



The Oulton Park Gazette

April 2026: Vol 2 Issue 1

Photo: Alan Cox



Photo: National Motorcycle Museum

THE TOURIST

We interview multiple TT winner Stuart Graham

Oulton Hall Memorial

The Racing Soldier



Tech Talk

Broadbent's Book Corner & Quiz

WELCOME

Hello!

Welcome to the first edition of *The Oulton Park Gazette* of 2026.

During the off-season, MSV did a commendable job of marking the 100th anniversary of the devastating fire which destroyed Oulton Hall on 14th February 1926. Chief Executive, Jonathan Palmer, hosted a service in the Foggarty Moss Centre to remember the 6 people who lost their lives as a result of the disaster. A memorial to them was later unveiled on the outside of Old Hall corner.

I have spent the last few months compiling a feature on an iconic motorsport figure from Cheshire – Stuart Graham. He has packed so much into a racing career spanning 60 years. It took him all over the World and secured TT wins on 2 and 4 wheels. Above all else, the help he provided in compiling the article made me realise what a true gentleman he is.

Another thing I found out putting together this month's edition is how highly motorsport is regarded when it comes to developing the skills of the Armed Forces. This came to light when interviewing Ben Seaton – “The Racing Soldier”.

This is the time of year when the amazing work of our marshalling community is highlighted when their awards are handed out during their pre-season training weekend. The dedication to the sport of Marshal of the Year, Richard Hodgkiss, is remarkable as I discovered when I interviewed him.

Talking of honouring success, developing his marshalling skills was key in enabling our very own Dan Chilvers to qualify for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. He recounts the experience in this edition.

Meanwhile, as Dan is studying for an engineering degree, I set him the challenge of describing the technical aspects of Formula Ford 1600 and Fun Cup racing cars.

Our resident bookworm, Michael Broadbent, has reviewed a couple of tomes covering the fire at the Oulton Hall and the twin Grey-Egerton brothers who grew up on the Oulton Estate prior to going off to fight in World War 1.

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Marshals' Training took place in early February

OULTON HALL FIRE CENTENARY



To mark the Centenary of their deaths, MSV unveiled a Memorial to the 6 people who perished when Oulton Hall caught fire on 14th February 1926. This was preceded by a Service of Remembrance in the Fogarty Moss Centre which was led by the vicar of St Peter's Church, Little Budworth, the Reverend Canon Paul Dawson (below).

The fire is believed to have been started by a short in the electrical system. At that time, wiring systems weren't installed to modern day safety standards.

Those who died on that fateful day were: Joseph Hunt (volunteer fireman), George Wallace Sinclair (head gardener), Mary Spann (maid), Bertha Lloyd (head housemaid), Fred Crank (gamekeeper), and Harry White (farm labourer).

Everyone initially evacuated the building, but some of the staff went back inside in an attempt to bring to safety various high-value antiques. However, parts of the structure began to fall down when they were still inside.

Descendants of those who died attended the ceremony along with representatives of the Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service.





After the Service, flowers were laid at the newly created Memorial on the outside of Old Hall Corner where the Hall once stood. It is constructed from charred bricks from the original building and enclosed by fences providing a quiet place with benches to allow people to sit and reflect. There are information boards about Oulton Hall, the fire and the 6 people who lost their lives.

The Memorial was funded by MSV, Sir William Egerton, Little Budworth & Rushton Parish Councils and Maurice Hunt – a descendent of the fireman who lost his life as a result of the tragedy.



Maurice Hunt, grandson of Joseph Hunt – the leader of the Tarporley Volunteer Fire Brigade, shows Joseph's helmet to MSV CEO Jonathan Palmer. Joseph was in the Hall attempting to rescue the staff when a ceiling began to collapse. He leapt from an upstairs window but died in hospital a few days later.

The headgear was salvaged from the Hall following the fire.



GRAN TOURISMO

The story of Multiple TT
winner, Stuart Graham

Portrait of Stuart Graham by Alan Cox

Stuart Graham is something of an iconic figure at Oulton Park. The local resident, who won the Tourist Trophy (TT) on two-wheels and four, began both his motorbike and saloon car careers at the Cheshire circuit in 1961 and 1973 respectively.

It was perhaps inevitable that Stuart would grow up to become a racer as his father, Les, was a famous motorcycle rider before and after World War 2. He won the inaugural 500cc Motorcycle World Championship in 1949 on an AJS.

Stuart's success in the Isle of Man TT emulated his father who won the 1953 125cc Ultra-Lightweight TT race for MV Agusta. Tragically, only days later, he was killed instantly during the Senior TT event in a crash at Bray Hill.

At the time, Stuart was only 11 and too young to take on board any tips about riding technique or 'bike preparation from his father. One thing he had picked up, however, was a passion for petrol-powered speed not least because the Graham family had relocated to Italy when Les signed for MV Agusta. His Dad expected the move to be

permanent as he planned to become a development engineer for the company when he retired from racing.

Stuart and his younger brother, Chris, were able to immerse themselves in the factory, getting up to all sorts of mischief.

Meanwhile, Les became friends with Alberto Ascari and, when F1 cars tested at Monza, Stuart would explore the magnificent machinery in the paddock as the 2- and 4-wheeled Grand Prix legends talked road cars – they both had Jaguar Mk Vlls as their daily drivers.

Les had grown up on the Wirral and when he was killed, his sons were staying with family in Wallasey while their mum was with their father on the Isle of Man. Les' widow remained in the North West of England with her boys and never returned to Italy.

The loss of his father didn't dim Stuart's enthusiasm for anything with wheels and an engine. At boarding school his textbooks were full of drawings of cars and motorbikes rather than coursework. This was to the detriment of his O-level results, but he still

managed to be taken on as an apprentice at Rolls Royce in Crewe.

While riding to work on his scooter, Stuart spotted a 125cc Honda Benly in the window of Bill Smith's dealership. Somehow, he persuaded his mother to help purchase the 'bike and soon he was making his racing debut at Oulton Park.

Given that the dangers of motorsport had dramatically and tragically impacted on her life, it must have taken a great deal of mental fortitude for his mother to see him head for the circuits. Stuart recalls, "When my passion for racing became serious, she reluctantly agreed. But I had to understand how she felt. When I subsequently gained success, especially in the TT, it was nice when she expressed her pride."

