

The Oulton Park Gazette

APRIL 2025: Vol 1 Issue 1

SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!



Duncan
Fitz-Gibbons



Marshal
of the Year

Introducing
the BBC!



Broadbent's
Book Corner!

WELCOME

Welcome to this, the first ever edition of the Oulton Park Gazette. It will contain reports and articles on the car racing at Oulton Park.

I wish to thank all those who supported and encouraged the idea of race reports on the Oulton Park Racing Facebook Group, especially Phil & Shirley of PS Images who managed to convince me that the project was worth setting up. Their excellent photographs have been bringing my race reports to life in other publications for a while.

PS Images provided the Austin A30 and Marshal of the Year photographs on the front cover as well as others throughout this first edition.

I would also like to thank Michael Broadbent for supplying excellent his book reviews. His love for motorsport really shines through in his writing as he gives his thoughts on a diverse range of books related to racing.

It would be great to hear from any other contributors who would be interested in supplying content.

For this “Pre-season Edition” there are features on Andrew Willis’ crazy V8-engined Austin A30 which was an unexpected stand-out car at the 2024 Gold Cup and Marshal of the Year, Duncan Fitz-Gibbons.

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AUSTIN POWERS



Photo: PS Images

There were so many fantastic vehicles at the 2024 Oulton Park Gold Cup – both on and off the track. One of the most memorable was the retina-burning yellow Austin A30 of Andrew Willis. An A30 unlike any that emerged from the factory gates at Longbridge.

Although Willis didn't have the pace of the overall leaders in the brace of JMC Racing Special Saloons & Modsports encounters – he finished eighth and sixth – his little Austin caught the eye of many spectators. It also brought pleasure to their ears because it was powered by a 5 litre V8 engine!

It is hard to believe that the squat little yellow racer was originally an upright, black, standard A30 that Andrew bought from a seller in Glasgow. He initially enjoyed using it on the road, but the wiring harness had been modified by a previous owner, so the voltage kept dropping away regularly causing the car to coast to a halt.

After a couple of weeks, Willis was fed up with getting out and pushing the Austin so he parked it in the corner of his workshop and forgot about it... but

it would later become the second A30 that he competed with.

Throughout Andrew's childhood the Austin A30 model, launched decades before he was born at the 1951 Earls Court Motor Show as the "New Austin Seven", had significance within his family as it was his father's first car. Then, when Andrew was racing on short ovals during his teenage years, his jokes about his dad's old motor resulted in him finding an A30 and modifying it to Classic Hot Rod



www.mkpics.net
Motorsport Photography

Andrew's Austin A30 Classic Hot Rod

specifications when he was aged 19. Due to stricter regulations, this was less advanced than the car he built for circuit racing 8 years later. It had a largely standard bodyshell although underneath Andrew made extensive changes including a Ford Pinto engine, Escort gearbox, Sierra front suspension and Anglia rear axle.

He competed with the Austin on the ovals for 3 years with some success. It certainly brought him plenty of joy as he recalls, “It was a great little thing.”

Then Andrew decided to try his hand at circuit racing and again he did very well, finishing runner-up in the Am Class of the 2021 Ginetta G40 Cup having never driven on anything other than an oval before the first round of the championship.

Willis didn't find switching from oval racing all that difficult. “The techniques are the same,” he explains, “It's late braking and then slow in, fast out. But where



The standard A30 which became a racing car

I think those with oval experience have an advantage over circuit racers is when it comes to wheel-to-wheel dicing.

“With ovals you've got a small track rammed full of cars. The tracks are 3 cars wide with a grass bank on the inside and an Armco wall on the outside. It teaches you amazing spatial awareness and gives



The Ford Falcon that donated its engine



The V8 is squeezed into the A30's engine bay

you a cool head when immersed in a pack full of cars.”

end of his season in the G40 Cup, Willis decided that he wanted to build his own racing car from scratch, so he sold the Ginetta and bought something “slightly” bigger – a 1964 Ford Falcon!

He planned to use it to compete in Masters Pre-66 Touring Cars, however, Andrew discovered that the project was bigger than he imagined. He came to realise that the work required was never going to be completed, not least due to the costs involved. So, he sold the “Yank Tank” but kept some of the key components because he had decided to build a car that had been taking shape in his imagination for some time – the ultimate Austin A30, complete with the V8 engine and gearbox from the Falcon.

