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Front cover
Jenson Button celebrates his World Championship at the Yas Marina Circuit after an extraordinary 2009 season for him and Ross Brawn. Next year Jenson carries the coveted number 1 on a McLaren as he switches teams to join Lewis Hamilton (Photo LAT)
Dear Fellow Member,

The great news that Silverstone is confirmed as the home of the British Grand Prix for another 17 years takes us into new territory. What the regulations for an F1 car will be in 17 years’ time is anyone’s guess. Hybrid hydrogen gas turbines running on purified garbage, or good old fashioned internal combustion engines? No one can see that far ahead. But now at least, the opportunity is there for Silverstone to build on a long term certainty which has never been there before.

Considering that Silverstone has been on the calendar since 1948, it seems odd to think in terms of uncertainty, but if we knew what the future held, there would be no point in getting up in the morning.

There is also another opportunity for the BRDC, which is to clearly define what we want this Club to do/be. The responsibility for Silverstone to be preserved as the key asset for British motor sport will always be there. The way in which this can be achieved without stressing the club is the bone of contention, still. Rest assured that the Board is working hard on the Club’s behalf to resolve the issue of how to own a property with several businesses and a social club, which is a political body in its spare time, whilst also trying to support our British racing drivers. We are getting there! Trust me!

Have a fantastic Christmas break and see you in 2010.

Best wishes,

Damon Hill OBE
President, BRDC

Suzuka, Japan, 13 October 1996

Champion at last! The delight is almost tangible. And, scrolling forward to December 2009, a pictorial metaphor perhaps for the news that the British Grand Prix is coming back to Silverstone. Damon has taken his title in the best possible way, leading the Japanese Grand Prix from start to finish in his Williams-Renault FW18. The season had begun with four wins in the first five races and a dominant drive at Monaco until engine failure robbed Damon of a comfortable lead. Further wins followed in Canada, France and Germany before a slight dip as team mate Jacques Villeneuve narrowed the gap over the next four races. Sound familiar? For this last race, too, Jacques remains an ever present threat, taking pole position with Damon second, then the Ferrari F310 of outgoing champion Michael Schumacher and the Benetton-Renault B196 of Gerhard Berger. Jacques makes a poor start and it is Gerhard, on a three-stop strategy, who makes an unsuccessful bid to take the lead from Damon at the chicane on lap three and has to stop for repairs. Jacques does his best to recover lost ground but eventually retires at two-thirds distance when the right rear wheel comes adrift, and Damon is World Champion come what may. At the second round of pit stops, Michael nearly takes the lead but Damon is not to be denied his eighth win of the year despite the Ferrari driver’s best efforts. It is Damon’s 21st Formula 1 victory and his last race for Williams. Also sound familiar?

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After a hard fought and sometimes turbulent negotiation spanning almost three years we have finally agreed commercial terms with FOM and Allsport. The 17-year-long contract will bring long-awaited stability to the circuit and enable a realistic investment plan to be implemented. Further it will help underpin Motorsport Valley, lead to more regional high tech engineering jobs and inward investment, within which we, with our new Development Brief, are now well placed to benefit.

The Donington saga was an unnecessary distraction. However, we were not in a position in July 2008 to fund the new pits, or to pay the proposed FOM rights fee and were right to stand our ground in the belief that the Donington investment and business plan was neither achievable nor sustainable. While we waited on the sidelines and continued to plan for the return of the race, it was the success of the 2009 British Grand Prix and support from the industry that were the catalysts for rekindling FOM’s interest in a potential return to Silverstone.

I cannot go into the contractual details but suffice it to say that they have been well negotiated and documented. The contract is more expensive than the previous one but not ridiculously so. We do have to build a new pit and paddock complex for which we have planning and funding in place and, in this endeavour, should avoid the need to sell land at a low point in the market. It should be remembered that, against the odds, we were granted a Development Brief earlier in the year considerably raising the value of the property and that the halo effect of the new contract has already added 10% to land values.

We are entering a new and challenging era which will need careful management and an innovative approach to see us through. We are very late getting on sale and have much to do to catch up. In the first week of ticket sales I am pleased to say that we have experienced latent demand and have passed the sales curve of 2006, 2007 and are chasing 2008.

The one thing I regret over all others is that Donington, rather than benefiting, has become a victim with decimation of its business and major disruption to its infrastructure. Donington did not deserve this and those responsible should reflect on their actions. Let us all hope that the circuit will survive and regain its rightful position in British motor sport.

The track works we are undertaking this winter, besides enabling our long awaited return to top-class bike racing, will complement the new FOM contract and add new interest and spectacle. We have reached a threshold and Silverstone will be a very different place in 2010.

Having entered the year in doubt we leave it with hope and anticipation. I wish you all a very happy Christmas and look forward to welcoming you back in the New Year.
A rollercoaster year

Peter Windsor looks back at the final part of the eventful FIA Formula 1 World Championship season.

And so, as my colleagues used to say when it had all become a bit wearisome, they went to Abu Dhabi.

It was all over by then. Jenson Button and Brawn-Mercedes had clinched both the Drivers’ and Constructors’ World Championships; then again, it had effectively been over since Turkey, since the day Jenson Button, with massive grip and balance beneath him, had won as he had never won before. That day, in the gusts and grit of the Asian uplands, Jenson had looked Lewis-like in his mastery of Istanbul’s dipping, fast corners. Cross-winds had been but a minor disturbance. Jenson had won as he chose.

It was never again that good for him, even though the Brawn itself was on occasions still a great car: Rubens Barrichello proved its worth with subsequent wins in Valencia and then at Monza, where he earned himself another couple of years in F1 with a team called Williams. As the Brawn’s advantage diminished, however, and it became clear that Adrian Newey’s Red Bull chassis would in the closing races be just as effective on slow corners as it was on fast, so Jenson’s season became messy and fraught. A poor grid position at Spa resulted in the inevitable first-lap accident; other disappointing qualifying sessions left him with too much work to do on race day.

Looking back now I’d say that two things were obvious: Jenson found, as many athletes from a multitude of sports have often found, that defending a big lead is not easy. He scored six wins in the first half of the season. Six wins. Everyone, including Jenson, knew that that wasn’t going to happen in the second half of the year. And, if not, what? Jenson set about that most difficult of racing jobs: he raced to score points, to protect his lead, whilst his team-mate – a quick driver with 14 years of F1 experience behind him – set about winning. For years Michael Schumacher showed the world that he never, ever wanted to take that route: despite the critics, Michael never wavered in his belief that to win a Drivers’ Championship the team must work exclusively around one driver. If he, Michael, was driving for points (for the sake of the championship), the last thing he needed was a team-mate who would cramp his style.

“Sebastian Vettel lost only a little of his boyish enthusiasm – he actually became quite annoyed when things didn’t go his way towards the end of the year”

Well, guess what? Jenson ended up with the very team-mate who left Ferrari because he didn’t want to be told any more not to tread on Michaels’ patch? The irony was intense. And there was nothing that Jenson Lyons Alexander Button could do about it.
Having said that, I think there’s another thing, too: the smaller the Brawn’s advantage, the less Jenson liked the car. A “neutral” driver in the classic sense of the word – i.e., Jenson despises oversteer and what he describes often as an “unstable” rear under braking – Jenson began to back away from the Brawn whenever its rear grip disappeared. Rubens, by contrast, is a right-foot-braking oversteer-lover from the depths of Interlagos. Give him a broken barge board and lots of oversteer and Rubens is in his element. In this sense, then, there was no parallel with Michael-Rubens; Michael maximized a racing car regardless of its handling; Jenson maximizes it when the handling is right.

And so it became pretty close. Sebastian Vettel lost only a little of his boyish enthusiasm – he actually became quite annoyed when things didn’t go his way towards the end of the year – but systematically he closed the gap. He had the best car; his driving became smoother and faster with every race. In Japan, where we returned to Suzuka, I stood at the top of the Esses on a resplendent Saturday morning. Vettel, there, was sublime – sublime in the sense that he perfectly-manipulated the Red Bull from bump to bump, from fast right-hander into fast left-hander. He was different every lap; of course he was subtly different. The overspill, though, was constant: he lost little or nothing because of his amazingly accurate and soft-touch hand- and foot-work.

Mark Webber, meanwhile, seemed to be in another world. Having won in Germany a racer’s race – having won despite a drive-through penalty – he suddenly became Championship-aware and “drove for points” in Hungary to take a solid podium finish. After that, his driving seemed to lose its edge – a sure sign that Denis Jenkinson and Stirling Moss were right all those years ago: there is one thing more important than winning a championship and that is winning races. I’m not referring here to the Mille Miglia. I’m talking about the way Jenks used to decry the points system because it interfered with the business of the day – to win the race. Stirling, I think, always agreed with him. It showed in his loyalty to Rob Walker. Mark Webber, at heart, I believe is of a similar mould. No-one in F1 today (with the exception of Lewis Hamilton) has Mark’s ANZAC grit. He was seriously injured over the winter in a bicycle accident but there he was in Melbourne, swallowing pain-killers and looking good in the Red Bull. Then came even better drives, then came that win. Then he drove for points.

His equilibrium out of kilter, Mark uncharacteristically crashed in free practice in both Singapore and Suzuka. These two cardinal sins behind him – and the championship now lost – he was back to normal in Brazil and Abu Dhabi. Hopefully, this is a lesson learned for 2010. Mark can win the championship… if he drives to win.
Brazil, then, was the race. Jenson could have clinched it in Japan but qualified poorly and finished in the lower points. Sebastian Vettel and Rubens were the only two who could beat him. With the new frontier Abu Dhabi race still out there in everyone's vague imagination, the Brazilian Build-Up began, writers and TV people comparing this to the other great final-round years at Interlagos, desperate to convince the world that this was a showdown.

In reality, Jenson was under very little pressure. With two rounds still to go, he had a 16-point margin with which to play. Merely by crawling around he was undoubtedly going to do it. Still, F1 isn’t the world’s biggest and greatest TV show for nothing. Down the grid (after yet another poor qualifying) panned the cameras – down to where Jenson Button, the kid from Frome, Somerset, was about to conquer the world.

And through the field he sliced. Kazuki Nakajima, Jaime Alguersuari, Kamui Kobayashi: the great names of F1 were dispensed with. Sort of. Until finally, in the closing laps, with the pressure almost unbearable – came Jenson, defying the odds and the enormity of the moment. Here was our new World Champion.

Done it! Jenson Button faces the press after the Brazilian Grand Prix, crowned as the World Champion after a remarkable season. One of the talking points of the season was diffusers (Photos LAT)

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If an issue like the double-diffuser row arises again, you can be fairly sure that the teams will resolve it behind closed doors.

Webber, Robert Kubica and Lewis Hamilton to fill the podium. All had driven brilliantly in their own ways – Lewis, particularly, from a grid position even lower that Jenson’s.

Yet it was the screaming and shouting down below in the pit lane that captured the lenses of the TV shooters. Fittingly, for this was not a season for correctness, it seemed a little disrespectful. It was as if Tiger Woods, having sunk the winning putt, was walking straight off the 18th green without waiting for his playing partners to finish.

I say “fittingly” because we shouldn’t kid ourselves that this was a straightforward year. Yes, the media made much of it. ’New team wins first time out’, etc, etc. The reality is that Ross Brawn, Pascal Vesselin (Toyota) and Sam Michael (Williams) all ran a rear diffuser layout that other designers (Adrian Newey, McLaren’s Paddy Lowe and BMW’s Willi Rampf) all knew about, and considered, but didn’t race because they were told not to by the FIA.

They took the matter to F1’s own judicial
system but it was no good. The “double-diffuser” was now ruled legal on the spurious basis that there was nothing in the rule book specifically to say that it was illegal. In many ways, this was the last hurrah of the old generation: in the spring and summer of 2009, threatening to rebel against the FIA and FOM, the teams banded together as they never had before. Ferrari and McLaren team principals sat shoulder to shoulder. Plans were drawn up for a breakaway series. It all died away after Silverstone but the strength of FOTA remains: if an issue like the double-diffuser row arises again, you can be fairly sure that the teams will resolve it behind closed doors – and before any team races out of synch.

Given all of that, there’s little doubt that the Red Bull was the Car of the Year. Without a double-diffuser, Vettel won beautifully in the wet in China; with one, on circuits that mattered, like Silverstone and Suzuka, he was just unbeatable.

The Driver of the Year, notwithstanding Jenson’s wonderful feel for the delicate balance between power and traction, was in my view Lewis Hamilton. The McLaren was never a great racing car in 2009, even with a decent front wing and some sort of downforce at the rear, but Lewis continued to wring the absolute maximum from it, even if the best result was going to be ninth. If you try to apply some sort of equivalence factor to the season, and pick a race like Germany as one in which everyone had some sort of double-diffuser or another, Lewis from that weekend onwards was only beaten by Sebastian (45 points). In that phase Lewis (who suffered the first mechanical failure of his three-year career in Abu Dhabi) scored 40 points, ahead of the 38 of Kimi. And all three of them – Jenson, Sebastian and Lewis – finished with four poles apiece.

Speaking of the great Kimi, this wasn’t a vintage year. He was nailed by Felipe Massa in the early races, he came alive when he had a lesser driver in the second car (as Michael had trained Ferrari to operate!) and he spent the closing races wondering what he will drive in 2010. Even so, his consistent ability to manipulate the car seamlessly in all conditions was...
a reminder of how outrageous his talent remains. I hope we see him again.

This was also the last year of the great car companies spending what it takes… to out-do one another but not out-do their opposition when it came to winning races. As huge as the combined budgets were at BMW, Toyota and Honda, the results were appalling: Ross Brawn drastically cut the head-count, brought logic to the team, cut back on the spending… and immediately won races. Toyota continued to employ something like 800 people and yet, like BMW, found itself at the back of the grid at Monaco. Despite all the CFD. Despite the wind tunnel models. Despite the 100-or-so people in the aero department. Despite the suspension designers. Despite the simulations. Despite the test rigs. Despite.

Relatively small and relatively nimble, Brawn was a reminder in 2009 that there is no magic in motor racing: it’s all a question of how mistaken you are not.

And so, as I was saying, we got to Abu Dhabi.

A meshed hotel finish swapped colours with the fading sun; the F1 world settled on Fantasy Land as its place of winter repose. For me, the most incredible thing there was the Media Centre: for years I have been moaning to the FIA about showing Programme One on the TV monitors of the F1 world – “P1” being the timing and scoring page that shows the drivers’ names in shorthand and includes not only their fastest lap but also the lap they have just completed, together with some split times and trap speeds. And, for years, the FIA have been saying “no”,

“...The Driver of the Year, notwithstanding Jenson’s wonderful feel for the delicate balance between power and traction, was in my view Lewis Hamilton”
pointing out that the abbreviated names remain a mystery to most members of the media. No matter that, on a dry track-turning-to-wet we had no idea on “P3” – fastest laps only, names fully-spelt – who actually was quickest in the rain. No matter that we had no idea of the lap time just passed. On and on I went; no and no again they continued to reply.