After a few outings, Stuart was spotted by Bill Webster, a motorcycle dealer from Crewe who had just begun importing Aermacchi production racers. Webster lent Graham one of these machines for a race and he finished second which led to him doing a full season on the Italian 'bikes in 1962.

But then Stuart's career suffered a massive set back when Webster suddenly died. Fortunately, Graham had made his mark such that he was offered a 350cc AJS 7R and a 500cc Matchless G50 by Jim Ball – Stuart just had to prepare and maintain them.

By now Graham was working in the drawing office at Rolls Royce but, remarkably, the income he was receiving each weekend from his racing exploits via prize money was more than his weekly salary – so in 1966 he quit his day job!

He now embarked on a wonderfully nomadic life-style as he and his ever-supportive young wife, Margaret, toured the GP circuits of Europe with a caravan towed by a Thames van. They took the 2 racing motorbikes to circuits across the continent, including behind the Iron Curtain. The tracks were all unfamiliar to Stuart and many of them were dangerous road courses.

Aside from the racing, each weekend was a social event as all the competitors – and their wives/girlfriends – got on so well. Stuart became pals with all the legendary riders of the time including Mike Hailwood, Giacomo Agostini, Phil Read, Bill Ivy and Luigi Taveri. Every prize-giving after the Grands Prix became an epic party!

At the start of the season, Stuart was competing as a privateer with his trusty self-prepared AJS and Matchless machines but following some excellent performances, he attracted the attention of the Honda factory team. In particular, when he finished second to Ago' in treacherously wet conditions at the third round of the World Championship at Spa. This was the original version of the circuit with fast sweeping corners and houses on the edge of the tarmac!

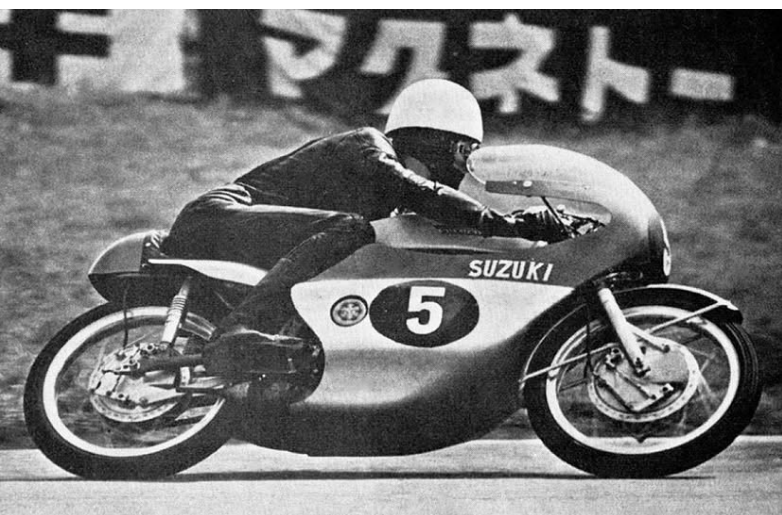
For the next round, at the Sachsenring, Graham was approached by Honda who handed him a 250cc 'bike which, with 6 tiny cylinders and seven gears, was unlike anything he had ridden before. The little pistons were able to rev so high that in Stuart's hands the machine screamed round to finish fourth on the East German circuit that was also new to him.

Riding his own Matchless was easy in comparison but Honda wanted him to focus on their 250cc model and so, before long, Stuart dedicated himself to the Japanese manufacturer. His team mate was Mike Hailwood who had an uncanny ability to be fast no matter how badly his 'bike was handling.

Hailwood won the 250cc World Championship in 1966. Graham's best results were a couple of second places behind his team leader at the Finnish Grand Prix and on the Isle of Man. He thought his trim physique was going to enable him to take a win at the high-speed Monza track which closed the season but his crankshaft failed with three laps to go.



*Stuart on his 250cc Honda at the 1966 Isle of Man TT.
Photo: Facebook/Nenad Arvamovic*



*Stuart debuts Suzuki's 4-cylinder 125cc 'bike at the 1967 Japanese GP.
Photo: Facebook/Paul John*

For 1967, Stuart expected to continue with Honda but over the Winter the company announced that they were cutting back and Hailwood would be their only rider. However, Suzuki stepped forward and offered a lucrative contract. He and Margaret were now able to tow their caravan with a 3.8 Jaguar!

Unlike the 4-stroke Hondas, Suzukis used 2-stroke motors which, with their lack of engine-braking, was a new experience for Stuart but he mastered it and was competitive all year. He took an emotional win in the Isle of Man TT and also claimed the Finnish Grand Prix. At the end of the season, he was third in both the 50cc and 125cc World Championships. Graham recalls, "Switching between different machines at each meeting was part of the challenge but not always easy."

For the final round, the Japanese Grand Prix at Fuji Speedway, Suzuki debuted their 4-cylinder 125cc 'bike which had both more power and better handling. Stuart thought he was going to win the race but decided to settle for second when his exhausts began hitting the ground.

With Suzuki intending to release a 3-cylinder 50cc engine for 1968 which developed 20bhp (400bhp per litre), Graham was looking forward to the following season but then the FIM (the governing body) made some drastic rule changes to reduce costs in the smaller classes. Engines were restricted to a single cylinder while gearboxes could have a maximum of 5 speeds. This prompted all the Japanese manufacturers to withdraw from the World Championship – although, given the unsustainable amounts they were spending, this probably would have happened in any case before too long.

Looking back on his Grand Prix career Stuart is proud to have scored World Championship points in every category - 50cc, 125cc, 250cc, 350cc and 500cc with both 2- and 4-stroke engines. He was one of the few riders to achieve this feat in the 1960s.

Suzuki gave him a 'bike to use at non-championship races in 1968 and, along with other works riders such as Mike Hailwood and Phil Read, Graham competed in various International events. He enjoyed several wins however, before long, Stuart's life was heading in a different direction. After he bought a car dealership in Cheshire, there was so much to learn he had no time to tour the circuits of the World. He offered to give Suzuki their machine back, but they did not want it, so it was sold to an up-and-comer called Barry Sheene. It was his first pukka racer.