The little black Glaswegian A30 was wheeled out of its corner and given a wash. After a lot of thinking Andrew set about cutting it up. A year and 3 weeks later, the car was completed and taking part in her first race at Brands Hatch. Andrew says, “I had created a wide bodied, full space frame, 400bhp V8 short wheel-based terror and I loved it!”

At the front and rear, Willis used sheet steel to extend the wheelarches by 5 and a half inches. In total, the car is 22 inches wider than a standard A30. However, at its core, it retains the original outer bodyshell and doors although the interior has been

gutted. In its place are tubing and aluminium panelling. The boot and bonnet are now fibreglass.

The unique yellow racer also has a Capri atlas rear axle and Cortina front hubs. The engine has been stroked from 4.7 to 5 litre and has alloy, race-specification heads.

Andrew has always been interested in engineering, especially World War 2 bombers, and runs his own garage in Birmingham where he mostly repairs buses. He can turn his hand to anything – mechanical, bodywork, painting, fabrication, welding, designing, preparation and set up – which comes in very handy when it comes to putting together competition vehicles!

There are many cars that he likes more than the tiny saloon from Longbridge, and as he is 6 feet 3 the car is barely big enough for him to fit in, but he loves to be different and to stand out from the crowd. Furthermore, he felt the challenge of making an Austin A30 go fast was fantastic!

As they are tall, narrow and short, with a breathless 803cc engine as standard, they have none of the attributes required for racing. The open regulations of the Special Saloon category mean the only limitation is the imagination of the constructor.

While the A30 is the only car Willis has built from scratch, he does have a number of restoration projects ongoing. These include the ex-Gerry Marshall Triplex-sponsored Ford Capri. Andrew has a soft spot both for fast Fords and old cars with significant history. When working on the Capri, he gets a real buzz when he sees overspray on bits of metal from the original livery.



An artist's impression of how the restored ex-Gerry Marshall Capri will look. Credit: Alan Cox

Sadly, in 2025, a business relocation means that Andrew will not have much time to go motor racing, but he hopes to take part in selected events.

MARSHAL OF THE YEAR



Photo:
PS Images

Duncan Fitz-Gibbons is presented with the award for BMMC(NW) Marshal of the Year - The Bellini Trophy - by Chairman Oz Phillips

At the North West Marshals' Training Weekend at the start of February, Duncan Fitz-Gibbons received the "Marshal of the Year" award from both the regional committees of the British Motorsport Marshals' Club (BMMC) and British Racing & Sports Car Club (BRSCC).

Duncan earned these accolades after recruiting more than 300 marshals since he became the Recruitment Officer for the North West, alongside taking on the role of Deputy Chief Marshal in 2024, working with Margaret Simpson, a stalwart of the BMMC(NW).

He took over the role of Recruitment Officer in 2019 towards the end of his second season of marshalling, which began after relocating to the North West.

Growing up in Cornwall, Duncan had no race circuit within a reasonable traveling distance. However, there was a stock car track he visited a few times, and his best friend's father organized several sporting trials events he attended. Other than that, his only access to motorsports was F1 on television.

After attending a Marshalling Taster Day at Oulton Park in April 2018, Duncan realized he had discovered an exciting new hobby. "I was hooked!" he says.

According to Duncan, the best thing about "Life in Orange" is the people he meets! "Marshalling is such a great leveller – it doesn't matter where you come from or what you do, we all support one another and enjoy the racing. There is such a variety of people, from a huge range of backgrounds, meaning there is always something new to talk about!"

Given his enthusiasm, it's no wonder Duncan soon became the Recruitment Officer for BMMC(NW)! Despite a false start due to the 2020 pandemic, once lockdown ended, he fully embraced the role.

"Recruiting 300+ marshals was definitely a team effort," Duncan explains. "I was the organizer, but everyone else at Oulton Park deserves credit too.



Duncan guides a group of would-be marshals around Oulton Park on a Taster Day. Photo: PS Images

The biggest interest comes from the recruitment tent at the larger meetings, and there are a number of people who volunteer to staff it. After that, people attending the taster days are made very welcome by all marshals and officials. The feedback I always receive is that 'everyone is so friendly'."

Aside from boosting the numbers who provide Safety Cover at Oulton Park and Anglesey Circuits, Duncan recalls a couple of highlights from his time marshalling. The most exciting moment came last year when he was receiving training to become a Post Chief at Oulton's Druids corner and had no less than 10 incidents to deal with. These included a car which hit the flags post on the exit of this very fast corner. It destroyed a fire extinguisher and the safety car board!