Until we got to Abu Dhabi. There, in a classic Media Centre of the new era – not a real car or a genuine piece of race track to be seen through any of the windows – were three, huge TV monitors much as you would see at a rock concert. And there – in the middle! – was “my” timing page. I couldn’t believe it. I imagined that everyone was so scared of playing with the new, big-screen channel system that no-one had had the courage to change it. Progress at last!

On that note of victory, I sign off: thanks for having me and thanks for being the BRDC, without whom British motor sport – and F1 in particular – would be much the poorer. In 2010 I hope I can do justice to our heritage with a little project we are calling US F1. American it may be – but that’s only because Ken Anderson and I grew up with Jim Clark (Indy winner!) and Dan Gurney as our heroes, and with cars like the Indy Lotus and the F1 Eagle as our yardsticks. If we can capture only a teaspoonful of what those drivers and cars have given us then already it will have been worthwhile.

Farewell to Kimi Raikkonen (above) who, having been bought out of his Ferrari contract a year early, moves to rallying for 2010, an unusual way to exit the sport just two years after winning the World Championship. Farewell, too, to Toyota as the under-performing Japanese team announced its withdrawal from F1 shortly after the Abu Dhabi race (left). Despite his mixed results, many pundits named Lewis Hamilton (far left) as the driver of the year (Photos LAT)
Look at the results that appear after a race weekend and there is a BRDC Member involved somewhere! With championships coming to a close in the winter months, there is a chance to look at title results as well as race successes.

Take Rob Huff as an example, as the WTCC star has been in great form all season in the new Chevrolet Cruze. Rob took victory in the first race in Macau in November on his way to fifth in the championship, ending the season just four points behind triple champion Andy Priaulx. James Thompson’s season (in which he competed in four different touring car series) ended prematurely in Macau after he was involved in an accident in qualifying. His LADA was beyond repair and we wish James well for a speedy recovery from his injuries. James added a third in the Danish Touring Car Championship to his CV although his BTCC season ended when Johnny Herbert took over his Honda Civic.

James, along with Andy Priaulx and Ben Collins, took part in the endurance rounds of the Australian-based V8 Supercars Championship Series at Philip Island and Bathurst. The cars are notoriously difficult to adapt to, plus they were new circuits to James and Ben, so it was Andy that was the strongest, taking his Holden A number of Members tackled the Le Mans Series in 2009, particularly Silverstone where Nigel Mansell made his prototype debut sharing the factory Ginetta with his son Greg and Lawrence Tomlinson (below). The famous Bathurst 1000 endurance race attracted greater European interest than in recent seasons with Ben Collins (pictured right) joining James Thompson and Andy Priaulx in the entry. The trio also raced in the September endurance at Philip Island (Photos LAT and BAM Media).
than just a GT racer. Marino Franchitti proved to be one of the stars of LMP2 in the ALMS and scored 10 podiums in 10 races during the season.

Over in the DTM, Gary Paffett’s efforts to wrest a second title were thwarted by the Audi armada but four wins helped Gary to second in the championship. But for a retirement in the season opener, it could have been a different story.

GP2 was short of Members in 2009 with Karun Chandhok the only one on the grid, finishing 18th in the championship. Far busier was the opening double-header of GP2 Asia which boasted a podium finish in race one for James Jakes driving for David Sears’s Super Nova squad. Oliver Turvey took fourth in race two while Sam Bird joined the grid, too.

Joey Foster claimed the Australian F3 Championship thanks to a win in the double-header weekend at Sandown Park, while Sam Bird finished third in the Macau Grand Prix to end a somewhat frustrating season where his pace in the F3 Euro Series was hampered by bad luck.

The Le Mans Series came to an end at Silverstone in September where Darren Turner’s Lola-Aston Martin took fourth place, while much attention was on the Ginetta of Lawrence Tomlinson which was shared by Vice President Nigel Mansell, and Nigel’s son Greg. The car suffered gremlins early on but fought back up to 28th place by the end of the five-and-a-half hour race.

Richard Westbrook’s early season success in the Porsche Supercup was forced to play second-fiddle to his FIA GT Championship duties. In the one-make series, ninth was Richard’s reward for a part-season but he secured the GT2 title within the FIA GT Championship, with Rob Bell and Andrew Kirkaldy taking joint seventh in the class.

In a different type of sports car series, the new Formula Le Mans class, Members Luke Hines and Charlie Hollings became the first British drivers to race in the category at Silverstone. Luke took a fourth and a third, Charlie a seventh and a fifth. Alexander Sims was in action that weekend, too, the F3 Euro Series race winner winning both Radical European Masters races on an impressive sports car debut.

David Brabham’s successful season concluded with the American Le Mans Series LMP1 title, with Johnny Mowlem taking seventh in a season in which he marked himself out as more

Luke Hines (far left) and Charlie Hollings became the first Brits to race in the Formula Le Mans category at Silverstone in September, while Richard Westbrook’s decision to concentrate on the FIA GT Championship was a good one as he netted the GT2 crown (left). James Jakes (below left) had an impressive GP2 debut in Abu Dhabi in the opening double-header of the GP2 Asia series and Sam Bird ended a frustrating F3 season with a podium result in Macau (Photos LAT)
Over a century has passed since Don Melchor created a legend. When he discovered his finest Concha y Toro wines were missing, he spread the word that the devil lived in his cellar. From that day, the wine has been known as Casillero del Diablo, the devil’s cellar.
Storm in the USA

The battle for supremacy in this year’s IndyCar Series boiled down to an enthralling three-way tussle between BRDC Members Dario Franchitti and Ryan Briscoe, and Dario’s Target/Chip Ganassi Racing team-mate Scott Dixon. Each could have emerged as champion at the season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway in Florida, and not unusually in IndyCar competition, the outcome was determined by fuel strategy.

The three pretenders were in a league of their own as they disappeared into the sunset – quite literally as the 200 lap race began in late afternoon and finished well after dusk. Dario led from the pole but soon relinquished his advantage to “Dixie” who held sway until the first round of pit stops. Ryan then catapulted into the picture and dominated most of the latter stages. Unfortunately for team owner and BRDC Honorary Member Roger Penske, Ryan’s pace was such that he required a splash of fuel with six laps remaining. Ditto Dixon. Dario, after adopting a more conservative approach, stretched his fuel load and emerged with his fifth win of the season – and the championship.

It was Dario’s second IndyCar title in three years, providing full vindication of his decision to switch back to the open-wheel ranks after a disappointing 2008 season. The IndyCar series produced a thrilling season. Jeremy Shaw reports.
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in NASCAR. There was another reason for a little extra celebration, too: “When I won the championship in 2007, there were still two series [IRL and Champ Car], but this year it was one unified series and I got to race against everybody,” Dario said. “The competition level is higher than it has ever been because everybody is under one roof now so it’s great. It’s extra special.”

New Zealander Dixon, who also won five times, had to settle for second in the title chase, with 605 points to Dario’s 616. Aussie Ryan took third, just one point farther adrift.

Helio Castroneves claimed fourth in the standings in a second Penske Dallara-Honda, albeit a massive 171 points adrift. Helio missed the opening event while successfully defending himself from tax-evasion charges, and scored an emotional victory in the biggest race of the season, the Indianapolis 500. The Brazilian also won at Texas, but his championship challenge was undone by a couple of untimely errors.

A year had passed since the Indy Racing League merged forces with the Champ Car World Series, and the positivity that greeted what might be termed a “marriage of necessity” was largely maintained in 2009. Against that, the world economic recession hit the American racing scene hard. Fresh sponsorship packages were thin on the ground and several well-established teams found it difficult to keep pace.

The average field of 23 cars was down only one from 2008. That was the good news. The bad news was that the top two teams – Ganassi and Penske – were even more dominant. Surprisingly, the only interloper into victory lane in 17 races was perennial underdog Dale Coyne Racing. Coyne’s first win in 25 years came courtesy of a brilliant drive at Watkins Glen by another BRDC Member, Justin Wilson. He was unlucky not to win on the streets of St. Petersburg, too.

Former IRL champion Dan Wheldon placed 10th overall for former powerhouse Panther Racing, while fellow BRDC Member Mike Conway was 17th – and third in the Rookie standings.

BRDC members Darren Manning and Alex Lloyd book-ended the season with strong eighth-place finishes. Darren’s effort at St. Petersburg wasn’t enough to satisfy IndyCar legend A.J. Foyt, but there are high hopes that Alex’s excellent one-off appearance for Newman/Haas/Lanigan in the final race will transfer into a full-time ride for 2010.
A GOLDEN SEASON

Ian Titchmarsh looks back at the BRDC Gold Star

Printing deadlines for the Autumn issue of the Bulletin meant that much had happened by the time it appeared. However, the new BRDC website will have enabled Members to keep in touch with the situation as it evolved over the last few rounds of the Formula 1 World Championship, the Indy Racing League and the American Le Mans Series.

Traditionally the Gold Star year has always ended on 31st October which has the effect of including the 2008 Brazilian Grand Prix in the 2009 reckoning and excluding the first Abu Dhabi GP. Our new World Champion Jenson Button took over at the top of the points table in early June after winning the Turkish GP, displacing Adam Carroll who had been scoring heavily in the 2008/2009 A1GP World Cup of Motorsport. Since then, although Jenson has stayed on top, he has not won another race whilst Adam has not been able to race at all.

Meanwhile Dario Franchitti and Ryan Briscoe were slugging it out in the IRL in their battle with Scott Dixon for the championship, all the while closing in on Jenson’s Gold Star points lead. Dario emerged from the final round at Homestead-Miami both as winner of the race and, for the second time, IRL Champion. Ryan had to settle for third in the IRL table and third (by a single point) in the Gold Star to Dario whose sixth place at Petit Le Mans proved decisive. In fact, Dario is the only Member to have scored points in more than two series this year, having also taken in the Daytona 24 hours in which he finished fifth.

Fifty years since his celebrated father and BRDC Vice President, Sir Jack Brabham, won the first of his three F1 World Championships, and 20 years after winning the British F3 title, David Brabham shared the ALMS LMP1 title with his American co-driver Scott Sharp. David scored enough Gold Star points to secure fifth place in the final standings, just three shy of Adam Carroll while fellow Aussie Mark Webber, at one stage an outsider for the Gold Star after his win in Germany, failed to score again until his resounding success in Brazil, to leave him six points adrift.

So it’s two Gold Stars for Jenson, one for his World Championship and the other on the traditional points basis while the Club has also awarded a Gold Star to Dario for his IRL title, coming as it has after his first title and Indy 500 victory in 2007 and a sabbatical year in NASCAR in 2008.

It is interesting to reflect that in 2008 Lewis Hamilton won the Gold Star with 248 points after winning five GPs from 18 races. His margin over the next best points scorer – Rob Huff in the WTCC – was 104 points. This year Jenson has won the Gold Star with 246 points after winning six GPs from 17 races but his margin over Dario was just 31 points. Last year 32 Members scored Gold Star points: this year, admittedly helped to some extent by the ability to score class points in endurance races, 58 Members have earned points. Space does not permit all to be included in the table here but the full roll of honour can be found on the Club’s website.
Jason Plato triumphed in the BRDC Silver Star as Ian Titchmarsh describes.

In one of the closest finishes ever (worthy of Silverstone but in fact at Brands Hatch!), Jason Plato snatched the Silver Star from Colin Turkington’s grasp in the final race of 30 in the HiQ MSA British Touring Car Championship.

Jason’s Racing Silverline, RML-prepared Chevrolet Lacetti crossed the line a scant 1.485 seconds ahead of Colin’s Team RAC, WSR-prepared BMW 320si. Second place was enough to secure Colin his first BTCC overall drivers’ title in his eighth season in the series, a cause for much celebration at the circuit into the wee small hours, so that being pipped at the post for what would have been his first Silver Star, after being favourite for much of the season, was not uppermost in his mind.

In the BTCC all points count but for the Silver Star only the best 12 results are relevant so that, although Colin ended up with a higher total than Jason, the latter’s seven wins, four second places and one third gave Jason his fifth Silver Star against Colin’s six wins, four seconds and two thirds. Jason’s last gasp success was all the more remarkable since it was achieved with a hat-trick on that final day at Brands, a feat only achieved once before (by Dan Eaves at Thruxton in 2005), the first of which being by a mere fifteen-thousandths of a second as he squeezed over the line a whisker ahead of Tom Chilton’s much-improved Ford Focus ST. Had Jason not beaten Tom and all other results been the same, he would have tied with Colin, which would have been broken in Jason’s favour on the basis of one more second place, but if Colin had beaten Jason in that very last race Colin would have won the Silver Star by two points.

Tom’s day at Brands produced two podiums and more than doubled his points tally for the year, bringing him into the top 10 for the first time. Mat Jackson had a disappointing weekend at Brands Hatch with no finishes in the top 10 although he held on to third place in the final standings. Stephen Jelley in the second Team RAC BMW produced a fine pair of wins at Rockingham in the penultimate BTCC event to move up to fifth overall while new Full Member Adam Wilcox was able to join fellow British GT competitor Aaron Scott in the final top 10 with a couple of podiums in the final British GT Championship races at Brands in late September.

And finally a word for Sam Bird, the only Member to score Silver Star points from Formula 3 this year. Sam spent most of the year in the F3 Euro Series but took time out to compete in the British F3 International Series races at the new Portimao circuit in the Algarve, coming away with a second place.
Push the Button

Britain has a new Formula 1 World Champion. Bob Constanduros looks at Jenson Button’s remarkable season.

In footballing parlance Jenson Button’s year would be called a season of two halves. Early in the year, there were thoughts that it would be all over by early summer as Jenson won one race after another. But then, ironically enough, in the cool temperatures of an English summer, it all began to fall apart. There were various reasons for the lack of success in the second half, but Jenson attempted to remain upbeat throughout, and a champion’s drive let him clinch the championship with one race to go.

The basic story of how Jenson nearly didn’t have a drive at all is well known, how Honda pulled out of Formula One and how team principal Ross Brawn rescued his team but at a cost. Ross’s preparations for the 2009 season had been exemplary. Never was there to be such a huge change in technical regulations with the rewriting of the aerodynamic specifications plus slick tyres among the changes. But with typical Brawn attention to the job in hand, the task was tackled early in the previous season by the then Honda team, made that much easier by the fact that the 2008 car wasn’t competitive and any development would be worthless.