The urge to compete was still with Graham and before long he was racing karts against his brother. In 1973, they watched the Group 1 saloon cars at Oulton Park and Stuart thought it would be good fun to get involved, as well as being a good medium for promoting his business.

So, Graham bought a Ford Capri which he describes as "reasonably cheap". When he tested it at Oulton Park, he was immediately close to the pace. "I had no driver coaching," Stuart recalls, "I just relied on my natural instincts. I am sure my bike racing experience was a help as keeping it smooth was the key. Although the racing lines were a little different, I soon got the feel for them. At least being inside a car was much safer than riding a 'bike, even if it was a little warmer!"

After he had done a few races and got to know some of the people in the paddock, Stuart and his brother, Chris who had developed a talent for tuning engines, helped fellow competitor Les Leston get his Chevrolet Camaro Z28 up and running during a meeting at Silverstone. After this, the two siblings took over the preparation of the big American coupe.

Then, Les was unable to take part in a race at Oulton Park because he was stuck in Hong Kong so Stuart drove the car to the circuit, put some numbers on the doors and won the race by a comfortable margin!

He then decided to get a second-hand Camaro of his own and took 8 wins during the remainder of the

season. His domination at the front of the field continued into 1974 when the stakes were higher due to the British Touring Car Championship (BTCC) adopting the Group 1 regulations. Due to the multi-class structure that was employed at the time, the title went to Bernard Unett because the Hillman Hunter driver had a larger winning margin in one of the classes for smaller engined cars.

The most prestigious saloon car race at this time was the RAC TT at Silverstone. Stuart won this in both 1974 and 1975 to add to the 50cc Ultra-Lightweight TT he claimed on the Isle of Man in 1967. He was the first TT winner on 2- and 4-wheels since Freddie Dixon in the 1930s. Dixon also won the TT on 3 wheels having taken the 1923 Sidecar TT. His victories in the RAC Tourist Trophy occurred in 1935 and '36 at the Ards circuit in Northern Ireland behind the wheel of a Riley.

Stuart was always fastidious about how his cars were presented and this helped in securing sponsorship from Fabergé and their Brut 33 fragrance. His black and green Chevies carried one of the most recognisable liveries in British motorsport.

Away from the race track, this commercial relationship created some memorable experiences. Stuart recalls, “With Fabergé, we enjoyed many promotional/publicity events during the six years of our partnership. They were great fun and were also attended by Henry Cooper, Cary Grant and several US film stars. As his fame increased, Barry Sheene later became involved too.”

After capacity limits were introduced to effectively ban the Camaro from the BTCC, Stuart ran Ford factory supported Capris for 3 years with continued support from Fabergé and additional sponsorship from Castrol.

As well as racing in the UK, Stuart also competed in long distance saloon car events across the Globe at the likes of Spa, Mugello, Brno and Kyalami in both Camaros and Capris. His co-drivers included Reine Wisell, Brian Muir and no less than Jacques Laffitte.

He hung up his helmet at the end of the 1979 season to concentrate once more on his garage business which was expanding. Stuart eventually became a Honda main dealer.



Stuart in the Brut 33 Camaro. Photo: Alan Cox

However, motor racing is something of a lifelong addiction for Graham and, after a hiatus of several years, he competed in a selection of fabulous historic sportscars which culminated in securing a TT win in a third category of motorsport.

This final section of Stuart's on-track career began in 1986 when John Beasley offered him a drive in his beautiful Lola T70. Stuart drove it for four seasons, including races in South Africa organised by David Piper.

Then when Bobby Bell was unavailable, Graham drove his Alfa T33 at Thruxton and won. After this success, Bobby lent Stuart his Lister-Chevrolet which he took back to Cheshire to prepare to his usual high standards while his brother, Chris, provided a fabulous engine with lots of grunt.

Finally, Graham took part in the Historic TT at Silverstone three times in Paul Michaels' ex-Equipe Endeavour Aston DB4, sharing with Richard Attwood. They were third, then second, and finally won it at the third attempt, giving him another type of TT victory to add to the list.

Through John Surtees, Stuart became involved in the very early iterations of the Goodwood Festival of Speed riding classic racing 'bikes up the hill. This

