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THE LONGTON SEASON GETS UNDERWAY WITH AN ASTONISHING 571 RUNS AT THREE SISTERS

Report and pictures by Denise Moore

Conditions for the first Three Sisters Sprint of 2013 were pretty inauspicious at the start of the day with persistent rain and a chilly breeze during signing-on, but the brisk wind was to prove a blessing as the weather cleared up in time for the driver's briefing (although extremely large puddles were hazardous to anyone wandering around the paddock). With a good entry of 69, there were high hopes of a fair number of timed runs, weather permitting.

In spite (or because) of a damp track, first practice went very well and everyone behaved themselves although proceedings were halted temporarily as Simon Robinson laid a thin trail of oil round parts of the circuit. This is what happens when you have these things serviced so I'm told! Second practice also went smoothly apart from Brian Walker coming off the track at the bend going down the hill and ending up in the tyre barrier. This sadly spoiled his day.

Martin Rowe triumphed a close battle in Class SB

Robert Hickson took victory in Class 1A

Continued ……

The first timed run had just begun when the rain resumed and Stephen Hobbs skidded through the S bends and ended up in the tyre barrier next to the paddock – he had already crossed the finish line by then. The rescue vehicle was not required but the car and driver were a bit battered and unfortunately took no further part in the event. By this time the rain was falling in earnest and David Robinson also pirouetted through the finish line – thankfully no damage done except maybe to his self-esteem. In the second timed run the same car spun after the finish line, coming into the 'Frying Pan' and tried to scare the marshal at the paddock entrance out of his wits.

The second timed run continued to be eventful as the Wesfield driven by Gary Bunn and Derek Hodder retired due to engine trouble and Barry Whitehead also went out with rattly big ends in the engine of RBS 7B. The black Lotus of John Graham also careered into the tyres by the side of the paddock after crossing the finish line, scattering tyres everywhere, but was able to continue. Felicity Nelson driving her father's Formula Ford gracefully pirouetted again in her favourite bend going back up the hill – perhaps we can informally name it after her – but she regained control quickly and is consistently improving – Dad is going to have to look out!

With the track drying out quickly due to the breeze and the appearance (finally) of the sun, everyone settled down after lunch and we managed a total of SEVEN timed runs with very few further incidents. Richard Vaughan recorded a DNF on his fifth run as he spun at the S bends and was pushed 'home' by the marshals. Russell Thorpe pulled out in run number 6 and took no further part.

Class winners: Russell Herring in his Clio, Alan Sawyer's rapid Subaru and Robert Holt in his Lotus Elise

There were several new class records set on the day and some incredibly close fought competition, one or two classes literally coming down to the last timed run. Martin Rowe and Roger Fish in Class SB recorded times of 51.77 secs and 51.95 secs respectively on the last run having fought a ding-dong battle all day. Tony Everall and Tim Nunn in cars 91 and 93 (Class 3H) finished with times of 43.35 and 43.36 seconds again on the last timed run – new records separated only by hundredth of a second.

And a final impressive statistic: We managed 571 starts through the day!

RESULTS

Class SA: Andy Bradley 58.47. SB: Martin Rowe 51.77. 1A: Robert Hickson 57.11. 1B: Russell Herring 51.91. 1C: Alan Sawyer 50.85. 1D: Robert Holt 57.70. 1E: Keith Calder 52.59. 2A: Martin Walker 48.81. 2B: John Hoyle 45.59. 2C: Andrew Hargreaves 47.41. 2D: Stephen Everall 48.22. 3B: Andrew Larton 49.37. 3C: Roy Bolderson 55.62. 3E: John Graham 49.09. 3G: Robbie Birrell 46.09. 3H: Terry Everall 43.35. 4A: Stuart Nelson 47.19. 4B: Marshall Rowland 52.07. 5A: Richard Vaughan 44.14. 5B: Geoff Ward 48.35. 5C: Peter Brogden 50.99. 5D: Brian Walker 65.81.