Jenson was encouraged, but then came the bombshell that Honda was pulling out of Formula One. Work on the new car continued, however, and Jenson kept faith with his team, even if its future looked bleak. Nick Fry worked on securing the team’s future, Ross Brawn kept the technical staff working on the car, and Jenson kept himself fit. One of Ross’s tasks was to secure the best engine deal possible. Clearly he couldn’t use a Honda engine, but this had been fairly low down the list in performance terms the previous season, so it was almost a relief to look elsewhere. McLaren and Mercedes were very positive, however, and helped secure a Mercedes deal.

Jenson instantly had at his disposal one of the best engines in the formula, one that would be proved by the fact that he used the same engine to win the Bahrain, Spanish and Monaco Grands Prix, and one that would also be used during the 90-minute Friday morning sessions in Germany and Hungary. It was a strong engine but the lack of available time to study its installation and position would cost the team later in the season.

“When you have to put an engine in a car in six weeks, when it normally takes six months, there are going to be some compromises,” said Ross towards the end of the year. “Our car is too heavy and its centre of gravity is too high.” The gearbox had been lifted six millimetres to marry up to the Mercedes crankshaft which compromised the rear suspension.

But Brawn had another ace up his sleeve. He had been quick to realise that there was space in the regulations for what became known as the double diffuser. Williams and Toyota also realised that this aerodynamic tweak would be permitted while others remained doubtful. By the time it had been officially ratified, Jenson and Ross were halfway to their first World Championship.

On March 6th, the Brawn Grand Prix team was officially announced and on the same day the new car was given its shake-down at nearby Silverstone. Three days later it was at Barcelona for its only four-day test with both drivers present. But when Jenson met Brawn-Mercedes on that first day, after ten laps he was faster than everyone else, including those who had been testing for weeks.

The opening seven races of the season are legendary, of course. Two poles and two wins in the first two races. Fifth on the grid in China followed by third in the wet race, before wins flowed again in Bahrain, another from pole in Spain; in Monaco, too, and then in Turkey. After seven of the 17 races in the calendar, Jenson had 61 pts, 26 more than his nearest rival and teammate Rubens Barrichello while third in the series another six points behind was Sebastian Vettel.

The next stop on the championship trail was Silverstone, and surprise surprise, the weather was cool. Just as Jenson hoped to delight his home fans with a win, his championship began to cool with the weather. Red Bull Racing, only marginally further away from Silverstone than Brawn, began to reap the rewards of their early season development – including double diffuser - the pace of which would accelerate now right through to the final race. The same would later be said of McLaren once its front wing endplates were tamed into giving Lewis Hamilton what he wanted.

Statistically, in the next 10 races, Sebastian Vettel would score 55 points, Rubens Barrichello and Mark Webber would score 42, Hamilton would score 40 and even Kimi Raikkonen, for whom Ferrari would soon cease development, scored 39. Jenson scored 34 points.

The question is: what changed? Typically, it was the combination of a number of factors. As mentioned, Jenson’s rivals began to catch up; it

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A truly remarkable season. Jenson Button celebrates a podium finish in the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in a weekend that allowed him to race without the pressure of the championship for the first time. The main goal of the title was achieved two weeks earlier in Brazil (Photo LAT)
had taken time for other teams to develop their double diffuser. Adrian Newey’s Red Bull Racing design for instance, while superb in detail, was not easily adapted to the new aero tweak.

At the same time, Brawn began to be hurt by the drawbacks of its late engine choice, the handicaps earlier detailed by Ross. But perhaps more importantly – and one which would differentiate Jenson from team-mate Rubens Barrichello – was the curious case of track temperatures.

Jenson has always been known as a very smooth driver. He is good at looking after his tyres. In warm temperatures, he can conserve his rubber while others are using up their tyres. But in the cool of Silverstone and the Nurburgring, and even others later in the season like Monza and even Singapore, he was outclassed by those who were able to heat their tyres.

Jenson himself would admit to other problems. “It was such a great start to the season but the last few races were pretty stressful for me as the pace was there but for whatever problems we had in qualifying we struggled a few times. It made it very difficult for me not just because mentally that hurts when you are not able to get the best out of the car on that day. But also I read too many papers and magazines. There were some negative comments. It is tough when you are a driver and you know that you are at the top of your game.”

And Jenson revealed that, like many people at the peak of their sport, he needs moral as well as material support. “The people around me have been so supportive and I’ve needed them. I might come across like I don’t care about this in the past but that is just putting on a brave face. It is showing a weakness, I suppose, if you say it is hurting and it is stressful but I can say it now. It was a very tough few months and I needed the people around me and especially the team to fight for this.”

Then it came to Brazil, the horror of qualifying 14th and seeing his team-mate on pole position. He admitted to feeling sick after qualifying, but his team – those close to him – shored up his morale and after a fantastic race from 14th to a championship-clinching fifth at the flag, he was able to reflect on the last few races.

“Today wasn’t any different to the last couple of races,” he explained. “I made the moves when I had to in the races and my pace was good when I was in clear air in the last few races. But the qualifying is something I haven’t been able to get my head around the last few races and I don’t know why that is. Maybe it is the stress of it all, maybe it’s just that we haven’t got it together and I think it is probably the latter.”

“I haven’t enjoyed the last few weeks and it has been difficult. Even though you have got the lead it is very, very difficult. Even if you’re performing very well and you’re beating the people that you’re challenging in the championship it is still stressful. You go to bed at night thinking about the qualifying and the race and you wake up thinking about it and during that period of sleep you think about it as well.”

Fifth and a fighting third were the results of the last two races. One gave Jenson the World Championship, the second demonstrated why he is World Champion. It had been a tricky season, but everyone knows that the tough get going when the going gets tough, and that is what was required of him in Brazil which the resulting reward.
Many of the BRDC Rising Stars have enjoyed success in 2009, says Ian Titchmarsh.

This year the Club is able to celebrate six champions from among the Rising Stars who have been with us all year while we are delighted to welcome three more young drivers who have come to prominence during 2009: James Cole, winner of the MSA Formula Ford Championship of Great Britain, Daniel MacKenzie, winner of the National Class in the British Formula 3 International Series, and Chrissy Palmer, winner of the prestigious Brands Hatch Formula Ford Festival.

It has been a truly outstanding year for 21-year-old Will Bratt from Banbury. In the last issue of the Bulletin we noted that he was lying fourth in Euroseries 3000 with seven races remaining. In the last two of these at Monza, against some strong and experienced opposition, Will scored a win and a second to tie on points with Italian former GP2 racer Marco Bonanomi, a deadlock which was only broken in Will’s favour when the number of second places was taken into account, each having had four wins. The prize was a fully funded drive in the current GP2 Asia series. Despite racing in Europe last year and this, Will has also found time to take a degree in History from the University of Oxford.

In the UK, Western Australian Daniel Ricciardo followed up second place in last year’s Formula Renault Eurocup with...
a resounding performance in the British Formula 3 International Series, six wins helping him to secure the title well before the end of the season. Daniel has already topped testing in Formula Renault 3.5 before tackling the Macau Grand Prix and then an F1 test with Red Bull. At 20 years of age Daniel’s future is looking very bright indeed.

On the BTCC-support bill there were titles for Tim Bridgman in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, Dean Smith in the Formula Renault UK Championship and 15-year-old Sarah Moore, following in her brother and BRDC Rising Star Nigel’s wheel-tracks in the Ginetta Junior Championship. Former British Formula Ford Champion Callum MacLeod was another to venture into Europe seeking success on a shoestring and has come away with the Cup Class of the Spanish-based European F3 Open Series.

Will Bratt (left) won the Euroseries 3000 title on a tie-break that was only resolved on a countdown to the number of second places! Sarah Moore (right) won the Ginetta Junior Championship and also bagged the Autosport Club Driver of the year Award in a season that won her many admirers with some excellent racecraft, while Callum MacLeod (right) won the Cup Class in the European F3 Open Series.
Jonathan Adam

Acknowledged as the top rookie by many BTCC pundits, Jonathan has had a fine debut season in the BTCC. He has fully justified the faith shown in him and the efforts made by the Superstars programme last winter to help broker his drive in the championship. Finishing eighth overall having become a consistent front-runner bodes well for 2010 if he can continue in the series.

As we all know, participation in our demanding sport does not always result in us achieving all our goals. The 2009 Superstars had mixed results on track this year, but all were able to benefit from the programme put in place by the BRDC to progress their careers. There have been many new initiatives put in place to help the young drivers and I am proud of how they have all immersed themselves in both these and club activities, although some practice before next year’s Clay shoot might not go amiss, gents!

Star Performers

The BRDC Superstars have enjoyed differing seasons as Tim Harvey explains.

Wayne Boyd

The jump from Formula Ford to F3 with wings and slicks was never going to be easy. In a difficult learning year Wayne reminded everyone of his outstanding talent when he won his first F3 race in the wet at Donington Park, but his final championship position of 12th reflects his season overall. A winter spent testing will undoubtedly help Wayne to challenge for the championship in 2010.

James Calado

Finishing as runner up in Formula Renault UK will have been a disappointment to James after 10 pole positions and eight race wins. His four non-scores lost him the title to Dean Smith but it was a hugely impressive effort in only his second season of car racing. He graduates to F3 in 2010 with support from the Racing Steps Foundation and was a BRDC/McLaren Autosport finalist for 2009.

Adam Christodoulou

After failing to find a F3 budget for this year, Adam took the gamble to move to the USA and race in the Star Mazda series. It has been a spectacular success, winning the championship in his first year and the $100,000 prize and a drive in Formula Atlantic for 2010. Despite all the travel, Adam has found time to fully participate in all the Superstars training opportunities.

Riki Christodoulou

A late deal with Fortec let Riki contest the British F3 International Series. Always a front runner, Riki won his first F3 race brilliantly at Snetterton on his way to claiming fifth in the championship despite a few retirements. Nevertheless: an outstanding debut F3 season and, as ever, Riki is a staunch BRDC Superstars supporter.
Dean Stoneman
Dean finished the year a highly creditable fourth overall in Formula Renault. Always one of the fastest drivers, Dean was only held back by finances as his family-run team competed with those with over double his budget. The Superstars scheme helped enormously with Dean’s training, giving him one less thing to worry about.

Andrew Jordan
Andrew was not overawed by his illustrious team-mates Matt Neal and Fabrizio Giovanardi but is still learning the craft of British Touring Car racing. Andrew finished ninth in the championship but showed tremendous speed and consistency towards the end of the year.

Andrew Meyrick
Contesting the Le Mans Series with the Kolles Audi team looked like a dream drive for Andy. However the team struggled to learn the complexities of the car and Andy suffered from a lack of testing. Highlight of Andy’s season was a fourth place finish at the Nurburgring. Nevertheless he was always one of the team’s fastest drivers and hopefully is carving out a career in sports cars in the future. Andy has also contested several historic races this year most recently winning the final FIA Historic Formula One race at Paul Ricard in his father’s March 761.

Stuart Hall
Stuart was finally confirmed this year as a works driver for Aston Martin Racing in the Le Mans Series. The highlight of his season was a third place at the Nurburgring and low point was crashing at Le Mans. However, he remains one of the most driven and competitive drivers I have ever met.

Sean Edwards
Sean’s sponsor for Porsche Supercup withdrew two weeks before the start of the season so Sean has had to make do with guest drives in various championships. However he has excelled every time an opportunity has arisen. He drove in the FIA GT championship and the German Carrera Cup.

Jason Moore
Like his fellow FPA graduates, Jason has found the step up to F2 and the calibre of drivers he now faces a tough challenge. His speed has improved during the year and, with the help of Christian Vann as driver coach, so has his confidence.

Andy Meyrick
Contesting the Le Mans Series with the Kolles Audi team looked like a dream drive for Andy. However the team struggled to learn the complexities of the car and Andy suffered from a lack of testing. Highlight of Andy’s season was a fourth place finish at the Nurburgring. Nevertheless he was always one of the team’s fastest drivers and hopefully is carving out a career in sports cars in the future. Andy has also contested several historic races this year most recently winning the final FIA Historic Formula One race at Paul Ricard in his father’s March 761.

Alexander Sims
The 2008 McLaren Autosport BRDC winner Alexander Sims finished fifth in the F3 Euro Series in his debut F3 season. Following his first win at Nurburgring he was a front-runner all season. Immensely talented and versatile as well (he comfortably won a Radical European Cup race at Silverstone) his future looks bright. A proud BRDC member, he even wears the socks!

Oliver Turvey
Oliver graduated to ‘big power’ from F3 to Formula Renault 3.5 with aplomb. Winning at Monaco on his first visit to the track was outstanding. He has been a consistent front-runner and finished fourth in the championship in his debut year. Oliver makes the final step prior to F1 in 2010 moving up to GP2 with support from the Racing Steps Foundation.

Overall an excellent class this year, and I’m sure all BRDC members will wish our Superstars every success in 2010 and beyond.

Tim Harvey
Director, BRDC Superstars.
Fifty years after his celebrated father, Sir Jack Brabham, won the first of his three Formula 1 World Championships, and in his 16th participation at Le Mans, David Brabham won the French classic and also secured the LMP1 category of the American Le Mans Series. For the last three years David has been the lead driver for Duncan Dayton’s Patron Highcroft Racing team in the Honda Performance Development Acura ARX chassis, sharing with American Scott Sharp.

While Sir Jack’s fame as a driver was very much in single-seaters (“I don’t think he really enjoyed sports cars all that much,” says his youngest son) David has been one of the most highly regarded exponents of sports-prototype and GT racing for nearly 20 years. Yet an overall win at Le Mans continued to elude him until this year although the opportunity to take it was fortuitous to say the least. “I had been interviewed on the stage at this year’s Autosport Show for winning the GT1 category with Aston Martin and mentioned that I had nothing fixed up for ’09 since Highcroft were not planning on doing the race. Nic Minassian heard this and asked afterwards whether I would be interested in driving for Peugeot. Two days later an email arrived from Peugeot asking me to give them a call.” And so it was that David found himself sharing one of the 908 HDIs with Alex Wurz and Marc Gene in a trouble-free run.

This outright victory was not David’s first visit to the Le Mans podium. That had been in 1993 in somewhat controversial circumstances when his TWR Jaguar XJ220C, shared with David Coulthard and John Nielsen, had raced under appeal and won the
GT category but was subsequently excluded. “With that huge crowd of people around the podium at the end, you feel like you’ve won the race”, a feeling which was to be repeated with Aston Martin in 2007 and 2008. “Although the podium experience was the same as before, and it had been pretty manic in the fortnight leading up to the race as I expected, what I was unprepared for was the recognition which came afterwards. My phone was jammed with literally hundreds of calls and texts.” David’s profile, already high within the world of sports car racing, reached new levels. “I also believe that it was one of Dad’s proudest moments”. These days Sir Jack is unable to travel from Australia but he was tuned in to every hour of the race as it unfolded.