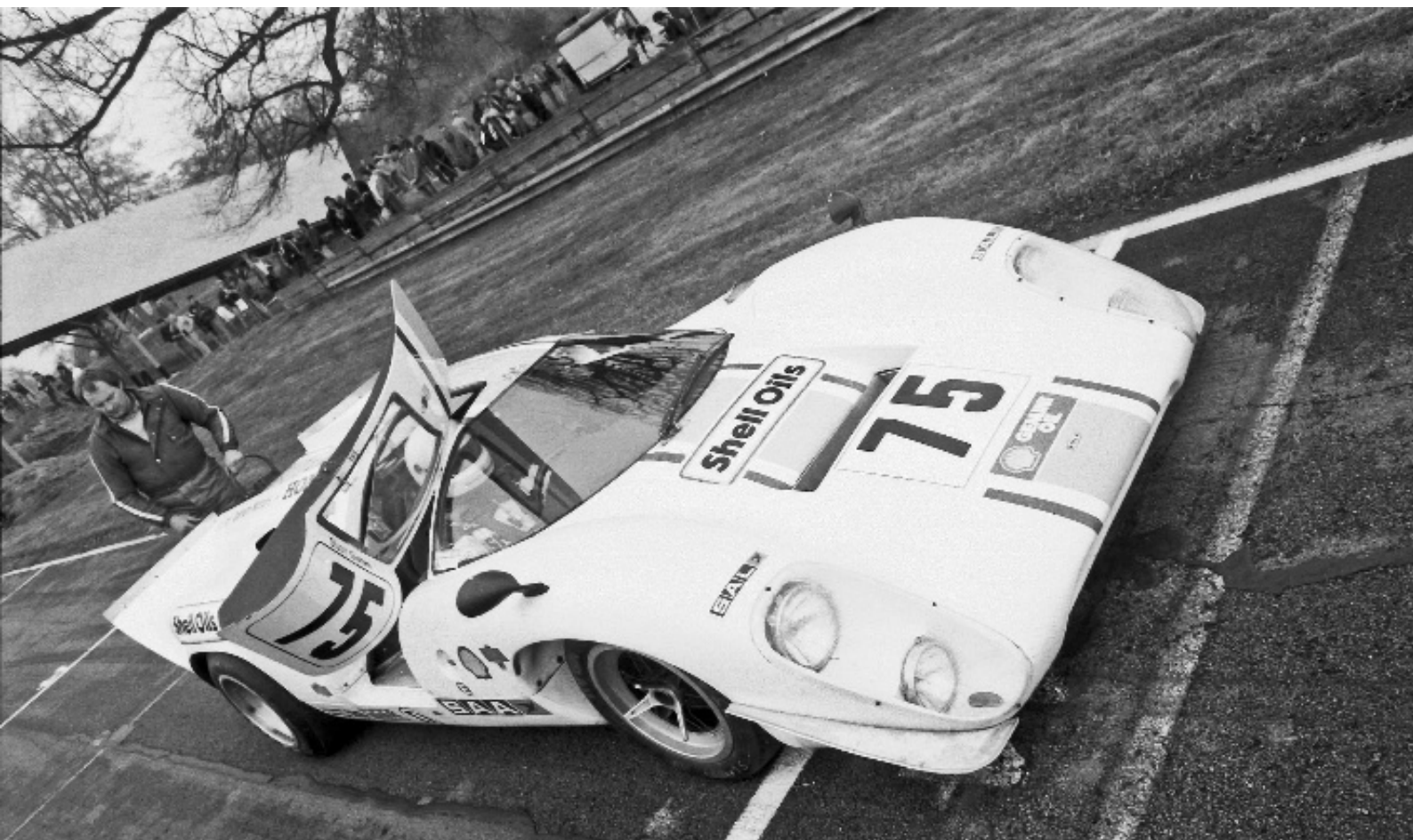
was the start of a long and enjoyable involvement with Goodwood.

Graham has also taken part in the race meetings at Goodwood, dusting down the Lister for its annual outing on the Sussex Downs. Indeed, he has been fortunate enough to have the pleasure of driving some great cars. He scored a few wins but the RAC TT Celebration race at The Revival always eluded him.

However, arguably one of the highlights of his visits to Goodwood, has been the opportunity to demonstrate all the GP bikes and GP cars from the Honda Collection Hall which he regards as a special privilege. He feels performing at Goodwood over the years has kept him young!

At his Cheshire home, Stuart used to have quite a collection of classic road cars but most of these have now been sold except for a few high-end Mercedes Benzs. His wife Margaret likes to take her SL500 out on sunny days, although she has to watch out for potholes!

Stuart celebrated his 84th birthday earlier this year and says, "I am not sure whether I will be doing much more racing. Maybe I will take part in the odd demonstration or parade – we will see!"



Stuart on the grid at Oulton in the Lola T70. Photo: Alan Cox



BEING THE BEST

Ben Seaton - Soldier, Marshal, Team Manager and Racing Driver. Photo: Ben Seaton

Sport plays a major role in the British Armed Services as it provides a safe environment for personnel to push themselves to their limits and “Be the Best” as the Army recruitment slogan goes.

For the Corps of Royal Engineers in particular, motorsport provides a great environment for their troops to hone their technical skills. Such is their belief that this produces better soldiers they have acquired racing cars for them to prepare and compete in.

This is something to which Ben Seaton can testify. Ben is a senior (Grade 3) marshal who hails from Middlewich. Oulton Park is therefore his home circuit although providing safety cover at race meetings has taken him all over the World – often this has happened in conjunction with serving King and country.

After leaving school, Ben worked in his local Co-Op for a year before doing something much more exciting the following September – he joined the Army!

It was natural for him to be assigned to the Royal Engineers as throughout his childhood he loved nothing more than taking things apart to find out how they worked. Once enlisted, he specialised as a Plant Operator & Mechanic. It was a role he really enjoyed as it involved controlling large machines on the army’s construction projects.

Ben recently earned a promotion to the rank of Corporal and has taken up a new position training

specialist water engineers to drill wells and develop clean water sources.

Throughout Ben’s time in the services, he has been lucky to meet members of the Army’s motorsport team. He is keen to shine a light on it as many people don’t know of its existence.

Seaton was inspired to join the British Motorsport Marshals’ Club having watched a feature by Ted Kravitz on marshalling during ITV’s F1 coverage. He immediately went online to find out how to get involved.

Ben’s background in the Armed Forces made it easier to settle into his new hobby as a marshal because many of those in orange are veterans. Both vocations provide a strong sense of camaraderie while the teamwork, leadership and mentoring were all familiar activities.

Although Oulton Park is Ben’s home circuit, his postings with the British Army mean he has marshalled at various circuits up and down the country. For the last couple of years Seaton has found himself almost as far away from a race track as it is possible to get having been assigned to Kinloss Barracks in the North of Scotland. Even so, this didn’t stop him from getting his motorsport fix, as on weekends when he was available, he made the 6 hour round trip to marshal at Knockhill.

Ben has also provided safety cover at Grands Prix across the World in Abu Dhabi, Canada, France and Belgium as well as at Silverstone.

When the 2016 event at the Yas Marina circuit ended, Ben witnessed first hand the crowning of Nico Rosberg as World Champion. Indeed, he couldn't have been any closer to the action as he was in the middle of a jostling scrum of photographers trying to get a shot of the Mercedes driver when he returned to the pits at the end of the race.

The army deployed Ben to Canada in 2019 and he managed to get leave to marshal at the marvellous F1 event at Montreal.

Such is his dedication, he and a friend once made the 20 hour journey from the UK to the Paul Ricard circuit in the south of France where they were the only British marshals.

Endurance certainly seems to be a recurring theme in Ben's motorsporting life as in June 2025 he attended a trio of 24 hour races on consecutive weekends! He spectated at Le Mans before marshalling at round-the-clock contests at the Nürburgring and Spa.

Over the years, Ben found himself out on track on sporadic occasions with arrive-and-drive karting and track days. Although he also won an amazing prize courtesy of MSV which was the opportunity to have a go in a F3000 car!

