

BARC North Western Centre report for BARC Magazine 2016 Spring edition

As I write this the NW Centre is well on the way to starting the new season. Regulations have been approved, dates fixed, documents sent out and registrations are flowing in. The winter has been spent with the usual round of seminars and training activities for officials and marshals. The rescue unit has passed its various training and assessment activities with flying colours and everyone is now anticipating the start of the season and getting back to the action.

Following the intense work done over the winter by our Championship Coordinator John Leck the committee wished to recognise the substantial amount of successful work he has carried out on the new website. We are delighted to have such an accessible and informative site which conforms with the format of the clubs main site.

John and our Treasurer and driver Duncan Aukland have also visited HQ to learn the RevUp race entry system which HQ will be using this year. They agreed that it is very straightforward for drivers to access and use the system. Three drivers have tested the system and found it worked well.



By the time you read this the NW Centre will have run its first race meeting of the 2016 season, held at Oulton Park. This year sees the fiftieth year of the Centre running race meetings at this circuit and we intend to mark the August meeting with this anniversary.

The Annual 'Real Night Out' Dinner Dance at the end of January saw the presentation of all the awards for the 2015 CNC Heads Sports Saloon Championship. It was great to see nearly all the class winners in attendance, the only missing driver being on a pre-arranged skiing holiday.

Our 2015 champion, Joe Spencer (Class C), above, is seen proudly holding his trophy. The other class winners are Helen Allen (Class F), Garry Watson (Class B), Ilsa Cox (Class D), Stuart Pearson (Class E) and Garry Wardle (Class A).

For the first time in the history of the championship not one but two of the classes were won by ladies, congratulations to Helen and Ilsa. Joe follows in his father, Rob's, wheel tracks as an overall champion. Rob took the title in a similar Stuart Taylor Locosaki back in 2009.

All the presentations to the drivers were made by our championship sponsor, and owner of CNC Heads, Ric Woods who was present at the event with his family.



Following on from the class awards several individual championship awards were made on the night. The first being the David Gledhill 'Driver of the Year' award. This award is in honour of long time marshal and championship sponsor, David Gledhill, who supported the championship over many years. At each Oulton Park and Anglesey round of the championship all the marshals 'on the bank' vote for the driver they deem to have been the best on the day. The 2015 award of Driver of the Year went to one of our Scottish drivers, Garry Watson. Garry can be seen (to left) receiving the trophy from the new Chief Operating Officer of BARC, Drew Furlong. Drew was our guest of honour at the

Real Night Out and presented some of the individual trophies.

The next trophy to be announced was the Spirit of the Championship. This is awarded, if there is a suitable candidate, to the driver that embodies most the spirit and friendliness of the championship. It is decided on by the championship committee at the end of the

season. Being such a friendly championship there was much discussion before the eventual winner was agreed upon. This year the award goes to a driver who was perhaps never going to win his class but is out competing come rain or shine, home or away. Since he joined the championship in 2012 he has only missed 2 rounds and this year he started, and finished, all twelve rounds in his immaculately turned out car. In the paddock he is always willing to lend a hand to those in trouble. At Cadwell Park in 2014 after practice he led the troops in re-building Oliver Thomas' Subaru after he had comprehensively modified it in practice. Early on last year he took out Kevin Cryer and when it looked like he was about to do the same at Rockingham he took the option of going at the wall instead. The winner of the Spirit of the Championship for 2015 was Steven Parker. We would like to thank Peter Scherer for his photos of the event which accompany this report.

Late January saw us representing the NW Centre at the funeral of John Leek. John was involved in club motor racing as a marshal, a racing driver, and a race mechanic. He built several very successful cars, and was particularly well known for his outrageous Skoda special saloon creations for Tony Sugden, Jim Evans and Bob Claxton, to name but a few. Several of his cars have run in the NW Centre Sports Saloon Championship. Andrew Hannah, for whom he was well into the building of an Ultima for our championship, recalls spending many, many years in a cold Yorkshire barn alongside John, whilst he patiently taught him the proper way to build and maintain racing cars, including a Cobra, a replica McLaren M1C which he built from scratch, and latterly a full race Ultima GTR. John could turn his skills to virtually anything from exquisite fabricating (and repairing) expensive monocoques, to designing a venturi and underfloor. And in true John Leek fashion he would always create some remarkable racing part from scratch and it would cost buttons.

John was a gentle giant who has helped many, many people with their broken racing cars in paddocks. John's old BRM F1 transporter was a regular sight at all kind of racing events, and he always seemed able to work miracles out of the various collection of old parts to be found inside his transporter. Nothing was ever thrown away, he always had just the bit you needed "in stock".

John fought a long battle with illness, all the while continuing to work on his latest racing project. He never complained about his difficulties, and shortly before he passed away he was still working out how best to design and create a low-cost honeycomb chassis in his barn workshop to replace the tube frame he had just made.

He gave his skills for free, and would help anyone genuinely in need. He will be very sadly missed by those of us who knew him over the last few decades.



Helen Allen and Ilsa Cox proudly showing Off their respective class awards
(all photos by Peter Scherer)



Mike Broadbent presents the Ladies trophy to Post Chief Bridgitte Broadbent