Sir Jack did not push any of his three sons into racing (“Mum was keener on my racing than Dad to start with,” says David) but once they showed an interest, he was there to help them all he could. Geoff, the oldest, led the way via British F3 to a very successful career in the American IMSA Camel GT series. Gary followed, also into British F3 in 1988. A year later it was David’s turn.

While Gary had been starring at the front of F3 in ’88, David had been finding his feet in Class B in his first year of racing in Europe. The seeds had been seriously sown at the Australian Grand Prix in Adelaide the previous November. After racing during 1987 in New Zealand, South America and the USA, David arrived back in Australia to contest the final round of the F2 Championship for the CAMS Gold Star. “I started 38th at the very back of the grid, round the corner, after the engine just stopped in qualifying.” There followed a heated exchange with Sir Jack as David sat on the grid with the Formula 1 world watching. “I was so fired up by what Dad had said that I drove like I’d never driven before. I was 11th at the end of the first lap, I was passing cars everywhere, going for gaps that shouldn’t have been possible. With a lap to go, I
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took the lead and won. I heard afterwards that Dad had been so impressed by my progress and lap times that he grabbed hold of Ken Tyrrell and told him to watch.

If there had ever been any doubts in Sir Jack’s mind about his youngest son’s future as a professional racing driver, that Gold Star race in Adelaide resolved them once and for all. The early months of 1988 in the fledgling Formula Vauxhall Lotus category had not been good but the switch to F3 Class B was a boost. “At Spa in the wet I was having a ball, sliding the car through Eau Rouge and loving every minute. I came in at the end of qualifying to be told by Gary that I was second. I assumed that this was second in class but he said ‘No, second overall. Hadn’t you better slow down!’ Gary was on pole.” From half a season David took five wins, five pole positions, and finished third in Class B.

For 1989 David landed a drive with Bowman Racing which had attracted sponsorship from Jewson Builders’ Merchants. The 1989 British F3 season was fought out between David in his Volkswagen-powered Ralt RT33 and the West Surrey Engineering-run Ralt RT33 with Mugen Honda motivation of Allan McNish. Whilst all was fine between David and Allan on track, technical issues involving engines intervened from the British Grand Prix onwards and were only resolved the following February. In the meantime David had won the Macau Grand Prix against the cream of F3 stars including one Michael Schumacher. “With all the fuss going on over the British championship, this was a massively important result and I felt vindicated. At that time it looked like Allan had won the championship and I didn’t get my points back until February.”

On the crest of a wave David signed with Middlebridge Racing for a season of Formula 3000 in 1990 with Damon Hill as team-mate. “Then Middlebridge, who had bought the Brabham F1 team, said that F3000 wasn’t going to happen and asked me at less than a week’s notice to drive at Phoenix in the US GP. I just didn’t feel I could do myself justice and declined.” However, David did begin his F1 career at Imola which set the tone for a year of DNQs or DNFs with the Judd V8-engined BT58 and BT59. “The team ran out of money and I had the feeling that they didn’t want me. If there had been another driver, I’d have been number three. Later on I was told by guys who worked on the cars that they were instructed to fit Stefano Modena’s used parts to my car.”

With no other F1 prospects for 1991, David turned to sports cars, finishing second at Monaco to Derek Warwick in the Jaguarsport Intercontinental Challenge series for the XJR15. This led to a place alongside Derek and Teo Fabi in the Silk Cut Jaguar XJR14 World Sportscar Championship team and wins at the Nurburgring and Sugo. Three years later David had his second and final shot at F1 with Nick Wirth’s ill-fated Simtek team in which Sir Jack had become a shareholder. Although David qualified for every race in 1994, results on limited resources were disappointing so that, although Simtek carried on for a few races into 1995, David was no longer with them, having called time on his F1 aspirations.

Since then David has become one of the most sought after sports car drivers. He has been part of the ALMS since its inception; in 1996 he won the Japanese GTC Championship sharing a McLaren F1 with John Nielsen. A year later, paired with older brother Geoff in a BMW 318i, he won the Super Touring Bathurst 1000. Having terrorised the Audis with the eccentric and unbearably noisy Panoz both in the ALMS and at Le Mans for several years, he became part of Team Bentley at Le Mans in 2003, “But our car [shared with Johnny Herbert and Mark Blundell] had all the problems and we had to settle for second place but we had a great time together.”

David’s straightforward and amiable manner, coupled with his exceptional ability to extract the maximum from a sports-prototype or GT car over long races have endeared him not just to the top teams for which he has driven but also the fans. In 2008 he was voted ‘Most Popular Driver’ by ALMS fans and Motors TV viewers and was first team choice from the American Auto Racing Writers’ and Broadcasters’ Association. And around a hectic programme of racing, which shows no sign of abating, David has led the MSA’s Elite driver training programme since its inception in 2007 as he seeks to put back into the sport for the benefit of young drivers the lessons he has learned over the last 25 years.
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After the Falkland Island’s debacle in 1982, I felt my relations with Argentina might prove a little strained and to continue searching for motor cars there counter-productive. By that time there was a shortage of countries with undiscovered cars – I suppose that I had had most of them already! Out came the atlas and I seriously considered giving up the search, but I suppose once “blooded” it is very difficult to stop…

Sometime during late 1983 I applied for a business visa to visit Cuba in order to look for some lost racing cars including a Jaguar D-type which Andrew Whyte, the Jaguar guru, told me had disappeared. I reckoned that I needed a holiday but after several months I had forgotten the visa so imagine my surprise when a phone call came from the Cuban Embassy in London telling me to report there to have it issued as I would be leaving the following Thursday for Havana. I thought it was someone taking the mick but it was for real… my Mother freaked as she said I would never return as some friend of hers had been locked up during the ’60s for several years. Cuba in those days was not the somewhat laid back country you see in the travel brochures now.

It was with some trepidation that I boarded my flight. We did not hold out a great deal of hope of finding anything as my visa lasted for only seven days. I was escorted off the plane straight into a black Lada estate car complete with translator and chauffeur/bodyguard. We were whisked straight out of the airport – no Customs or Immigration procedures – and taken to the Havana Libre (read Hilton Hotel pre 1960). It is the only time I have been treated as a serious VIP anywhere! The hotel was dreadfully run down with only one lift working and the food practically non-existent – you went to the restaurant and your food was weighed – actually this was common practice in Eastern Bloc countries. I explained to my “team” what types of car we were looking for and we set off into the unknown… Havana is the most wonderful place, a serious time-warp with an enormous number of ’50s American cars all over the place, some in quite outstanding condition.

Jet-lagged and generally knackered, I met my “team” after breakfast and was taken to see a 1906 Cadillac which was overpriced and really not what I was looking for. The game rules were made perfectly plain to me – I was never to discuss price with the owners of whatever vehicle I wanted to buy and if I did, it was on to the next aeroplane back to Europe! All negotiations took place when the owners were not present and the Cuban government would then agree a mutually beneficial deal. I explained that I was looking for an old competition Jaguar which has to be like looking for a needle in a haystack in a country as big as Cuba. However, that afternoon I was...
shown a very tired MkVII saloon with one door and a “7” stuck on its bonnet – at least my guardians were beginning to get the message.

On the second day I was a bit desperate on how to continue the search when I saw this small blue car parked on the quayside. It could have been a “special” and my driver wanted to drive on, saying it was an MG. Eventually he was persuaded to stop and on examination it turned out we had struck gold as the “special MG” was in fact an early Maserati A6GCS in appalling condition fitted with a Skoda engine and gearbox but who cared – I had proved to myself and more importantly to the “team” that there was a genuine possibility of finding serious machinery! This was the first of some 25 cars we bought and the Maserati really was the turning point of the entire trip as we all became most enthusiastic – no longer were old Chevrolet Bel Airs being offered and the serious search had begun. The driver then had a stroke of luck noticing an old convertible lurking in a backyard and that is how the BMW 507 Coupe was found

I was lucky that no-one had seriously searched for cars on the island previously. A Ferrari Mondial had been bought by a Dutch diplomat in 1980 but most people were only interested in the old American cars. The Cuban Grand Prix for sports cars had been an annual event until 1960, but period photographs simply did not exist. There was a total lack of interest in motor sport and it did not help researching the few old race pictures that I had unearthed as it turned out that the majority of the competitors had come from overseas. It was therefore practically impossible to identify the Cuban-owned cars.

When day three dawned, and remember my visa ran out in four days, we set off to a very scruffy little village outside Havana because the driver had heard of a Jaguar languishing – this was the norm as every old car “languished” in Cuba. When we arrived at the address I got out of the Lada to begin the search and discovered an E-type bonnet resting against a hen house guarded by an enormous man-eating dog. I did my sums and realised what we had found – E-types were first manufactured in 1961, which was two years after the Revolution so there was no way such a car could have found its way to Cuba, thus the car was quickly identified as an XKSS. Then one thing led to another – we could not find the owner but risking my neck I clambered over a garden fence at another house and rummaged under a tarpaulin and lo and behold there was the complete, albeit damaged monocoque with front suspension, chassis numbers and so forth! The adrenaline was flowing and I had to be careful not to show excessive excitement to my new friends and we decided to await the owner’s return. Manuel, we shall call him, arrived back and seemed quite willing to sell the car with a load of spare parts – such as a Weber spare jet box for example. “Come back tomorrow”, he said “and I shall have the missing parts for you, but do telephone first!” I shall now shoot ahead a couple of days – we telephoned and telephoned and it was “manana” every time so I seriously panicked as I could see myself on the Iberia flight with nothing really accomplished … eventually we were summoned back to Manuel’s house and how can I ever forget the moment when we arrived to see a second XKSS Jaguar, this time a very complete car sitting on its flat tyres outside his house! Suffice to say I ended up buying the two Jaguars plus a load of spare parts. On a later trip I brought back a second correct engine and that most rare item, a D-type gearbox!

‘Twas not the end of the Cuban story as I still have my 1957 Ferrari Testa Rossa, another
stoke of good fortune. During the negotiations which were done on the telex from England, we were having a little disagreement over the final price so as a peace offering they threw in an old Ferrari. Now I, who had never seen or heard of this car, assumed it had to be the remains of an old 250 GT but, being a person who never turns down an opportunity, agreed to the deal and then forgot all about it! Three months later I happened to be in Pakistan shooting wild boar with some friends when I received a telex from Fiona to say that we had ended up with a Testa Rossa chassis totally complete and standing on its wheels! I had owned various such machines over the years so we decided to keep and rebuild the car and have it to this day. We ran the car at the Goodwood hillclimb a few years ago, otherwise it is used as a fun machine for competing in non-competitive events. There were a number of other cars that I found and brought back to Europe. Significant among these were two very complete Mercedes 300SL roadsters found in the same open shed, both fitted with the rare Rudge wheels. Amongst others were four 300SL Gullwings in poor condition and an assortment of somewhat more ordinary XK140 and XK150 Jaguars, Corvettes and an MGA. I would love to return to Cuba but sadly it would be a wholly different experience today without the excitement and adventure that I am certain is no longer there. Occasionally I receive telephone calls (reversed charges of course) from “Manuel” but the old Cuba has gone, like the old race cars, and all he offers me now is that old Gullwing, probably still with a Volkswagen engine that I had turned down all those years ago.
No British Grand Prix would be complete without the Red Arrows which thrilled the crowds before the race itself (top). Sebastian Vettel (left) was a dominant winner of the British Grand Prix, his first dry-weather victory, for the locally-based Red Bull Racing team. The FIA GT Championship kicked off Silverstone’s promoted events calendar (right). Reigning champions Vitaphone Racing led but Ryan Sharp/Karl Wendlinger (pictured following) scored back-to-back Tourist Trophy wins. Jenson Button (far right) came to Silverstone with high hopes of a win at home. It didn’t happen but crowd support for him was huge (Photos LAT, Jakob Ebrey and DPPI).
The BRDC Clubhouse looked impressive for the Grand Prix Ball (left). Lewis Hamilton (right) had a disappointing British Grand Prix but he remained a favourite with the fans as the Force India team brought glamour to the paddock (below). The RAC Tourist Trophy was fought out by the FIA GT Championship in May with a superb weekend of sports car racing and television character Big Chris, from children’s programme Roary the Racing Car, was a popular visitor (bottom right). Silverstone’s final big event was the Le Mans Series in September (left) which attracted a huge grid of sports-prototypes and GT cars (Photos Jakob Ebrey, LAT and DPPI).
Group C cars starred at the Silverstone Classic in July (above left) while the British F3 International Series made two visits to Silverstone, racing on the Grand Prix and International circuits. For BRDC Rising Star Daniel Ricciardo, the GP circuit was the only UK track on which he had previously raced (left). The World Series by Renault event in July brought the usual monster crowd and different shapes: the new DTM-style Meganes made their UK debut while the British Touring Car Championship (top) brought the usual hard racing over the August Bank Holiday weekend (Photos Jakob Ebrey, Renault Sport)
The British GT Championship was small on numbers but big on action, David and Geoffrey Jones taking the title in their Ascari KZ1R, pictured here on the International circuit in August (top left). A feature of the Silverstone Classic was the David Leslie Memorial Trophy Race for touring cars that brought Alan Minshaw’s immaculate BMW M3 back to the track (above right). Frank Sytner recreated memories of James Hunt in his Hesketh 308E in the Grand Prix Masters category at the Silverstone Classic (above) while Nigel Mansell followed up his Formula Renault 3.5 demonstration laps in July with a Le Mans Series race in September (above right). Fellow former F1 racer Johnny Herbert bounced back from the demise of Speedcar to race in the BTCC and made his debut at Silverstone in August while the glorious-sounding Lamborghini Super Trofeo cars had a delayed start to their season but were welcome visitors to the circuit. Andy Newall (left) drove Gordon McCulloch’s Alfa Romeo T33-3 in the World Sports Car Masters races with considerable brio! (Photos Jakob Ebrey)
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Launch time

From dry ice to a snowy Silverstone, Andrew Marriott looks back at some of the successful and not so successful Grand Prix launches.

Riccado Patrese and Thierry Boutsen were in there somewhere as the drums rolled to launch the Williams Renault FW13B. Television pictures were being beamed live across the Atlantic courtesy of new sponsors, the giant Canadian brewer Labatt’s, but they couldn’t see much. Unfortunately the smoke machine coupled with the dry ice device had gone into overtime and it took a full 30 seconds for the pair to emerge from the resultant smog. And it was all my fault. The look on the drivers’ faces was a picture, except that the media couldn’t see the choking grimaces because by then they too were enveloped in the man-made smokescreen.