But everything changed around 18 months ago when Seaton passed his ARDS test. This was a precursor to him enjoying a full season of racing in 2025 behind the wheel of the Royal Engineers' BMW 116 which has been built to the 750 Motor Club's BMW 116 Trophy regulations.

Ben competed in the Armed Forces Race Challenge plus the Birkett Six Hour Relay and the Race of Remembrance (RoR). He says, "It was an amazing year!" ...and his Army colleagues were always there to provide assistance.

"At all of our events," Ben explains, "the team help anyone in need whether it be crash damage, driving to the local scrap dealer, making adjustments or helping the driver strap into the car. The Royal Engineers have every trade we need including welders and electricians."

However, Seaton's hands-on technological background means there is plenty he can do to the BMW himself. He told The Gazette, "The mechanical training I've received with my trade has allowed me to be somewhat competent in looking after the car. This has also fed the other way... learning tips and tricks working on the cars has enhanced my capabilities when maintaining Army



Ben steers the Corps of Royal Engineers' BMW 116 through Cascades

equipment. It has massively helped my confidence with regards to what I can fix.”

While there is a strict hierarchical structure in the military, motorsport can turn that totally upside down as ability and experience are the sole factors that matter. Ben explains, “a Captain newly entering the sport might have to learn the ropes from a Private who has relevant experience. When I was still a Sapper (the Royal Engineer equivalent of Private rank) I acted as the team manager, making decisions, strategy calls and delegating to people who held ranks significantly higher than myself, I was trusted to competently conduct the role in the team’s shared interest.”

Being in the Armed Services, the RoR has huge resonance with Seaton. This 12 hour race, run in 3 stages, takes place at Anglesey every Armistice weekend. On the Sunday morning, the track action pauses to enable a poignant Service of Remembrance to take place.

Ben has attended the meeting 10 times – 7 times as a marshal, twice as team manager for Royal Engineers Motorsport and, best of all, being one of 5 drivers in the trusty BMW last November. His teammates were a captain, a corporal and a couple of veterans.

The Gazette was keen to know which is most enjoyable – competing in the ROR or marshalling at

the British Grand Prix? This was Ben’s reply: “I do enjoy the experience of marshalling at Grands Prix even though it does involve long days and sometimes there are large gaps in the schedule. The atmosphere and prestige that comes with F1 events is great to be a part of, and it makes for a good group catch up with marshalling friends from around the country and, indeed, around the world.

“However, competing in the RoR at the end of 2025 having marshalled or acted as team manager for the Royal Engineers for around 10 years was very special. Racing at night is also an experience not many get to enjoy so I would put taking part in the RoR just ahead of marshalling at the British Grand Prix.”

Nonetheless, Ben has applied to be part of the marshalling squad at this season’s Silverstone F1 event and he may return to Abu Dhabi too – depending on his overseas deployments with the Army. When work allows, Seaton also hopes to revisit a few English (and Welsh) circuits he’s not marshalled at for a while due to being stationed up in Scotland... and, last but not least, he will be racing once more behind the wheel of the Royal Engineers’ Renault Clio Cup car!

We thank Ben for taking the time to answer our questions and explaining how motorsport plays a small role in the defence of our country.





DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE

Richard Hodgkiss steps forward to accept the "Marshal of the Year" award

If you are looking for examples of the term "Dedication", the marshals at Oulton Park certainly live up to that word. They are outside regardless of the weather from early morning until well after 6 pm. However, in 2025, Richard Hodgkiss took dedication in marshalling to a whole new level!

He was named "Marshal of the Year" by the British Motorsport Marshals' Club's North West Region – BMMC(NW) – at their annual training day in early February.

Not only did he regularly attend race meetings at Oulton Park and Anglesey along with forays to other circuits around the country, but he also provided his marshalling skills to every speed (sprint) and

hillclimb event in the North West plus a number of rallies as well.

In 2025, Richard's non-circuit motorsport activities took him to Three Sisters in Wigan, Aintree, the Isle of Man, Scammond Dam, Barbon, Southport, and others further afield.

Obviously, Hodgkiss enjoys a wide range of motorsport but, the social side of things is also important to him. He says, "Being involved in so many diverse events has led to me making a broad range of friends. Some only attend speed and hillclimbs, others only race meetings."

Speed and hillclimbs can be more intense as, rather than a big grid, there is only one competitor to focus on at a time. Marshalling – as the name implies – is concerned with "marshalling" the cars so that they enter and exit the course in an orderly fashion as much as it is about dealing with the aftermath of crashes. Nonetheless, there are still accidents to deal with as the drivers are flat out against the clock.

Hodgkiss' interest in motorsport originally developed through watching it on TV. Then, 14 years ago, he signed up to be a marshal, that was during the Autosport Show at the NEC in Birmingham.



BMMC(NW) Chair, Oz Phillips, emotionally welcomes Richard to the presentation stage

Things went a full circle last season when the BTCC visited Oulton Park and Richard was asked to spend the two-day meeting giving advice in the BMMC recruitment tent. He didn't know what he was letting himself in for but as it turned out he had an amazing time sharing his knowledge of marshalling and love of the sport with the general public.

He was able to re-assure people that they weren't too old to get involved, they didn't have to commit to every weekend, costs are not as high as they might imagine and many women marshal. He managed to encourage quite a few people to sign up for a BMMC Taster Day.

Richard didn't have many weekends when he wasn't involved in some sort of motorsport... and on the rare occasions he wasn't on duty, he wished he was!

Oz Phillips, BMMC(NW) Chair, told The Gazette, "Richard is a truly versatile marshal and all clubs, no matter how big or small, would be poorer without him."

What many people didn't realise is that Richard provided all this support to the world of motorsport while battling cancer. Knowledge of this made Oz very emotional when he presented the trophy.

In January, Richard started a new course of chemotherapy administered via tablets which was going well when The Gazette spoke to him. He was therefore looking forward to another busy season of motorsport in 2026 with a varied mix of circuit racing, rallies, hillclimbs and speed events already lined up.



