4m blast along the seafront, I had taken off the alternator and I was planning on removing the rear wing if the floor was giving enough stability. Mark Smith in the works SBD car was here, sharing with Carole, plus the SBD Westfield with Craig and Matt, so it was a full 'Team SBD' turnout. Mark bravely started the day with no front or rear wing attached!

With an entry of around 200 cars, it took a while to get through, but I was pleased to be lying 5th overall after the practice run, just 0.13 behind Mark in the works SBD car. Despite driving his old car, Bill mucked up a gear shift and was about 7 tenths behind. So off with the rear wing to reduce drag and save weight, best tyres on as well - pressure reduced from the normal 18psi to 15, to get better longitudinal traction. Run 1 was much better - a PB of 10.38 - amazingly exactly what Mark posted! So his additional power (307bhp) and weight (430kgs) matched by my 292bhp and 380kg (in lightweight no wing spec). Bill missed 3rd gear again and was 9/10ths adrift.

So in the quest for another few hundredths, and the potential win as I was now sitting 3rd overall, we took the front wing off also and dropped the tyres to 10psi. Unfortunately I didn't get the start as perfect as I would have liked but did improve to 10.30 and just pipped Mark on a 10.34. The positive conclusion from this, is that Mark beats me almost everywhere if it is dry. In a straight line our cars are matched, so in need to be braver in the corners and grow bigger 'nads!!



All this chasing 10ths was put into perspective later in the day however and all second times were declared not void after a motorcycle and side car passenger both were killed in a crash after crossing the finish and the meeting was abandoned. The day started with blue flashing lights and ended the same way. We know we take risks in doing this sport, but it is not good when something happens like this.



For a change, we all went to Goodwood circuit a week later - not for competing, but for the Goodwood Revival - a fantastic event where everyone dresses in period costume, the grid of historic cars alone for 1 race was worth over £30M and had a glorious day out!

The following weekend it was down south (yet again) for a chance to play on the famous F1 circuit of Brands Hatch. This was a morning only meeting so the pressure was on to learn the circuit and deliver the goods in a short space of time.

I had watched videos and learnt the layout, but nothing prepares you for your first blast. It is fast and undulating, with some terrifying corners that are all blind - ie due to camber and elevation changes you cannot see the apex you have to commit to until you have arrived!

I had hired a garage on the pit lane to make life easier and shared this with Glyn Sketchly, who had persuaded me that "you must do this circuit once before you die". 5 beers and some loud music in the empty garage prepping the car the night before was most enjoyable.



2.75 laps for a single practice run - I almost ended up in the gravel on the 3rd corner, and took it cautiously after that, and was some 15 seconds off the pace. However, it was drying rapidly and was a lot gripper than the last time out - so aided my Martin Pickles excellent tyre preparation with the best tyres, we launched and delivered a very satisfying and exhilarating lap.

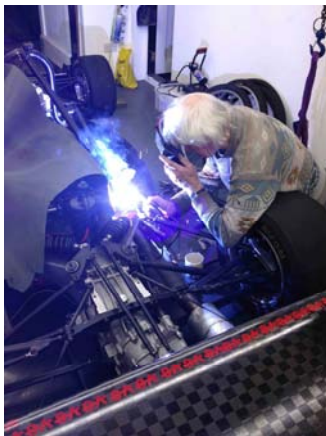
This amazingly was the fastest, just a few 10ths quicker than Terry Holmes - in the TEGRA V8.



John Setra - K2 Consultancy MD was here with his family and he tends to take on a 'mind management role' and pointed out one area where I was significantly slower than some of the locals - this was backed up by datalogging and video evidence - so we agreed the final run plan!