During my career in the Formula 1 sponsorship and PR business I launched a couple of dozen Formula 1 cars including several Williams and Lotus machines which went on to be world beaters. In a journalistic and broadcasting role, I have attended countless other Grand Prix launches and even today there is always the excitement of seeing a new Formula 1 car unveiled.

But back to 1990 and the Williams launch. The car was to be revealed in the museum area at Williams’s Grove factory. At one end of this was a workshop where those cars heading for the museum were fettled for exhibition. It was behind a roll-up metal door. I decided we would turn this workshop into the launch area, the door would lift and Patrick Head’s latest challenger would be revealed. To add a little drama I’d arranged both a dry ice and a smoke machine.

In rehearsal the resultant effect was a little lame, so for the actual reveal I asked for the machines to be cranked up a few notches. Too many, as it happened. By the time the door came up the workshop was completely filled with this fug of smoke and dried ice and consequently Thierry and Riccardo’s somewhat ghost-like entrance. Fortunately the smoke did finally lift and all was revealed.

There were rather more media in attendance that day then when I organised the launch of the 1978 Williams FW06, Patrick Head’s first car for the team. This was after Frank had split from Walter Wolf and spent a season running a private March for Patrick Neve. The factory was in a former carpet warehouse on an industrial estate in Didcot and about 12 assorted press turned up – although they did include a cameraman and producer from the Visnews organisation and pictures of what turned out to be a very promising car went around the World. There were no drivers at that launch and we were missing one, a certain K. Rosberg, a few seasons later when we were called upon to launch Williams’ new Canon sponsorship for the 1985 season. We had another problem, too – the car for the upcoming year wasn’t ready so all we had to reveal was the logos of a well known Japanese camera company on the side of the outgoing car. Not exactly headline-making news.

As the said Missing Finn was a former World Champion, the launch was going to miss a certain something and there was considerable pressure on him to put in an appearance at the launch in a West End Theatre. But Keke decided that learning to fly...
a Lear Jet in Florida was more important. He really wanted to be a Flying Finn.

As it just happened we knew a man called Jeremy Barratt, the former PR chief of the BSM Driving School, who had a new venture he was promoting. It was actually a man-like robot which he controlled by a joystick and which had a loudspeaker buried somewhere in its robot face from which robot-style words came out.

It’s difficult to believe, but I came up with the idea of dressing this robot in a custom made race suit, complete with the Canon logos. And calling it Keke Robot. Quite why the Japanese bought into this ridiculous idea I don’t know. We revealed the car and introduced the two drivers: Nigel Mansell and Keke Robot. The robot, controlled by Jeremy behind a screen, waddled about the stage and the end result was prime time TV coverage on both ITV and BBC and a happy new sponsor.

Without any question the most spectacular Formula 1 launches we were involved in were run for the eccentric boss of Essex Petroleum. David Thieme. The Zoro-hatted American had taken over primary sponsorship of Team Lotus back in 1980. Thieme was in the oil spot market business and was for a while spectacularly successful buying and selling tankerfuls of crude oil as they plied the high seas.

He wanted to impress his 30 or so big customers by not only sponsoring Lotus and but also putting on the biggest and most lavish launches ever. At CSS Promotions we came up with the concept of using the Albert Hall as the venue. In addition to the car launch we would put on an evening’s entertainment. Thieme liked the idea but had one worry: he didn’t want anyone to go hungry, and he wanted to feed them. The only problem – there aren’t any kitchens at the Albert Hall.

But with big bucks most problems can be solved and thus his guests, the media and a lot of hangers-on were treated to a lavish dinner cooked by legendary South of France Chef Roger Verge and brought in by heated wagons from the kitchens of the Dorchester. When the meal was over Shirley Bassey was the entertainment.

A year later Thieme wanted it to be even bigger and it was probably our finest hour. Through Mark Thatcher, we managed to persuade his mother to turn up and press the flesh with all Mr Thieme’s key clients. Outside the Albert Hall we’d done a deal, via an ex-MI6 character we knew simply as, “Mac”. Mac oiled the wheels so we could park Mr Thieme’s double-decker hospitality bus in the bus lane opposite the Hall. Then we placed on top of the bus Mr Thieme’s helicopter and it looked pretty
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spectacular I can tell you. The helicopter, of course, didn’t actually land on this forerunner to current uber-hospitality units, we craned it there. No-one was quite sure if the roof of the bus was strong enough to take the weight of the chopper – there were a few anxious moments – but sure enough the bus did not become a single-decker...

This time the entertainment was no less than the legendary blind R & B star Ray Charles with the Scottish singer Barbara Dickson as the warm-up act, Verge again provided the food, someone won an Essex-liveried Lotus Esprit in a free raffle, the Albert Hall was swathed in mimosa and quite a lot of people got drunk on Dom Perignon champagne. The only problem was that before he had settled a fairly substantial part of our bill Mr Thieme's star had fallen to such a degree that he was sought by certain authorities – never to be seen at a race track again. Or wave a pen over a cheque book.

Indeed everyone who had quaffed the champagne had actually done so at the expense of CSS Promotions rather than Essex Petroleum – and most of them weren’t even our friends.

Colin Chapman was very much part of these Essex launches, of course. But the F1 reveal involving the Lotus boss I remember the most was at The Royal Garden Hotel in 1971. It was the launch of the Lotus 56B turbine Formula 1 car. Chapman could hardly contain his excitement: he absolutely loved that project complete with its four-wheel drive and Pratt & Witney jet engine.

After the speeches and the reveal he decided he had to start it up. He wanted everyone to experience the whoosh factor. There was one problem, the exit from the jet was angled upwards and the basement Banqueting Suite of the Royal Garden had a low ceiling with an elaborate sprinkling system. I'll spoil a good story – there wasn’t any jet fuel in the tanks, so everyone was spared a shower. Colin was crestfallen but soon recovered.

Another launch I organised was that of the first ever March Formula 1 car, the unloved 701. Remember how March arrived on the scene, works cars for the likes of Jo Siffert, Chris Amon and Mario Andretti, private Tyrrell examples for Jackie Stewart and Francois Cevert and they were all there that blustery day at Silverstone.

But how did we know it had been a success? After the speeches and the reveal he decided he had to start it up. He wanted everyone to experience the whoosh factor. There was one problem, the exit from the jet was angled upwards and the basement Banqueting Suite of the Royal Garden had a low ceiling with an elaborate sprinkling system. I’ll spoil a good story – there wasn’t any jet fuel in the tanks, so everyone was spared a shower. Colin was crestfallen but soon recovered.

For at least 10 seconds there was stunned silence, until everybody broke out in applause

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The 2009 BRDC Annual Awards Luncheon took place on Monday 7 December 2009 at the Intercontinental Hotel Ballroom, Park Lane, London. This, the third year in the current format of a Central London luncheon, was the strongest supported to date with 120 Members present and the vast majority of prize winners in attendance. Indeed, with three Formula One World Champion drivers present and a further two sending messages via the television screens to the assembled Members and their guests, this annual Club celebration has clearly established itself on the calendar of events at this time of year.

It was no surprise that in his Championship winning year, Jenson Button should win more prizes than any other Member. What was a surprise was that for the second year running, the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Gordon Brown MP, should make time in his busy schedule to attend a Club event and present Jenson with the Richard Seaman Trophy.

The Prime Minister, together with all present, were still reeling, excitedly, from the news announced only two hours earlier that Silverstone had secured a 17-year contract to host the British Grand Prix. Indeed, for many present the first they knew of this news was as the President welcomed everyone to the luncheon. It is fair to say that the champagne, generously sponsored by Ginetta, could not have been more welcome or necessary as good news and success was very much the toast of the day.

Jenson, winner of the principal Gold Star for 2009, also received a second Gold Star in recognition of his Formula One Drivers’ World Championship victory. A special Gold Star was awarded to Dario Franchitti in recognition of his second Indy Racing League Championship victory and of course his famous 2007
Indy 500 win. It was a pleasure to see Dario back at a Club event and his special trip over from the States was made all the more worthwhile with the receipt of the Earl Howe Trophy also.

Regular Master of Ceremonies, Tiff Needell, did an excellent job of keeping the whole afternoon moving with a sense of purpose and amusement. The most poignant moment for all was the award of the inaugural Henry Surtees Award, presented by the Club thanks to the generosity of John and Jane Surtees in memory of Henry who lost his life this summer in a racing accident. It will be awarded annually for an outstanding achievement by a BRDC Rising Star. The first name on the Award – an Award that has as its base John’s 1964 Guild of Motoring Writers’ Driver of the Year Trophy – is Daniel Ricciardo’s. Daniel was deeply touched to receive the award which was generously presented on John and Jane’s behalf by Jonathan Palmer.

Good food, good company, good news to celebrate, much success and a great way to start the run to Christmas. The BRDC Annual Awards 2009 have rightly been considered a roaring success.

Stuart Pringle
AWARD WINNERS

BRDC GOLD STARS
Jenson Button

BRDC SPECIAL GOLD STAR
Dario Franchitti

BRDC SILVER STAR
Jason Plato

THE BRUCE McLaren TROPHY
Mark Webber

THE CHRIS BRISTOW TROPHY
Dean Smith

THE COLIN CHAPMAN TROPHY
Ross Brawn

THE EARL HOWE TROPHY
Dario Franchitti

THE ERA CLUB TROPHY
Jenson Button

THE FAIRFIELD TROPHY
David Brabham

THE GRAHAM HILL TROPHY
Jenson Button

THE HENRY SURTEES AWARD
Daniel Ricciardo

THE INNES IRELAND TROPHY
Mark Webber

THE JOHN COBB TROPHY
Lewis Hamilton MBE

THE JOHN COOPER TROPHY
Daniel Ricciardo

THE JOHNNY WAKEFIELD TROPHY
Sebastian Vettel

THE NIGEL MOORES TROPHY
Team RAC (West Surrey Racing)

THE RICHARD SEAMAN TROPHY
Jenson Button

THE SILVERSTONE-LE MANS CHALLENGE
Jan Charouz, Tomas Enge, Stefan Mucke

THE SIR JACKIE STEWART AWARD
Adrian Newey

THE SPENCER CHARRINGTON TROPHY
Max Chilton

THE WOOLF BARNATO TROPHY
Jonny Kane

THE ACO AWARD
Allan McNish

The President welcomed guests with good news about the British Grand Prix (left) while Master of Ceremonies Tiff Needell conducted proceedings with his usual aplomb (right). BRDC Rising Star Max Chilton with his brother, Full Member Tom (far right). David Richards, a huge supporter of Jenson Button when he drove for him at BAR, chatted with the new World Champion (below), while Dean Smith (below left) was the newest Member present as he received the Chris Bristow Trophy. Gunners from the RAF Regiment were on parade once again this year (Photos Jakob Ebrey)

Ross Brawn with Hazel Chapman as he received the Colin Chapman Trophy at the end of an outstanding season of which Colin himself would have been proud (above). Dick Bennetts received the Nigel Moares Trophy on behalf WSR/Team RAC after a remarkable BTCC campaign as an independent team (left), while 1990 Le Mans winner Martin Brundle presented Jonny Kane with the Woolf Barnato Trophy (far left) for the highest-placed British driver in a British car at Le Mans (Photos Jakob Ebrey)
British Formula One Legends Damon Hill, Sir Stirling Moss and Jenson Button (far left). Red Bull driver Mark Webber received the Bruce McLaren Trophy from Bruce’s widow and Honorary Member Pat at the end of a season in which he scored his first Grand Prix victories (left). Red Bull designer Adrian Newey received the Sir Jackie Stewart Award for a brilliant season from its eponymous instigator (above right) while David Hobbs regaled everyone with a couple of his highly entertaining anecdotes (above far right). Christian Horner (right) received the Johnny Wakefield Trophy on behalf of Sebastian Vettel for the Fastest lap at Silverstone on his way to winning the 2009 British Grand Prix, while there was much silverware on display (bottom right).

Very well received was the appearance of David Brabham, with his father Sir Jack, via a video message as David had been racing in Australia that weekend while Damon and Bette Hill presented Jenson Button with the Graham Hill Trophy for the season’s most meritorious performance in single-seater racing (Photos Jakob Ebrey).
Managing an internet baby products business is probably a unique occupation for an aspiring Formula 1 driver but that is how the 2009 McLaren Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year occupies himself when not racing, or training for racing. The family business, Kiddisave, is the West Midlands answer to Mothercare and there is a business head on his young, 21-year-old shoulders as he enthuses about the growth of the online operation of a retail company which his father set up as a shop in Walsall in 1988, the year in which Dean was born.

Quite apart from his business background, another unusual feature of Dean’s career is that for a racing driver it started at the ripe old age of 13. These days it seems that the majority of youngsters who make an early impression in cars have been racing karts since they were scarcely old enough for their parents not to be customers of Kiddisave! Not so Dean. Starting at a modest level in his early teens, he soon became a winner, taking the Junior Rotax Max Club championship in only his second season. One year later Dean was racing in the Junior Rotax Max Grand Challenge Finals in Egypt, finishing sixth and setting fastest lap. On the back of this Dean was one of the drivers awarded a scholarship for the first year of the Formula BMW UK Championship in 2004.

This first season in car racing, dovetailed with a final fling in karting, brought modest success with third place in the Rookie class but Dean really began to make his mark in 2005 when a string of solid performances with Nexa Racing, including three wins, let him snatch the Formula BMW UK title from under the nose of favourite Sam Bird in the final races at Brands Hatch. This was a turning point in Dean’s career for it showed that, despite his limited racing experience in karts and cars compared with his rivals, he could beat them all.

It was also in 2005 that Dean became a BRDC Rising Star before moving on to the first of four successive seasons in Formula Renault. The first was not dissimilar to two years earlier in Formula BMW, solid performances which improved as the year progressed resulting in second place in the Graduate Cup but a modest ninth overall in the UK Championship at the end of the year. For 2007 a move to Richard Dutton’s Fortec squad put him up against teammate Duncan Tappy. It was Duncan who took more wins, scored more points and took the title but Dean ran him close all through the season at the end of which they were both Young Driver of the Year Finalists.

Staying with Fortec, Dean moved into the Formula Renault Eurocup for 2008. It was not a happy experience. The team struggled and Dean, very much a consistent front runner in the UK the year before, was only able to finish in the top 10 twice. As if to confirm that he was better than these results suggested, Dean was given a chance by Fortec to show what he could do in a Formula 3 car in the last two races of the British International Series at Donington Park. With very limited testing, two fourth places ahead of most of the regulars was the encouraging result but a F3 budget for 2009 was out of his reach.

Deciding to try to re-establish his reputation in a different arena at a price he could afford, and having enjoyed a one off drive in the VIP car in the Carrera Cup GB in 2008, Dean arrived at Brands Hatch at the start of this year ready for a full season in the championship. Up against the regulars, Dean took a fourth and a fifth in the two races before succumbing to the blandishments of Manor Competition’s Tony Shaw who persuaded him that together they could win the Formula Renault UK title which Manor had come so close to securing with Alexander Sims in 2008.