His proudest moment was last November's Race Of Remembrance at Anglesey where his son (also a marshal) and he were asked to lay the wreath on

behalf of those in orange at the remembrance service.

Every weekend, Duncan began looking after all those marshals he recruited (along with those with more experience) when he took on the role of Deputy Chief Marshal for the North West at the start of last season, supporting the nationally acclaimed Margaret Simpson. He had the opportunity to learn from an absolute legend in providing support to those offering safety cover at circuits.

Like Margaret, he walks around the entire track checking in on every marshal to ensure everyone is enjoying their hobby and has no issues. Margaret used to do all this on her own, but now they may divide the circuit and separately visit their respective sections – depending on their other duties.

"Taking on the role wasn't difficult," Duncan recalls, "but it was daunting! Margaret does a fantastic job, and there is a huge amount of respect and



The Recruitment Tent was key in attracting over 300 new marshals

admiration for her. I didn't want to let her, or the rest of the marshals, down!"

Using his IT skills, Duncan made life easier for Margaret by automating some of the manual processes. This simplified communication to both the taster day attendees and regular marshals prior to them attending race meetings. The new systems

in operation in the North West are now being considered for use across the country.

After only a short time as Deputy, Duncan was thrown into the deep end when he acted alone as Chief Marshal at Anglesey Circuit's Ginetta Festival – "G Fest" – on behalf of the BRSCC. He organized the volunteers, worked closely with the BRSCC HQ, and proactively dealt with issues to ensure the smooth running of a very important race meeting for the club.

Duncan says, "It was daunting, but I followed Margaret's training and everything worked OK. Well, I didn't receive any complaints!"

Andrew Holley, Chairman of the BRSCC North West, had the following words to say about Duncan: "He is one of the most affable and enthusiastic volunteers you could wish to meet in a circuit paddock – thoroughly reliable, an excellent team leader, and an exemplary mentor."

Looking back to when he received recognition during the marshals' training weekend, Duncan said, "I was completely overwhelmed to have won the 'Marshal of the Year' awards from both the BMMC and BRSCC. There are some very impressive names on the trophies, and to be considered as one of their peers is a huge honour."

The BMMC thanked Oulton Park for allowing them to use their facilities to train the North West-based marshals.

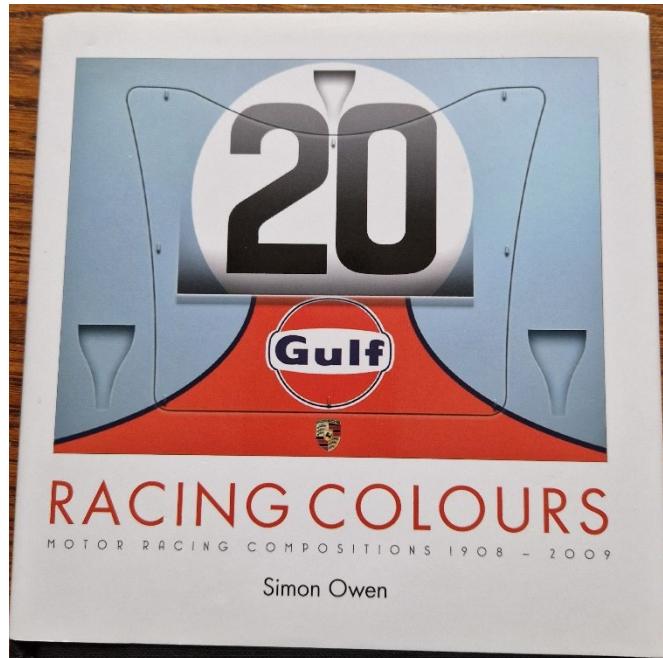
If you wish to attend a Marshalling Taster Day, [click here](#).



Duncan receives the BRSCC(NW) Marshal of the Year trophy from Chairman, Andy Holley

BBC – Broadbent's Book Corner

Michael Broadbent review his favourite books



Racing Colours

1908 to 2009

By Simon Owen

Publisher: Veloce Books

[Available here](#)

Simon passed away in 2012 leaving a legacy of stunning art mainly centred on his love of motorsport. He used watercolours and progressed on to computer generated illustrations which is what this book focuses on. However, unlike other books on motorsport, you don't get to see the whole car, just part of it, some including race numbers on either the front, rear or side of the car.