Oz Phillips presents Richard with the Bellini Trophy which is awarded annually to the North West's Marshal of the Year

DUKE'S GOLD



Dan, at Buckingham Palace, to collect his Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award

Our lead writer, Dan Chilvers, tells us how being a marshal has helped him obtain his Duke of Edinburgh Gold qualification.

I have wanted to work in and around motorsport since I was about 8 years old. I happened to be at Oulton Park watching the British GTs with my family when I spotted the recruitment tent. With a bit of encouragement from my mum, I had a chat with Duncan Fitz-Gibbons (a Deputy Chief Marshal) and before I knew it, I was booked in for a taster day with the BMMC(NW).

My taster day at Oulton Park took place during the Supercar Pageant in July 2022. After the usual walking tour of the circuit, I was sent off to Lodge corner with my mum where we watched the remainder of the races. I vividly remember being on the flag in post and being told to stand facing the corner like a flag marshal (therefore the cars coming at me from behind!) and not flinch when they flew past on the first lap. It's fair to say I wasn't

quite brave enough until after a few tries. One marshalling suit order later, I completed my first full day as an incident marshal the following October and haven't looked back since.

The Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) award is a three-tier award that challenges young people to push their boundaries, improve themselves and help people around them. Each tier takes longer than the one before with Gold taking up to 2 years if all sections are done concurrently.

The easiest tier is Bronze, then Silver and finally Gold. For each level the young person must complete a physical section (weekly exercise or sport), a volunteering section (helping in the community or with an organization or club) and a skill section (grow and improve a skill towards a set goal). Then finally the young person must complete an expedition hike across the countryside (and a residential as well for Gold only). On my expedition I had to scale a mountain, battle the wet, wind and

sun, carry my tent, cook food on a gas stove and navigate with a map with a group of friends. A tough but rewarding 4 days.

Usually, young marshals use marshalling as their volunteering section but as my time as Cub Scout young leader already covered that section. That meant I was free to use marshalling elsewhere, so I chose it to be my skill. I spoke to my DofE coordinator, and we worked out my goal should be to work towards getting closer to grade 1 track marshal and learning marshalling based skills. Duncan Fitz-Gibbons was my assessor (an external person who keeps track of your progress and signs you off at the end of the section) and he was very helpful with the entire process.

I completed lots of online training courses all throughout the off season before completing a training day in February and then made sure I attended at least once marshalling day per month (rather than the standard 1 hour a week, it was agreed I would do 1 day a month). I also made sure I completed at least one day in each role around the circuit and then logged all my learning and new skills on each of these days as evidence for the award. After 18 months I submitted the skills section and completed my DofE Gold a few months later. This culminated, as all Gold awards do in a presentation event at Buckingham Palace (but more importantly I became a fully qualified Grade 1 track marshal in June 2025).

Aside from reaching this milestone as my marshalling career develops, the 2025 season highlight occurred at The Gold Cup. The event featured the 75th Anniversary of BRM and had a huge group of classic BRM single seaters on display and parade. I was lucky enough to be able to stand on the pit straight while these gorgeous machines were lined up on the grid for the group photo. After the photographers had captured this incredible moment, I was asked/volunteered myself to help. I (along with some mechanics from Hall & Hall) pushed the 1967 BRM P126 #1 across the paddock and it was such an honour to help move this icon and it became the cherry on top of the always incredible Gold Cup weekend.

My favourite series to watch and marshal has got to be Legends racing. I am always astounded by how close they can race at such high speeds lap after lap. The drivers are also so friendly and happy with a slight hint of crazy. I remember one cool down lap

after the final race of the day seeing two of them line astern waving with not one but both hands out of the side of the car for what felt like the entire lap. They are also relatively light so not too difficult to push out of a gravel trap or recover! An honourable mention though to the CNC Heads championship purely on the range of cars and the wildness of the modifications the owners have completed to them.

This season, I am hoping to marshal at the Goodwood Festival of Speed either on the hillclimb itself or in one of the many paddocks. I spectated the event once and fell in love with the incredible range of machinery on display and dream of going back in orange (or white!).



Dan doing what he loves best - marshalling at Oulton Park

DAN CHILVERS' TECH TALK

FORMULA FORD 1600



Quest chassis being prepared. Photo: Wayne Pearson

At the risk of slightly misquoting Shakespeare, “to ‘wings and slicks’ or not to ‘wings and slicks’, that is the question”. And it’s been pondered by many single-seater racers across the country. Anyone who wishes to climb the slippery single-seater ladder to GB3 and beyond will learn to love and loathe the safety net provided by aerodynamic aids and slick tyres. However, Formula Ford stands in complete contrast to these high-tech cars with its mechanical purity. The series provides one of the most important training grounds in motorsport to make the jump from karts to cars. This regulation-led simplicity creates thrilling racing, so let’s go under the (rather limited) bodywork to examine the engineering needed to achieve this.

Formula Ford was created in late 1966 by Geoff Clarke and John Webb as a cheaper alternative to Formula Junior and Formula 3. Once the pair had received backing from Henry Taylor (Ford’s competition manager), they could set about starting the Formula. The series has attracted many race car constructors with Van Diemen, Lotus and Reynard being some of the best known. The debut race was held at Brands Hatch in July 1967, and the British championship ran for decades before evolving into Formula 4. Formula Ford’s core principles remain the same over its 50-year history: affordability, mechanical grip and driver skill.

The chassis that underpins all Formula Fords from the 1960s to the 2010s is a steel spaceframe design which cuts costs and increases driver safety. This lattice of strong metal tubes creates high torsional rigidity which reduces chassis flex and providing drivers with a stable platform. All Formula Fords integrate a roll hoop and side-impact protection for driver safety, and all modern chassis must be Motorsport UK safety compliant. Formula Ford’s weight distribution is kept slightly rear-biased due to its rear-mounted engine. This creates a tendency towards oversteer which, with tuning, can be reduced or amplified to a driver’s preference.

Supporting the car’s weight and transmitting the tyres force to the road is the car’s double wishbone suspension system. This uses two metal supports on each corner to support the wheels and brakes and allows for increased tunability with adjustable camber, caster and toe.