FTD & Best LDMC: Terry Everall. **Best Novice** Steve Morgan. **Best Lady**: Felicity Nelson**.**

Footnote: Naughty Boy Award to Tim Nunn for wanton drifting round the 'Frying Pan'.

Continued ……

Keith Calder in his Audi TT

John Hoyle in his Westfield

Andrew Larton set a new class record

Terry Everall took FTD by one hundredth

Richard Vaughan, fastest single-seater

Felicity Nelson, the event's 'best lady'

Continued ……

SOME PATCHY RESULTS FOR LONGTON'S CONTENDERS AT RE-PATCHED AINTREEE

The 'Aintree season' kicked off on April 27 with competitors finding their way round a newly repaired track that included a patch of new tarmac filling in the famous dip in Bechers Bend.

The weather stayed dry and although there was a big entry, bulked out by a host of Caterham Academy runners, there were three timed runs.

Running through the classes, the increasingly popular 1400cc to two-litre standard production saloons and sportscars saw the usual closely-fought battle between Martin Rowe and Roger Fish in their S2000 Hondas. Martin emerged on top, lopping a tenth off his own record with a best exactly on 54 seconds. Roger came in second with 54.24. The car-changing Paul Webb put in 59.03 in his MG for seventh and Peter Gates took ninth at 59.99.

More records tumbled in the longer-established 1400cc to two litre prod saloons. Winner Tony Hart took just over a second off Russell Thorpe's record with a 52.39 run whilst Russell T. and dear old Doris were down in sixth at 53.81. The other Russell – Herring – was fifth with 53.73. The bigger-engined prod saloons saw a win for Alan Sawyer with a time of 51.56 whilst Robert Holt was second in the production sportscar class with 58.45.

In the small roadgoing kits cars the Stevensons – Bill and Carol – came in third and fourth at 60.89 and 68.03 respectively. Sean Bourn in his Cyclone was the only Longton representative in the larger-engined kit cars and came in third in 56.14. The 'specialist' car class saw second go to Stephen Everall on 49.83.

Andrew Larton was the clear winner in the smaller mod prods with a best of 50.73. Second went to John Moxham with a time of 52.61. In the over two-litre mod sportscars David Welton took first at 57.46.

Long-term Caterham driver Robbie Birrell was returning to sprinting from a period of circuit racing and came in third in the modified kits at 47.36. In the bike-engined kits Terry Everall romped to victory at 45.34, three-hundredths outside the record.

With two retirements in the small racing car class Barry and Eve Whitehead were left alone to have a father and daughter battle in RBS 7B. Eve emerged as the winner on 47.61 with dad a tenth behind.

The classic roadgoing class went to Alan Wilson on 57.22. John Graham, back in his Dallara after his Lotus outing at Three Sisters, took FTD at 41.15.

SINGLE SEATERS DOMINATE AT OLIVERS MOUNT

A trio of Longton's bike-engined single seater contenders were the only ones to make the trip to the Yorkshire seaside for the Olivers Mount weekend on May 4 and 5.

On Saturday victory in the class went to Russell MacFarlane with a time of 42.56 in his 1998 Nemesis. Eve Whitehead was close behind on 42.98 in RBS 7B with Barry following at 44.91. There was a similar pattern on Sunday with Russell reducing his time to 42.05, with Eve snapping at his heels on 42.76 and Barry coming in at 43.87.

Continued ……

THE SUN FINALLY SHINES AT HAREWOOD

The Harewood event on May 11 brought threatening skies and a little rain but competitors enjoyed reasonable conditions on the second and third runs as the sun came out.

A brief review of Longton competitors shows Russell Thorpe the best of the bunch in Class 1B, charging Doris up the hill in 68.57 to take third. Roger Fish, 'outclassed' as there is no SB formula at Harewood, won his regular battle with Martin Rowe with a time of 69.73, whilst Martin could only manage 70.34. Separating them was Russell Herring on 69.78.