So late in the day was the deal done that there was no time for testing before the second weekend at Thruxton but from Donington onwards Dean was a winner, taking the flag first on seven occasions as he battled it out with James Calado for the title. It could not have been closer until the penultimate weekend at Rockingham where, after dedicated commitment to an enhanced training regime, Dean was absolutely in a class of his own, taking maximum points and setting himself up to take his second single-seater title in the final rounds at Brands Hatch.

For 2010 Dean is hoping to move up to GP3 but F2 and F3 must also be distinct possibilities following recent tests. With budgets for GP3 and F3 much the same, but F2 approximately half the cost, it will be interesting to see which way Dean decides now that he has the Young Driver of the Year title to his name but, whichever it is, he will undoubtedly be a driver to watch.

Dean Smith won the Formula Renault UK title at Brands Hatch in October despite missing the opening double-header as he was racing in the Porsche Carrera Cup GB. The Formula Renault crown was his second major single-seater title success, but his season culminated in winning the BRDC McLaren Autosport Young Driver of the Year Award (Photos Jakob Ebrey and LAT)
Rob Barff was delighted when asked to drive a Porsche. In many ways, he had a surprise…

So I am wondering why they’ve asked me to road test a Cayenne. Not the new Cayman? A 911 Turbo or the GT2?… No, a Cayenne. A 4x4, an SUV! I’m intrigued and have zero previous experience of this category of car.

Look in Wikipedia under SUV and this is what you get: A sport utility vehicle (SUV) is a generic marketing description for a vehicle similar to an estate car but built on a light-truck chassis. Usually equipped with four-wheel drive for on or off-road ability, some SUVs include the towing capacity of a pickup truck with the passenger-carrying space of a small van.

I’ve been asked to road test the latest derivative of the Porsche SUV, the Cayenne GTS, and to be honest it’s not as bad as perhaps I was first expecting! Look through any brochure and the Cayenne can been seen in all manner of unusual colours but the model that I’ll be using is a dark metallic grey with matt black roof bars. It looks normal, almost nice!

The car seems a little smaller than I was expecting, too. The GTS sits
lower than the standard Cayenne and although the difference is only 20mm it gives the GTS a much more squat composure. Inside the cabin, it’s exactly what you’d expect from a £56,000 motor car, an air of excellent build quality, acres of Alcantara and the usual Porsche logical ergonomic layout. This GTS is heavily laden with optional extras including the PDCC, the Porsche Dynamic Chassis Control system which offers the driver a choice of either Comfort, Normal or Sport settings on the engine map, speed of gearchange, choice of gear and suspension setting all at one touch of a button. The Cayenne is sold as a five-seater but the centre seat in the rear is really for emergency use only, it’s happier with four occupants inside the cabin rather than five.

So who is this car designed for? Surely they haven’t made this car just for people to go away skiing in? Or serious off-roaders? City types who buy the car for the badge? No, they’ve all bought 911s. Country folk? Range Rovers. Footballers? Nope, Range Rover Sports or those awful American Lincoln things…

And then it came to me. If things had happened differently in my life and the sports car-loving enthusiast in me had married years ago and had a couple of children what would I want to shuttle them around in? Something which offers a huge amount of protection, bulletproof reliability, a safe elevated driving position, stonking performance when needed and the correct badge. And there you have it, Porsche have made a car for the 30-plus family man who still loves his Porsches but needs something practical to carry his wife, children and their medium/small dog around in.

“...The GTS offers huge performance and an element of practicality that I’d never really thought about before”

And as a driving tool the GTS is mega. Of course it’s a big heavy car, weighing in at 2300kgs, but it’s powered by a 4.8-litre normally aspirated V8, which pumps out over 400bhp and 500Nm of torque at a lazy low 3500rpm. However it’s been engineered from scratch by a company with massive sports car experience. It may be an SUV but it’s still a Porsche. This shows in the quality of the steering and ride. Despite the car’s size you can place the Cayenne GTS very accurately into corners, balance the car via the throttle before using the torque to recover lost momentum on the exit. The only time I found myself think, “This thing’s huge!” was when I was reversing into a parking space.

It sounds great, too. An old-school V8 noise, a really low frequency burble enhanced by the sports exhausts fitted to all GTS models. Given autobahn conditions the Cayenne GTS will do 0 – 62 in six and a half seconds and given enough straight road will run out of legs at 156mph. Quick in anyone’s book.

In terms of the PDCC settings, I found the Sport setting adequate for all but the very bumpiest roads where I chose Normal but steered clear of Comfort, I found it a bit too soft and floaty. When you consider that the car rides on 21 inch alloy wheels you might think that the ride would be hard on Sport setting, but not so. The support from firstly the air suspension and then the bucket seat provide more than enough damping and keep the car ride comfortable, even when pushing harder down country lanes. The car is available with a manual gearbox but I think I’d stick with the six-speed Tiptronic S gearbox as fitted to my test car. It shifts quickly, doesn’t kickdown unnecessarily and always seems to find the right gear for you. The GTS has a different final drive ratio in the transmission to offer quicker acceleration and the car never felt it was lacking in power on the public road. Clearly the Cayenne isn’t going to be to everyone’s taste. However don’t be too hasty and jump on the anti-SUV bandwagon. The GTS offers huge performance and an element of practicality that I’d never really thought about before. Rival manufacturers have similar cars, Mercedes has the AMG ML63, BMW is just launching the M-Powered X6 so clearly, even in these difficult financial times, there is still a market for these high powered Sports Utility Vehicles. It surprised me. I liked it, and think you might too.
Circuito da Guia, Macau, 21 November 1999
The McLaren Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award is an annual competition with which the Club has played an integral part for some 15 years. It has been the subject of comment by my predecessors in this column in years gone by because it undoubtedly plays an extremely influential role in propelling forward the careers of the best six young British drivers in any given year.

As this is widely understood and appreciated I will not dwell further on the merits of the competition itself, but rather I would like to highlight to you the remarkable cohesive quality that this award has within the wider motorsport world. For a start, it brings together a pretty varied group of judges who all give up their time – four days of it, over three different meetings at three different venues – at no charge to the Award. By definition of the calibre of judges that are required year on year, this means you are asking extremely busy people to make themselves available and they do so willing and undertake their roles with a degree of diligence and commitment that really underlines the seriousness with which the award is held in the wider motorsport world. This group are very serious about the responsibility that goes with the role, because they realise all too readily that their decision will likely change a life – forever.

In addition, top flight teams, at the end of an exhausting and lengthy season, agree to attend the assessment days and make their cars available to those who have had no experience of them before and cheerfully work with both the judges and the finalists to extract the maximum informative data from the two day assessment process. There are many other parties who contribute to the process as well. This year Aspire, the caterers at Silverstone, generously sponsored the food; two days of exclusive Grand Prix circuit use was made available by Richard Phillips at no charge; a film crew, photographers and reporters all from Autosport magazine are in attendance to ensure maximum publicity for the event; Marshals, race control and medical cover are all on standby for this small number of participants. The list of backroom staff is lengthy.

The administration and event preparation encompasses the finalist selection paperwork, processing of results, data presentation and timetabling, as well as accommodation, feeding and transportation – all of which are not the work of a moment. This year the Porsche Experience Centre generously provided fitness assessments at the Porsche Human Performance Centre at Silverstone; the results were very telling.

This large and disparate crew gather in the winter and stand out in weather that, at times, is only really suitable for ducks. That they do so is because they recognise the power and importance of this award and it is a pride that is undoubtedly shared by key stakeholders McLaren and Autosport too. The Club can feel rightly proud for its considerable contribution also. It is now back to more than ‘simply’ writing a large cheque out. The Club now hosts the assessments again and in doing so shows itself to play a key role in a life changing moment of a Formula One aspirant’s life. That has to be a good thing.

Since the above was drafted, the 2009 winner of the McLaren Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award has been announced as Dean Smith. Many congratulations to Dean who joins the Club as a Full Member as a result of this success.

Stuart Pringle
Secretary, BRDC
Lodging his claim to fame. At Oulton Park on Easter Monday for the opening rounds of the British Formula 3 International Series, 19-year-old Western Australian Daniel Ricciardo comes to the attention of British racegoers in the best possible way with convincing wins in both races with his Carlin Motorsport Dallara-Volkswagen F308. By the end of the year Daniel, who had finished second to the latest Flying Finn Valteri Bottas in the 2008 Formula Renault Eurocup, will have taken five more wins, more than twice as many as any of his more F3-experienced rivals, and the British F3 title.

In memory of Rising Star Henry Surtees, the much-missed son of 1964 Formula 1 World Champion and BRDC Vice President John Surtees, the Henry Surtees Award has been instigated for the most outstanding performance of the year by a BRDC Rising Star. It was with pleasure, tinged with sadness at the tragic circumstances which had brought it about, that Daniel was chosen to be the first recipient of the Award for he will surely do full justice to Henry’s memory in the years ahead. Already Daniel has been testing impressively for the Red Bull F1 team and as these words are written he has high hopes of combining the role of Test and Reserve driver for the team with a full season in the Formula Renault 3.5 series. Don’t be surprised to see Daniel joining fellow countryman Mark Webber on the F1 grid before the end of 2010.

Kenny Acheson is having his first race at the Kent circuit for nine years and his first in England for six. A decade earlier his successes in Formula 3 and Formula Ford have marked the Ulsterman out as a future Formula 1 star but it has never quite worked out. A move to Japan and Group C Sports-Prototypes lets Kenny emerge as Japanese Champion in 1987. For 1989 he is signed up by Sauber-Mercedes as partner to Italian Mauro Baldi. A solo drive first time out at Suzuka has almost brought Kenny victory but Mauro is switched to the other car and wins with Jean-Louis Schlesser. Back with Mauro, another second place follows at Le Mans, sharing also with Gianfranco Brancatelli, but Brands Hatch sees Kenny take his first win with a strong middle stint topped and tailed by Mauro. There is another win to come, at Spa, but Kenny’s chances of winning the drivers’ title have really evaporated with those team orders at Suzuka. His successes are, however, enough to win him a BRDC Gold Star, scoring exactly the same number of points as Nigel Mansell with Ferrari in F1 – the only tie in the history of the Club’s premier award. Here we see Kenny’s glorious Sauber-Mercedes C9-88 rounding Paddock Hill Bend after lapping the Tiga-Cosworth GC289 of John Sheldon/Mario Hytten (which finishes fourth in C2) and the Porsche 962 of French brothers Jacques and Jean-Marie Almeras who claim 10th overall in a field of 38 cars on their first visit to Brands Hatch. (Photo LAT)

As an appetizer for the titanic battle to come later in the day between Jackie Stewart and Jochen Rindt in the Grand Prix, 35 screaming 1-litre Formula 3 cars line up for an epic 20 laps. You want overtaking? Only twice does the same driver lead across the line on two successive laps and goodness knows how many changes of position there are around the rest of the pre-chicane GP circuit. From 12th on the four-three-four grid, Alan Rollinson in a brand new Goodwin Racing Chevron B15 hits the front for the first time on lap seven but previous leaders have been Tim Schenken (Sports Motors Brabham BT28), Reine Wisell (works Chevron B15), Ronnie Peterson (Vick Tecno TF69) and Tetsu Ikuzawa (Mike Spence Lotus S9). Going into Copse at the start of the last lap Ronnie is seen here leading “Tiny Tets”, Reine and Alan. But it’s Alan, who has only led over the line for that one previous lap, who times it to perfection and screams through Woodcote first to take the flag by four-tenths of a second from Tetsu and the two Swedes with Ronnie half a second ahead of Reine. Also part of the leading group are Bev Bond (Race Cars International Brabham BT28) one-tenth behind Reine, Peter Gaydon (SMR Team Owen Tecno TF69), Charles Lucas (Ben Moore Titan Mk 3) and “Schenks”, just three-and-a-half seconds covering these first eight. Formula 1 beckons for Ronnie, Reine and Tim and within two years Ronnie will be on his way to second place in the Formula 1 World Championship behind Jackie Stewart.

Lodging his claim to fame. At Oulton Park on Easter Monday for the opening rounds of the British Formula 3 International Series, 19-year-old Western Australian Daniel Ricciardo comes to the attention of British racegoers in the best possible way with convincing wins in both races with his Carlin Motorsport Dallara-Volkswagen F308. By the end of the year Daniel, who had finished second to the latest Flying Finn Valteri Bottas in the 2008 Formula Renault Eurocup, will have taken five more wins, more than twice as many as any of his more F3-experienced rivals, and the British F3 title.

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Autodromo Nelson Piquet, Rio de Janeiro, 26 March 1989
Il leone uno! The start of the love affair between Nigel Mansell and the tifosi. Only once before has a Ferrari driver won on his debut in the World Championship – Giancarlo Baghetti at Reims in 1961. After a torrid time in practice, qualifying and the warm up, in particular with the electro-hydraulic gearchange, Nigel starts an unpromising sixth on the grid, where a last minute puncture was noticed and replaced, in the new John Barnard-designed V12 640, three places behind team mate Gerhard Berger and 1.4 seconds adrift of Ayrton Senna’s pole-sitting McLaren-Honda MP4/5. Unhappily for them, Ayrton and Gerhard tangle at the first corner elevating Nigel to third behind the Williams-Renault FW12Cs of Riccardo Patrese and Thierry Boutsen. Thierry soon retires with engine failure. Nigel is second and closing on Riccardo whom he passes in a million dollar move (think Stowe, British GP 1987) at the end of the back straight. Refuelling stops cost Nigel the lead for a few laps but he is back in front before half distance and there he and his hitherto recalcitrant Ferrari stay for the rest of the afternoon despite the need to stop and replace a loose steering wheel. At the flag the McLaren of Alain Prost (destined to be Nigel’s team-mate in 12 months’ time but that’s another story!) is over seven seconds behind. That night the bells ring out in the streets of Maranello and another British chapter in the history of the great Italian team has begun. (Photo LAT)

Circuito da Guia, Macau, 21 November 1999
Third place with three wins in the Autosport British Formula 3 championship with the Promatecme Dallara-Renault F399, in only his second season of car racing, has marked out 19-year-old Jenson Button as a driver to watch. At Macau, against the cream of Formula 3 drivers from around the world for the first time, he is confronted by the always potent TOM’S Dallara-Toyota, driven this year by newly-crowned Japanese F3 Champion Darren Manning, and local hero Andre Couto in a Dallara-Opel. Darren, with two previous visits to Macau behind him, qualifies on pole but Jenson, with the very last lap by anyone in Q2, takes second just 0.2 sec behind. Into Lisboa Bend on the first lap Darren runs wide and Jenson nips through into the lead followed by Robert Lechner’s Dallara-Opel which then hits the tyre wall at San Francisco, the very next corner, causing a multiple pile up. Although Darren has escaped the carnage, Jenson is long gone and almost certainly uncatchable. But the race is stopped. On the restart Darren does not make the same mistake twice while Jenson has to settle for third behind Andre. In the second leg, Jenson and Andre clash at Lisboa and the local hero (who will win the following year) is out. But there is no way that Jenson can claw back his leg one deficit to Darren and he has to settle for second in leg two and on aggregate. A week later in Korea, the order is the same but this time Jenson is halfway alongside Darren as they take the flag.