In the early 1980s there was a major change to the suspension design when the dampers are relocated within the car’s body (called inboard dampers), making use of a pushrod configuration. This uses the damper to push the tyre down into the track and improves packaging by moving bulky components internally to save weight and reduce drag. All these factors combine to produce the crucial mechanical

grip needed in the absence of aerodynamic downforce. To master a Formula Ford, the driver needs a setup that matches their driving style with regards to understeer, oversteer and sensitivity.

The “Ford” in Formula Ford comes from the spec engines used since 1967 from the Blue Oval. The original regulations used a 1500cc Cortina GT engine before Ford moved production to the 120 bhp 1600cc Kent four-cylinder engine which ran until the mid-1990s. Various other Ford power units were used before an EcoBoost engine was introduced in 2012. The new engine used a turbocharger to produce 160 bhp. There remains racing series for both generations of cars with the EcoBoost championships providing the link to Formula 4 and beyond. Tight engine regulations and controlled rebuild cycles ensure close performance across the grid. All Kent engines still run Weber carburettors and the EcoBoost engines use tightly controlled ECUs to stop money buying success with complex tuning. Original Kent engined cars run four-speed manual gearboxes once again emphasising driver skill. The later EcoBoost generation cars swapped the manual gearbox for a sequential unit to better align with faster formulas.

Only certain manufacturers and tyre sizes are allowed by each series. For example, the BRSCC Classic Formula Ford rules allow tyres with a width of 160 mm on the front and 170 mm on the rear which is roughly the same width as a classic Mini’s tyres. The treaded nature of the tyres affect all areas of the cars handling. The driver must consider grip levels, operating temperature, braking distances and tyre preservation across each race. The brakes are equally as simple with only iron brake discs permitted in most series. All constructors aim to have a low unsprung mass (the mass between the suspension and the road, namely wheels, tyres and brakes) as excess mass here negatively impacts response and handling.

Aerodynamics are the absence that defines the car. Strict regulations ban all aerodynamic aids of any kind and control the dimensions of the bodywork. This creates the car’s distinctive shape and reduces drag, improving straight line efficiency. Low drag allows for surprisingly high top speeds especially for their engine size with Kent engined cars reaching around 130 mph. The lack of aero enhances slipstreaming and forces drivers to adapt their driving style. Slipstream trains of 10+ racers are common in races across the globe with driver skill

and bravery on the brakes being needed for overtakes.

The lack of bodywork and low, central driving position means drivers have the best possible view of the track so they can place the car around each corner. Data loggers and electronic dashboards are permitted provided they have no influence on car behaviour. The data presented on them must only be used for informing the driver and for review after a session. This system allows for drivers both young and old to develop their skills, perfect their line and go faster with each new session.

All in, a Formula Ford weighs between 400-500 kg depending on the engine. The lighter 420 kg Kent engined cars have a power to weight ratio of 285 bhp/tonne while the EcoBoost cars have 320 bhp/tonne. This puts the older examples in line with a Chevrolet Corvette C6 with new versions challenging Nissan GT-Rs and Dodge Vipers on paper. This creates fast, thrilling and close racing ensuring Formula Ford remains the benchmark for driver development.

Formula Ford is a near-ideal case study in regulation-driven engineering creating a true proving ground for motorsport talent. The formula’s inherent mechanical simplicity continues to produce elite drivers as it emphasises the fundamental talent needed to race at the top. It just goes to show how technical restraint isn’t boring; it’s thrilling and even freeing.



Alan Raine's PRS chassis. Photo: Alan Raine

DAN CHILVERS' TECH TALK

FUN CUP



Ask a motorsport fan what series has the best racing in the world and most answers will be international, big-budget, manufacturer-backed series like Formula One or IndyCar. However, ask the dedicated motorsport fans who turn up to UK circuits every weekend and their answer might be a bit different. A large portion would answer with the countries most underrated series, the Fun Cup. This epic of club racing has a field of spec silhouette race cars that charge around for hours on end, the podium often split by just seconds over the line. Combined with reasonable entry prices and running costs, this ensures the Fun Cup remains relevant in today's ever-changing racing landscape. Most readers of *The Gazette* will be familiar with the car's shape but in this article, we aim to get under its skin.

The Fun Cup was conceived in Belgium in 1997, based on the success of endurance karting races with its spec nature and affordable entry price. The philosophy was to create close endurance racing without the budget needed to run a GT car or prototype, with cars costs between £15,000 and £30,000. Naturally, Fun Cup expanded across Europe before it crossed the channel in 2002. The

jewel in the Fun Cup's crown is the 25 hours of Spa, a titanic battle of an endurance race which makes a good claim to be the longest continuous motor race in the world with grids of up to 120 cars.

It takes 260 hours to build a bare chassis into a fully equipped and track-ready car during which all the components must be installed and tested. The chassis uses a space frame design to create a structure from steel tubes which ensures rigidity and reduces weight. The Fun Cup chassis features a central section and separate front and rear structures which contain the suspension and powertrain components. All chassis are fabricated in-house by JPR Motorsport to ensure they meet all Motorsport UK required crash regulations. The space frame acts as an integrated roll cage which further cuts weight, cost and improves driver safety. The bare steel is initially powder coated to increase its lifespan and prevent corrosion. The car was designed with a mid-mounted engine to provide an optimised handling balance. It does this by moving the vehicle's centre of mass as close to the centre of the wheelbase as possible. This reduces both understeer and oversteer creating a neutral and planted car.



Next in the build process, the vehicle's four corners are built which includes adding suspension, tyres, wheels and the steering system. All cars use Bilstein dampers with a choice of hard, medium and soft springs. The range of spring stiffnesses allows for customization between circuits as hard springs provide less body roll and more stability with the risk of the car becoming unstable over bumps or rough surfaces. The MacPherson strut design used on Fun Cup cars allows for moderate levels of tuneability with adjustable camber. All cars run the same Hankook RS4 Endurance semi-slick tyre on lightweight alloy wheels to help reduce cost and ensure a level playing field. The brakes, hydraulics and pedals are provided once again by JPR Motorsport for safety and fairness.