In the roadgoing kit car classes Bill Stevenson put in 78.39 in 2A, with Carol on 81.22. Sean Bourn recorded a best of 70.09 in Class 2B. In the smaller 'specialist' car class Andrew Hargreaves took second at 62.3, whilst Robbie Birrell also came second in the closely-contested larger engined class at exactly 61 seconds.

Eve and Barry Whitehead were non-starters in the small single-seaters leaving Richard Vaughan to uphold Longton honours with fourth place on 61.08.

CHAMPIONSHIP UPDATE AFTER HAREWOOD

The latest championship table shows Eve Whitehead at the top, despite missing Harewood. Roger Fish is second with Robbie Birrell third, although they have both dropped a couple of events.

NEWS SNIPPETS FROM THE MSA

Nominations for people to join the specialist committees, including the sprint and hillclimb sub committee, are being sought by the MSA. The groups meet two or three times a year to discuss new regulations and other issues. Applicants must be members of an MSA-recognised club or regional association, which must 'sponsor' the application. There are no formal qualifications other than experience in motor sport. To apply submit a brief CV of motor sport involvement, including any relevant qualifications, to the sponsoring MSA club. The sponsor should forward the application before the end of June.

Rally cars (and presumably cars used in sprint events? – ed) should not be affected by new MOT regulations requiring moveable seats and functioning airbags. MOT Special Notice 01-13 states: *Where a vehicle has been extensively modified or converted, certain Reasons for Rejection, such as for components 'missing where fitted as standard' should not be applied, for example: a car converted for rally use (i.e. rear seats removed and fitted with a roll cage and full harness seat belts etc.) may have been converted so as not to require a brake servo, power steering or airbags.*

Wales Rally GB (14-17 November) will be based in Deeside, North Wales this year. The rally's headquarters and central service park will be alongside the Toyota Engine Plant in Flintshire. The start will be in Conwy on November 14, with the finish in Llandudno three days later.

British Sprint Championship: Terry Holmes began his title challenge with victory in the opening round at Castle Combe, while Stewart Robb dominated proceedings at Lydden Hill. Provisional standings are: 1 Terry Holmes, 21 points; 2= Terry Graves, 19; Mark Smith, 19.

British Hillclimb Championship: Former champion Scott Moran kicked his season with victories in both run-offs at Prescott. Provisional championship standings: 1 Scott Moran, 20 points; 2 Roger Moran, 17; 3 Alex Summers, 14.

Continued ……

EARLY ALERT – DATE SET FOR LONGTON DINNER

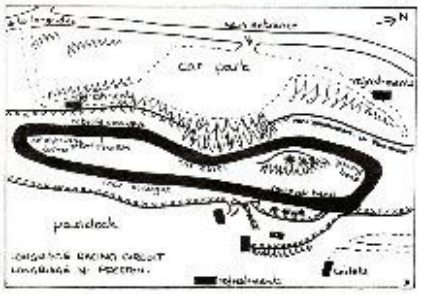
Longton's annual dinner and presentation of trophies for the 2013 season will take place on Saturday, January 18, 2014 in the Barton Suite at Barton Grange Hotel, Barton, Preston. More information soon!

THE LION'S SHARE OF THE SAFARI RALLY …

Last month's pictures from the past featured the 'Safari Rally' held at Knowsley, Oulton Park and Burtonwood in February 1983. **Chris Lee** sent in these recollections: *I remember marshalling on the Safari Rally, and recall being at Knowsley more than once. I can't remember which year but we were marshalling next to the lions compound. The lions were safety tucked away and firmly locked in their den. They must have has a big surprise when a rally car made a surprise visit!*

The car left the stage, went through the fence and collided with a hut. We stood outside the fence calling to the crew to stay in the car, much to their confusion, whilst the 'white hunters' turned up to take control of the situation. No rally crew or lions were hurt in the incident. Funny but thinking about it I'm pretty certain it was the last time we were there!

Chris also sent in some pictures from a Longridge race meeting in 1977 for those of you who remember or lament the glory days of this little Lancashire circuit.



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