Mulansse Corner, Circuit de la Sarthe, Le Mans, 11 June 1955
They have just been exceeding 190 mph along the Ligne Droite des Hunaudieres and have lapped the 2-litre Gordini T15S of Hermano da Silva Ramos. The body language of both Mike Hawthorn (Jaguar D-type) and Juan Manuel Fangio (Mercedes Benz 300SLR) shows that neither is thinking about 4pm tomorrow. This is a re-enactment of the French GP two years earlier but this time Mike has a British Jaguar with which to go head-to-head with the reigning World Champion in his German Mercedes. Two hours into the race Mike and Juan Manuel are over a minute ahead of Eugenio Castellotti’s Ferrari. As 6.30 pm approaches the pit stops begin. First in is the Ferrari. A few minutes later, having just lapped the fourth and fifth-placed 300SLRs of “Pierre Levegh” and Karl Kling, Mike heads for the pits and the chain reaction is triggered which changes motor racing forever. For over 80 spectators this epic contest will be their last experience. 

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PIERRE AUMONIER
1936–2009

Throughout the 1970s and ’80s Pierre Aumonier, who passed away on 30 August at the age of 73 following a heart attack, played a pivotal role in the BRDC’s racing activities. Those were the decades when the Club, which had always organised occasional race meetings such as the annual Daily Express International Trophy, became one of the major race organisers in the UK both at Silverstone and elsewhere. Jimmy Brown charged Pierre with the task of running a series of championship race meetings at Silverstone and, as it seemed, in no time at all these had become major features of the national racing calendar. With a very small team to assist, Pierre took on in addition not just the International Trophy but also the RAC Tourist Trophy and the Silverstone 6 Hours (latterly the 1000 Kilometres), events which attracted the highest quality entries thanks to Pierre’s powers of persuasion and approachability.

Pierre came to Silverstone from the BARC which he had joined as a marshal in the early ’60s. When Thruxton opened in 1968, Pierre became that club’s Press and Publicity Officer before moving to Silverstone in a similar capacity. To this role were soon added the duties of Assistant Club Secretary to Tony Salmon. When Tony retired in 1977, it was entirely appropriate that Pierre should take over as both Club Secretary and Competitions Director, soon to be given a seat on the board of Silverstone Circuits Ltd in recognition of the important part which race meetings played in the Club’s activities in those days.

Pierre became one of the most highly regarded Clerks of the Course both at home and abroad. He acted as a race steward at Spa, Nurburgring, Hockenheim and, one of his great passions, Le Mans. Thanks to Pierre very close links were forged with the ACO and the French classic. With his enormous knowledge and experience, Pierre was keenly sought after to become a member of various organising committees including the European Touring Car Championship, of which the TT at Silverstone generally boasted one of the largest entries, and the Formula 2 Alliance. There are several highly regarded Race Directors, Clerks of the Course and other senior officials today who acknowledge how much they learned from Pierre and the standards which he set.

In the Walkinshaw era came a parting of the ways with the BRDC and Silverstone which, in hindsight, can be seen as a portent of things to come for the Club. However, Pierre continued his involvement in the highest echelons of the sport as Race Director both for the British Grand Prix and the British Touring Car Championship. It was the 1994 GP, and the notorious black flag incident involving Michael Schumacher and Tom Walkinshaw (again), which saw Pierre on the receiving end of a 12 month suspension of his licence by the FIA for the sins of others. As recent events have shown, motor racing machinations take no prisoners.

Demoralised at the way in which he had been treated and by the lack of support from people from whom he might reasonably have expected it after his years of service to the sport, Pierre moved away from motor racing although he served as Race Director for the International Sports Racing Series which became the FIA Sports Racing World Cup in 1999 and continued to sit as a member of MSC Tribunals. He also acted as Secretary of the Meeting for the British Grand Prix up to this year. In 1992 Pierre had returned to the other great passion of his life – opera - becoming Administrator for Northampton Festival Opera which, thanks to his guidance, now performs nationally way beyond the bounds of Northampton itself.

Ask most drivers who found themselves having to deal with Pierre because of some transgression and they will attest to his firmness and fairness. Although not a driver himself, Pierre seemed to understand the psyche of racing drivers extremely well and they rarely left “the headmaster’s study” feeling that they had been unfairly treated. As a jovial raconteur, Pierre could recount these incidents years later in amusing detail. Pierre was an only child and had no close family. However, he has left a circle of friends, colleagues and acquaintances who will always remember him for his substantial contributions to the BRDC, Silverstone, the sport of motor racing and, in a totally different sphere, to opera.

Ian Titchmarsh
MARCUS CHAMBERS
1910-2009

Marcus Mordaunt Bertram Chambers was born near Plymouth on 8th August 1910, the son of a serving officer in the Royal Navy, later to become a Rear Admiral. On 6th December 1917, Marcus and his parents, by then stationed in Canada, were lucky to survive when a ship called the Mont Blanc loaded with 3000 tons of explosives exploded in Halifax harbour after colliding with another ship. The front of their house was blown in and close by there was enormous loss of life caused by the largest explosion ever recorded at that time.

Marcus was educated at West Hyde, Winchester and Stowe Schools and after deciding that a career in accountancy was not for him, became involved in the motor trade in 1931 working at a branch of Lex Garages near Selfridges in London. In 1935 he joined the Vintage Sports Car Club, by now being the proud owner of a 1907 Grand Prix Renault. In 1936 Marcus started his own tuning business, largely to fund the successful racing of a series of his own Bentleys, and through this met Peter Clarke who was involved with HRG cars. Marcus was invited to team up with Peter for the 1938 Le Mans 24 Hours race in his semi-works HRG finishing 10th overall and then returning in 1939 to win the 1½ litre class.

Good results in the long distance events started to make other European manufacturers take note of this team from rural Berkshire and with Pat Moss, now a regular team member, the publicity for BMC was encouraging. The mechanics loved working for Marcus (affectionately nicknamed ‘Chub’ by them) and his eye for a good restaurant and a reputation as a bit of a gourmet meant that there was never a problem finding mechanics to accompany him in his service car.

Marcus was the first driver to get a result on an international event in a Mini, the Viking Rally in Norway in 1959. In 1961, he decided he would like to spend more time at home with his new family. He had often been described as the “Poor Man’s Neubauer”, but John Thornley reckoned he was more of a gentleman’s Competition Manager. As Pat Moss commented, “He was like a favourite uncle, the person who did everything to make one’s path easy.”

So, in August 1961 Marcus left Abingdon to take up the position of Service Manager at the BMC dealer, Appleyard’s of Bradford, at the invitation of famous rally driver Ian Appleyard. In 1963 he had a call from his friend Peter Wilson, engineer in charge of development at Rootes, asking if he was interested in going back into motorsport management. Marcus started at Humber Road, Coventry in February 1964 in charge of the Rootes Competitions Department. The exciting new development for Rootes was the Sunbeam Tiger and it was a baptism of fire for Marcus to oversee the entry in the 1964 Le Mans 24 hr race with two cars, neither of which finished. Marcus now concentrated on the rally programme with the Hillman Imp and Sunbeam Tiger, using his experience to gain significant success with both models. The 10,000 mile 1968 London Sydney Marathon was a tremendous result for the Rootes team when their under-rated Hillman Hunter achieved an outright win against works teams from British Leyland, Ford, Citroen etc. After the take over of Rootes by Chrysler, the Competitions Department was put into suspended animation and Marcus was transferred to the road proving department. Not taking to the new American style of Detroit management Marcus chose to join one of his old drivers John Sprinzel helping to run his string of garage businesses, eventually retiring in 1975.

In retirement Marcus enjoyed continental travel with his second wife Pat showing great skill in photography, and painting in water-colours. Marcus had two children, Nicholas and Erica, through his first marriage and Sarah and Hugh through his second marriage. Bill Price
BERT DUTHIE
1924–2009

Bert Duthie, an Associate Member of the BRDC since 1979 was one of the Club’s ‘backroom boys’ who made our racing as safe as it is. Though his active participation in motor sport started as a rally competitor he soon moved into the organisational side.

In the days when the BRDC organised numerous race meetings, Bert rose to become both Chief Startline Marshal and Assistant Clerk of the Course, until his retirement from active participation in events in 2006. He also carried out similar duties with the AMOC and the VSCC and had carried out various duties at the British Grand Prix from 1963 for the Royal Automobile Club.

For the above involvement, the Motor Sports Association made him an Officiel D’Honneur some years ago to mark his achievements.

Bertram Bryce Duthie was born on the 12th of July 1924 in Glasgow, Scotland. He was a true Scotsman in every sense of the word. Along with his mother and father, Bert moved to Northwood, Middlesex, where he grew up with his younger brother, Ian. After school he trained as an engineer, later working alongside his father, Robert, forming the companies R.H Duthie and Sons and Duthie Hydraulics and spent many trips backwards and forwards to Europe especially behind the Iron Curtain, attending trade shows and promoting the companies.

When his father retired, Bert formed his own company, Unicorn Panels, a drinks machine vending company in Harrow, designing and making his own machines and continued many years in the industry.

In 1986, Bert retired from business, selling the company, and he and his wife June moved to Stisted, near Braintree, where Bert continued to work for one of his distributors as a consultant.

While providing for the family when living in Gerrards Cross, he would spend some of his spare time at his beloved golf course at Moor Park, getting his handicap down to a very respectable 8. While not doing any of the above, he learned French, played badminton, learned to play the organ, attended the many dinner/dances and functions connected with all the various organisations including the Masons with which he was also highly involved.

With his wife, June, he had two sons, Michael and Nigel, who gave them five beloved grandchildren between them Adam, Nicholas, Alana, Olivia and Zach. In October 2003, June, his wife of 55 years, passed away, a passing that Bert never got over as June had battled pain most of her life with rheumatoid arthritis without complaint. But as the illness took more of a grip on June, Bert was there helping her, nursing her, making her as comfortable as he could, and in doing so may have neglected himself healthwise. He was not away from June for any longer than was possible.

Bert was a great man, a good man, a thoughtful, kind and loving man, and he will be missed.

Len Pullen and Neil Murray (with thanks to the Aston Martin Owners’ Club)
Life Member Geoff Friswell died at the age of 63 on 4 August 2009 after a long battle against Leukaemia. He was a BRDC Member from 1976 and was best known for his domination of Clubmen’s racing in his Mallock.

He first competed in scrambles at the age of 16 where he met the former BSA works rider Bill Nicholson, who raced and prepared MGBs. Geoff’s tow-car was an MGB – it soon became his race car with help from Nicholson!

An F4 Vixen followed, then an F3 Brabham BT21B with 1-litre screamer, replaced by a Lotus Ford twin-cam, replaced by an FVA, at which point the expense of beating similar motive power became prohibitive.

He built his first Clubmen’s car in 1971, with which he won eight races, finishing second in the Shell Championship. Next year he won the Shell and Wingfield championships, winning 14 races, which included the first of two outright Cadwell Park lap records.

Formula Atlantic followed in 1973 with a Surtees TS10, which he demolished at Mallory Park. Then, with help from his father, he bought a March 73B, winning the Yellow Pages round at Oulton Park, setting a new lap record, and being awarded the BP Driver of the Day. BRDC Membership and a Grovewood Award Commendation followed, the main award being won by Geoff’s friend Tom Pryce. For 1975, Geoff had a Miller Organs (unpaid!), Brian Hart-engined, Clubmen’s Mallock, with which he won the championship.

A sponsored, works-assisted Hawke FF2000 drive, partnered by Tiff Needell came in 1976. Despite several wins, a bad accident testing a March 742 halted the season and he eventually finished third in the championship to Ian Taylor and Tiff, narrowly missing a works Unipart F3 drive.

An FF2000 accident in 1980 broke Geoff’s back, which also broke his spirit. So, 20 years since his last motorcycle competition he took up grasstrack racing, trials, then Veteran Speedway with many wins, which he continued until shortly before his death. He was a true “Gentle” Man, steadfast friend, and naturally gifted competitor.

Fris the Whizz at the peak of his powers (with a little help from Brian Hart and the Mallock family). In 1975 in his Clubmen’s Formula Mallock Mk16 Geoff won 22 races and two championships, set 13 lap records, and had two seconds, two thirds and two fourths (Photo Ted Walker (Ferret Photographics))
Peter Wheeler, who died in Lancashire in June, was the owner of sports car manufacturer TVR from 1981 to 2004, and was at its helm during its glory years. As an engineer, he was at the forefront of the development team that produced three engines at a time when small car manufacturers weren’t meant to be able to manage even one; he was closely involved in the styling of his cars and as a driver, he campaigned TVR Tuscans with no small measure of success.

In 1980, he was in negotiations to sell his chemical engineering company and shoot and sail the rest of his days away but instead, over the next two years, bought all the shares in TVR. He always maintained that he hadn’t meant to buy the company, it just happened by accident!

As the years went by, TVRs got faster, better looking and made some truly astonishingly good noises and that was thanks to Peter’s lead. He became more and more instrumental in the styling and the engineering of the cars, until those aspects became his favourite parts of the business, almost an end in themselves.

Peter was from Yorkshire and, to an extent this was a defining character trait as well as a geographical point of origin. He loved Yorkshire County Cricket Club, even Geoffrey Boycott, and Boycs’s gritty contrariness was something that Peter enjoyed emulating, especially in his dealings with the media. Colin Goodwin, one of the most frequently banned, and frequently forgiven, of all motoring journalists wrote in Autocar of him that, “Peter Wheeler brought us some of the most dramatic cars ever built, but he was more than a successful car builder and businessman. For my generation, he was our Enzo Ferrari, Colin Chapman or Ferrucio Lamborghini: a maverick who did things his own way.”

Peter was instrumental in getting TVR back to Le Mans and there is no question that getting TVRs onto the grid, and then to the end of the world’s most gruelling motor race, was one of Peter’s finest hours. He had taken a little company from Blackpool, 10% of whose entire staff had travelled down to France the first year, onto the global stage and given many of the Porsches and Ferraris a proper fright. The following year, the TVRs beat a lot of them too and Peter was there to see it, loving every moment of it all, quietly soaking in the way that the largely British crowd cheered on every appearance of the TVRs.