The illustrations start with the Panhard-Levassor in 1908, right up to the 2009 Peugeot 908 HDi, covering GP and F1 cars along with sports and GT cars, scooping up a rally car as well as a saloon car. Oh, and not forgetting a certain F1 drivers' helmet.

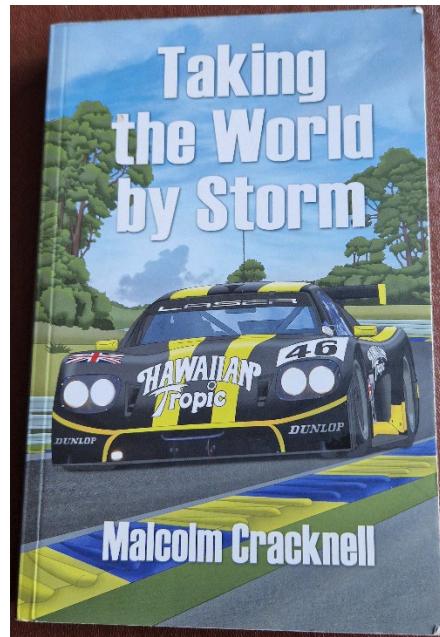
OK you say, it's a picture book, not a story book. However, the amount of research and design going into each picture means that you could be looking at a photograph of the car and not a computer-generated illustration. Simon took his time

generating each illustration and this is demonstrated at the end of the book where his notes and sketches are shown to demonstrate how much detail has gone into each picture. Each picture comes with a relevant text which personalises it either from the team's or driver's perspective. This meticulous approach meant that he left us with a stunning legacy of his interpretation of motorsport art. His ability to reproduce colour, patina and light is remarkable as well as delicate. And, dare I say, better than a photograph!

The majority of the illustrations were made available as pictures, and some are still available via specialist sellers including Historic Car Art, Alex Reade and others.

This is not the kind of book to read through in a couple of sittings. Nor is it a book with the standard ¾ illustration trackside. It homes in on one specific area of the car and is incredibly detailed.

My advice is to enjoy it with a glass of your favoured drink and allow your mind to reminisce about the cars, what they meant and where you saw them, at a Grand Prix, Le Mans, Goodwood or in a museum.



Taking the World by Storm

By Malcolm Cracknell

Publisher: DoubleDeClutch

[**Available here**](#)

This book is a bit different, crossing the lines between fact and fiction – known as faction!

The story centres around Lawrence Whittaker and his efforts to conquer Le Mans with his low volume sportscar – the Lister Storm.

The Storm – in the guise of the GTS version made its debut at Le Mans in 1995, up against the heavyweight manufacturers including Ferrari, Chrysler, Jaguar, Porsche and McLaren. Its distinctive livery, created by its sponsors – Newcastle United Football Club made it a fan favourite, along with the sound of a Jaguar XJR9 V12 seven litre engine.

The car was improved and was reincarnated for 1997 as the GTL which is where the book centres on the efforts of the team to compete with the big teams.

The main character is Larry Payne who has a very colourful vocabulary, which fortunately is toned down, substituting “clown” for other words! All the mechanics and drivers are brought to the forefront, with name changes – obviously! However, for those in the know, it is easy to identify who they are.

There is always a struggle for speed and reliability which the author manages to capture well, mixing the challenges of racing globally in the BPR Global GT Series, along with racing in the British GT Championship for several years.

It is a classic tale of David versus Goliath as a small independent manufacturer takes on global established brands in an effort to cement their name in the history books. Whilst the team did well in the British GT Championship, it did not fare well on the international stage with the likes of the FIA, and the ACO trying to thwart their racing by imposing rule changes, scrutineering challenges and funding. The book shows this up well as they try to circumvent some of the rules so that they could race.

The reader will be taken behind the scenes at Le Mans and some of the skullduggery other teams tried to inflict on Lister to prevent them from racing. It is the kind of book to read through in one or two sittings, then read again, just to make sure that what was written was mostly true!

For those of you who can remember, the Lister team was highly individual, the cars looked and sounded incredible and with the likes of Mike Jordan, Julian Bailey, Anthony Reid and Tiff Needell racing, it proved to be a fan favourite along with the glorious sound of a V12!