I seem to get in a confidence zone and the car was behaving exceedingly well, delivered excellent grip and this increased the confidence more. I was on the ragged edge on one exit kerb, this did some damage as I later found out as I rode the rough exit kerbs, but I kept my foot planted! At the next corner the plan had to be delivered and an underwear change was almost needed. Then comes Paddock Hill Bend, a famous corner that did not disappoint. 135mph approach to a blind uphill braking zone, scrubbing off 40mph as you drop over the hill and then turn right downhill to hit the apex - minimum

corner speed of 90mph, which is down the hill, so steep you cannot see it. then 120 before you hit the dip and rocket up the other side. I stopped the clock some 4.5 seconds faster than the last run to take the meeting win. Next year this event is likely to be a round of the British - so good practice!



In preparation for the next round - the chassis was found to be cracked so some emergency very short notice welding was required thanks to David Hunter for keeping me in action.

The weekend of the year was held at Anglesey. In early October then chances of horizontal rain all weekend were high - but sun cream turned out to be required! Depending on results I would finish between 6th and 9th, so it was everything to play for.



photo by Will Setra - aged 11

A full turn out for the weekend with over 30 BSC contenders fighting for the 12 spots for points. qualifying in 8th place, but at least I'd saved the best tyres for the run off. Every run all day was a 51 second point something 2 practice, 2 timed. So for my first run off I was annoyed with another 51.3. Having got one in the bag I tried a "Dare to Fail" run, seriously frightened myself at the first bend and the braking zone into the hairpin from 130mph to 40mph in 60m and was rewarded with a time of 49.69 to finish 8th - phew at last!

Chris and Jonny were helping all weekend again and got more than they bargained - again! They found a rear wheel stud had sheared off completely at some point in the run off and I potentially could have lost the rear wheel. I had a brand new spare, but it was a two hour stripping down job to replace - the beer intake had to slow temporarily!

The second day was on the international course and it was time to break the 140mph barrier, for yet more high speed trouser airbag deployment moments.

12th place was a little too close for comfort, but pushed very hard on both run to go quicker and finish 7th. these scores both days meant that I dropped other low scores and my best 7 from the season left me in 6th place overall. Rather chuffed with that as there were 12 V8's entered at the start of the year.

Hats off though to fellow 2 litre competitors Mark Smith in the works SBD Reynard and Colin Birkbeck in the Dallara, who at the end of the season were ahead of me in both main and class championships.



Thanks to **K2 Consultancy** and **TEW Engineering** for their support this season with tyres and also to SBD for engine work and practical assistance.

Can we improve on 6th overall next year? Who knows, but we will certainly try.

Plans for 2013? well you can't stand still or you'll go backwards, so we are fitting a 4 wheel sensing traction control and launch system, plus full time lambda monitoring with engine mapping closed loop feedback. Some further weight reductions and aerodynamic upgrades. I might even cut back on cheese a little bit to see if I can dip under 11stone/70kgs!

Steve



Photo by Neil Lambert

British Sprint Championship 2012 Final Top 12		
Stewart Robb	4.0 Pilbeam-Judd MP88	87
Terry Holmes	3.5 Lola-Judd ERH	78
Mike Musson	4.0 Pilbeam-Judd MP88	62
Mark Smith	2.0 SBD Reynard	62
Colin Birkbeck	2.0 Dallara F301	61
Steve Miles	2.0 Van Diemen RF96mm11	52
Colin Calder	4.0 Gould GR55	52
Graham Porrett	3.5 Lola-Judd ERH	49
Terry Graves	3.5 Gould GR37	41
Scott Pillinger	2.0 DSP SBD	31
John Graham	2.0 Dallara	31
Heather Calder	4.0 Gould GR55	20

2 Litre Class 2012		
Colin Birkbeck	Dallara F301	323
Mark Smith	SBD Reynard	323
Steve Miles	Van Diemen RF96mm11	310
Scott Pillinger	DSP SBD	299
John Graham	Dallara F397	298
Tony Jarvis	Reynard FVL	265
Martin Webb	Reynard FVL	256
Dave Pillinger	DSP SBD	233
Craig Sampson	SBD Reynard	88
Matt Hillam	SBD Reynard	74
Steve Broughton	SBD Reynard	49

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photo by Edward Fox - aged 8