But he did do it quietly – Peter was never a hail fellow well met type, nor did he ever want to stand behind a microphone. His cars were noisy, but he most certainly wasn’t.

He is survived by his wife, Vicky, and three children.

Ben Samuelson
People often wonder what the point of keeping archives is. This applies across the board from business archives to county record offices as they are expensive to run, don’t make vast sums of money and in essence are just boxes sat there gathering dust with a load of old papers in them.

Well, I suppose that’s one way of looking at it, but the view often changes when you’ve worked with – or had cause to call on – an archive and then you realise the importance of the information they hold. In essence archives are the documented, collective memory of an individual, company, group, community or government. They keep within their walls our history, of how decisions were reached, how plans were implemented, maps drawn up. On an even more personal level, the history of our families which can often lead to skeletons coming out of family cupboards. The BBC’s ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ programme is a very good example of this.

Even the BRDC’s own archive holds a few secrets we are yet to uncover, and some that have already become apparent. Within the confines of the BRDC Library we hold a set of journals called Speed, for those that are unfamiliar this was a motor sport magazine commissioned by the BRDC that ran from 1935 to 1939 when the publishing company ceased trading due to monetary difficulties. It was in Speed that the long forgotten Gold Star issued to Pat Fairfield was found.

Pat was injured in the early stages of the 1937 Le Mans 24 Hour race while trying to avoid the wreckage of another accident whose driver was lying across the track. In the process Pat skidded and was collected by another other car, ending up 100 yards away in a field. This resulted in severe abdominal injuries from which he subsequently died. At the time he was convincingly leading the BRDC Awards of Merit Road Star table (as the Gold Star was then known) with a significant 24 point advantage over Raymond Mays and 26 over ‘BBira’. It was agreed by the BRDC Board that it would award the only posthumous Gold Star to Pat Fairfield, which was later presented to his wife. The only other mention of this Gold Star is in the Club’s Board Meeting minutes from July 1937, where the proposal of awarding this star was tabled by Mr Follett, seconded by Mr Edwards, and was unanimously agreed to.

This award does not appear on any of the winners’ lists published by the Club in the various anniversary books or yearbooks. In fact there was not a single mention apart from a corner of Speed magazine in 1937. Well not anymore! Lists have been amended and P G Fairfield added to the Gold Star Board in the Clubhouse. Was this Gold Star deserved? Was the Club right to issue a posthumous star? Why has the Club never done this since or perhaps they have and we have just not found it yet?

These are all questions that can be raised from this recent discovery and some might think that 52 years later does it really matter? But as a Club that places high regard on this award then, yes it does; the prestige comes from the names of the previous winners, and Pat Fairfield deserves to take his place on the board as much as our current Gold Star winner.

Delving deeper into the archive, Steph Sykes finds genuine buried gold…
Members’ News

Races, faces and graces. Lunches and events have been popular with Members in recent months as David Addison reports.

Car of the Year
In early November, Silverstone once again hosted the test day for the finalists of the Car of the Year competition. The event was organized by BRDC member Ray Hutton, Honorary President of the Car of the Year Jury. The six British members of the 59-strong international jury are, from the left: Andrew English (Daily Telegraph), Paul Horrell (Top Gear Magazine), Phil McNamara (Car Magazine), John Simister (The Independent), Andrew Frankel (Sunday Times/Motor Sport) and Steve Cropley (Autocar). The seven cars on the short list for Car of the Year 2010 were: Citroen C3 Picasso, Mercedes E-class, Peugeot 3008, Skoda Yeti, Toyota iQ, Vauxhall Astra and Volkswagen Polo. The winner was the Volkswagen Polo.

On and off-track Members have been busy in the last few months, with Paul di Resta being one such. Not just has his DTM season been a successful one but he was also asked to test the Force India Formula 1 car and the Scotsman has high hopes that this could kick-start his ambition to become a Grand Prix driver.

Win Percy, now residing in Spain, was a popular visitor to Australia in October. As a guest of Holden he attended Bathurst and watched the Holden Racing Team, the evolution of the team that Win founded, score victory. Win was the star turn at Holden’s annual media dinner before the race and then went to Classic Adelaide where he had more good tales to tell.

Richard Piper took a win in the recent Interserie revival class at Donington in his McLaren M8F after a superb race and...
Ben Clucas (above) rounded out his Spanish GT season by clinching the crown in the final double-header in the Algarve.

John Morrison is arranging trips to the Bentley factory at Crewe where you can see more cars like this Supersports (left).

The BRDC Marathon team of Rob Barff, Andy Priaulx, Olly Gavin, Darren Turner, Jonny Kane, Stuart Pringle, Johnny Mowlem, Guy Smith, Sean Edwards, Peter Dumbreck, Richard Westbrook and Charlie Hollings will be running the London Marathon in support of the children’s cancer charity, CLIC Sargent. Good luck to them all and to support them, visit www.justgiving.com/BRDC-marathon-legends.

A number of Members were in action at Goodwood, many in unfamiliar cars! Oliver Gavin in the all-Mini race (to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the car), for example, was a highlight.

Over in Europe, Ben Clucas clinched the Spanish GT crown at the Algarve in November. Ben needed a third place or better from one of the two races to secure the crown. Ben took pole position for race one and a brace of second places secured the title in his Ginetta G50 adding another success for Lawrence Tomlinson’s company.

John Morrison called in at Silverstone with one of the very first new Bentley Supersports. John – who sells Bugatti Veyrons – has kindly offered to organise a private tour of the Bentley works at Crewe in the New Year. More details to follow when the trip is booked, but if in the meantime you would like to learn more about the incredible 621bhp car – which the press are already calling the greatest Bentley ever made, please call John on 07767 277775.

In September, a number of Members enjoyed a fascinating day out at the Lincolnshire Aviation Museum. The centre piece of the visit was the firing up and taxiing of an Avro Lancaster, which could be enjoyed at incredibly close quarters. And the price of this incredible day out? Just £5 and the experience comes highly recommended!

The founding fathers of the BRDC threw lavish parties to celebrate their on track success. To them, the social side to motor racing was almost as important as the success on track. Fast forward 80 years and attitudes to the social element of the sport have altered somewhat.

In December, the BRDC held the 21st Century ‘Bentley Boys’ night on the town in London, open to Full Members of the Club aged up to 40 only. The evening was very generously sponsored by Spence Refit Ltd and started with a champagne reception at the new five-star Grange Hotel in St. Paul’s, followed by a sumptuous meal. An excellent night had by all and the consensus was this should become an annual affair.
The Bulletin team recommend worthy additions to your library

**All My Races**
Author: Sir Stirling Moss OBE with Alan Henry  
ISBN: 978 1 84425 700 3

Although it is not far short of 50 years since Sir Stirling Moss's mainstream career came to an end, it is only now that a book has emerged which deals individually with every single event in that career from the first Harrow Car Club Trial in his father's BMW 328 in March 1947 at the age of 18 through to the disastrous crash at Goodwood on Easter Monday 1962 in the UDT Laystall/Rob Walker Lotus 18/21. Including not just all the races but trials, sprints, rallies and record-breaking attempts, that is a total of 585 events. Of these, 66 were World Championship Grands Prix of which Stirling won 16, the first at Aintree in the 1955 British Grand Prix with Rob Walker's Lotus 18/21.

Stirling seems to have been an inveterate diarist throughout his career, a resource on which he and Alan Henry have been able to draw extensively when recalling races, some of which took place 50 or more years ago. This gives the book a very personal flavour which would simply not have been possible if reliance had been solely on contemporary race reports. The diaries have been used before, perhaps most notably in Doug Nye's 1987 collaboration with Stirling entitled *My Cars, My Career*. However, whereas the thrust of that book, as the title implies, was on the cars which Stirling raced, this latest work offers a clear perspective of how each season unfolded, race by race.

Particularly fascinating are the earliest years in the little Coopers and the Formula 2 HWMs at long lost circuits such as Brough, Dunholme Lodge, Mons, Aix-les-Bains, Perigueux and Ostend. In 1950, for example, Stirling competed in 49 individual races all over the British Isles and Europe in a variety of cars. Contrast that with 1961, Stirling's last full season, when he took in some 55 races from the New Zealand Grand Prix on 7th January to the South African Grand Prix on 26th December. F1 races were longer then, too, Stirling's victory over the more powerful Ferraris at Monaco that year occupying over two and three quarter hours in what he regards as "Probably my greatest drive in a Formula 1 race".

Stirling and Alan have gone to great trouble to source some superb images to illustrate not just the well known events but also many of the more obscure races, with succinct but informative captions so that just about every page is a delight.

The latest in the 'scrapbook' series and the now established format requires little introduction to the majority of motor sports enthusiasts. As with the Stirling Moss and Murray Walker titles, this book provides a wonderful, personal insight with much of the information and photographs coming from family records and the book clearly benefits from Bette's personal input to the project. There is a lot of material too; enough to fill nearly 180 good size pages.

One is reminded of the sheer versatility of drivers of this period – not so long ago – and Graham's legendary sense of humour is also easy to detect from these pages. I felt I learnt a lot about the man; so this book must be doing a good job. Recommended. SP

**SPECIAL OFFER**
Porter Press is offering BRDC Members the following discounts:

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The Post-War Frazer Nash
Authors: James Trigwell & Anthony Pritchard
Publisher: Palawan Press Ltd – www.palawan.co.uk
Price: £300

This book, at over 400 pages, is exquisitely produced and effectively comprises two halves. The first is a very comprehensive review of the development and competition use of the post-war Frazer Nash. The second half is a fantastically detailed register of all the post-war cars made. Given that the vast majority were used in competition, it is a veritable encyclopaedia of 50s sports car racing too.

The book starts with a rather natty summary of the somewhat different origins of the marque in the ‘chain gang’ pre-war guise and concludes with appendices covering Bristol engine details, Le Mans entry details for the marque and road test re-prints amongst other gems.

As previously stated the quality of production is faultless and this level of detail will not be beaten. This book is, therefore, a must have despite its hefty price tag, although with a production run limited to just 600 copies, one can imagine this being a safe bet to increase in value fairly rapidly.

Races Faces Places
Author: Paul Parker
ISBN: 978 184425 508 5

From the mid-1950s to the 1970s Michael Cooper was a familiar figure at many of the major races in the UK and the rest of Europe armed with much less sophisticated cameras than are deployed these days but with a degree of access, both trackside and in the paddock, which is simply no longer available. Michael Cooper died in 2005 with one substantial tome devoted to his photographs already published by Palawan Press but priced beyond the reach of many of us.

Now Haynes has published, at less than one sixth of the cost of the earlier production, nearly 400 images in a book of high quality and benefiting from the informed and informative captions of Paul Parker. The coverage ranges from Formula 1 to sports and saloon car racing, with informal shots of many of the notable personalities of the era. The final image is not of a car but of the remarkable feat of the late Ray Hannah flying his Spitfire the wrong way down the pits straight at a height of about 20 feet during the inaugural Goodwood Revival in 1998. While that was little more than 10 years ago, the preceding 346 pages are truly evocative of the decades when many Members were at the peak of their racing careers.

Williams
Author: Maurice Hamilton
ISBN: 9780091932671

Maurice Hamilton should need no introduction to BRDC Members as the motor racing correspondent of The Observer, for many years part of the Formula 1 commentary team on Radio Five Live and the author of many books on the sport. He has been covering Formula 1 since 1977, the same year as Williams Grand Prix Engineering was founded, and has therefore witnessed at first hand all the successes and failures which Sir Frank Williams, Patrick Head and their team have achieved or suffered since Clay Regazzoni’s victory at Silverstone 30 years ago.

But this book goes back before that, to Frank’s early days as a driver, the deals which were done to parlay Frank Williams (Racing Cars) Ltd via Formula 2 into a fully fledged Formula 1 team with Piers Courage and a second-hand Brabham BT26, the loss of that first team to Walter Wolf, and the rebirth of Frank as an increasingly formidable Formula 1 force, this time with Patrick Head alongside to take care of the engineering aspects while Frank concentrated on finding the funds to finance it all.

Maurice has spoken to just about anyone who has been involved with Frank’s racing activities since the earliest days and it is the words of all these people, from family and friends to World Champions, engineers and mechanics, which give an authenticity and dimension to this book which make it an essential and major contribution to understanding the evolution of one of F1’s best loved and most successful teams with 16 World Championships and 113 race wins to its credit. Maurice opens each chapter by setting the contemporary scene before leaving it to the participants to tell it how it was in their own words.

In the manner of the Williams team itself, this is not a glossy, lavishly produced book but is all the better for that. It is the words not the images which are at its core. Formula 1 has its dark side, as has been only too apparent in the past few months, but the Williams story is the best possible antidote to that kind of thing and provides an understanding of what lies at the heart of F1’s true racers. A great read!

Making my Marque
Author: Jem Marsh
Publisher: Poulton Lodge Publishing
ISBN: 978-0-9562968-0-1
Price: £39.95

The story of Marcos – Member Jem Marsh’s marque – has been previously documented but not with his hand on the pen. In many ways this book is very similar to the ‘ Scrapbook’ series of which the Graham Hill edition is reviewed also in this Bulletin. Being compiled by Jem and Lyn Marsh it is immensely personal and the pride with which this single handed manufacturer took on the established sports car order, only to become one of their number, is clear to all who read this fascinating book.

Histories of marques are at their best when the man behind them is telling the story. Making my Marque is no exception and is a worthy addition to any Member’s bookshelves.

SP
CLUB AND REGIONAL EVENTS

PROVISIONAL SILVERSTONE 2010 EVENTS CALENDAR

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<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>Vintage Sports-Car Club Pomeroy Trophy</td>
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<td>28 March</td>
<td>Historic Sports Car Club</td>
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<td>3 – 4 April</td>
<td>BRSCC</td>
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<td>10 – 11 April</td>
<td>BRSCC</td>
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<td>17 – 18 April</td>
<td>MSVR FIA Formula 2 Championship</td>
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<td>18 April</td>
<td>Superkart</td>
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<td>24 April</td>
<td>Vintage Sports-Car Club</td>
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<td>30 – 2 May</td>
<td>Silverstone Supercar featuring FIA GT1 World Championship</td>
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<td>8 – 9 May</td>
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<td>Historic Sports Car Club</td>
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<td>7 – 8 August</td>
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<td>20 – 22 August</td>
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<td>9 October</td>
<td>Historic Sports Car Club</td>
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<td>10 October</td>
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<td>16 – 17 October</td>
<td>MSVR</td>
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Please note that this calendar is provisional at the time of publishing and may be subject to change. You will be informed of any changes via Club Newsletters, the 2010 Yearbook and the Club website.
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