At this stage in the build process the rolling chassis is finally mated with its running gear. The cars use a 1.8-litre Audi/VW inline four-cylinder engine and a Sadev five-speed sequential gearbox operated with either a gearstick or optional paddles. The engines are tested on a dynamometer to ensure they meet the series mandated 133 bhp limit. The engines still run distributors for ignition and a carburettor which means the cars are simpler and have no ECU. This means that teams cannot run different engine tunes to create more power. Both engine and gearbox are sealed along with all major components to ensure the cars are technically identical and of equal performance. The engines are very reliable with rebuilds only needing to occur every 2-3 seasons of endurance racing.

Next the wiring must be complete before work on the body and interior can begin. The fibreglass body is installed next with its sectional panels that increase ease of repair. Of course, the bodywork is styled upon the Volkswagen Beetle, but the Fun Cup shares no parts with the German cult car. This makes them true silhouette race cars as they outwardly appear like a production car yet share little to no mechanical components with the original. The front splitter and adjustable rear wing create downforce to plant the car. These wings are modest in size to avoid speeds getting out of control while also giving the drivers extra grip to work with in fast corners. The car's unique shape helps place an emphasis on slipstreaming along straights before diving for an overtake on the brakes.

All Fun Cup cars use a central driving position like a McLaren F1 or a BAC Mono to boost the racing sensation. The car's central bucket seat is easily adjustable to allow for a range of drivers to use the car in one race. A full data logging system can be chosen and added to track driver and car performance, and this allows team to maximise both the car and drivers' potential over a full race.

Overall, a Fun Cup car weighs 860 kg with the driver onboard and produces 133 bhp for a power-to-weight ratio of 155 bhp/tonne. This is roughly equivalent to a Caterham Seven or modern Mazda MX-5 but don't let that fool you into thinking these cars are boring to watch or drive. Predictable handling, sealed engines and spec tyres underpin Fun Cup's ethos, creating races that are consistently close and often unexpectedly thrilling.

Thanks to Rob Boston Racing for allowing Michael Broadbent to photograph their car.



STOCKPORT VIADUCT QUIZ

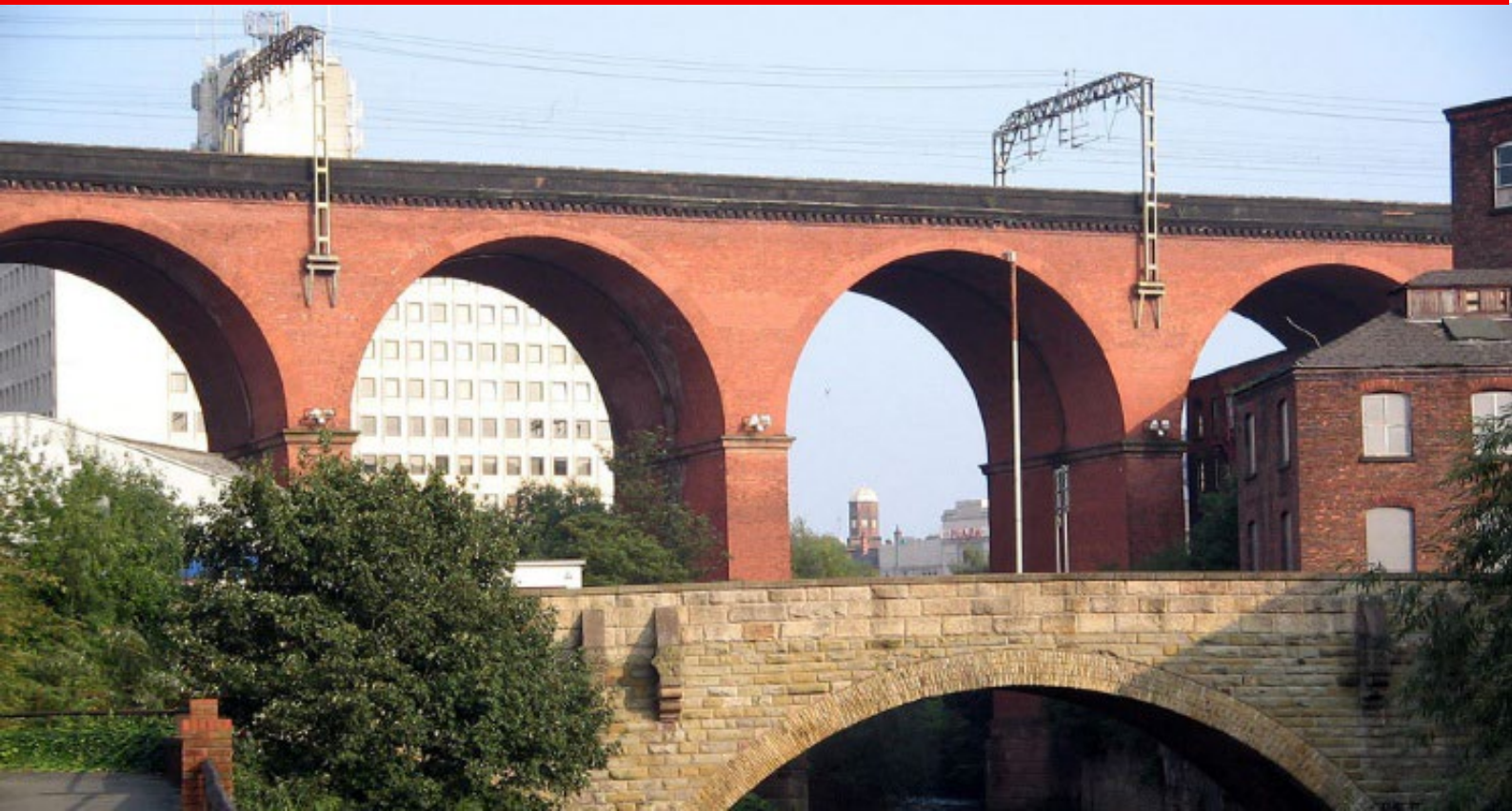


Photo: David Dicken blog

Many of you will have travelled through Stockport and passed under the famous railway viaduct on your way to Oulton Park. So, here are some questions about the viaduct.

How many arches are there in total? (Hint: More than the 4 in the above photo!)

What year did construction start?

How many bricks were used?

How much stone was used in construction?

What was the cost in total?

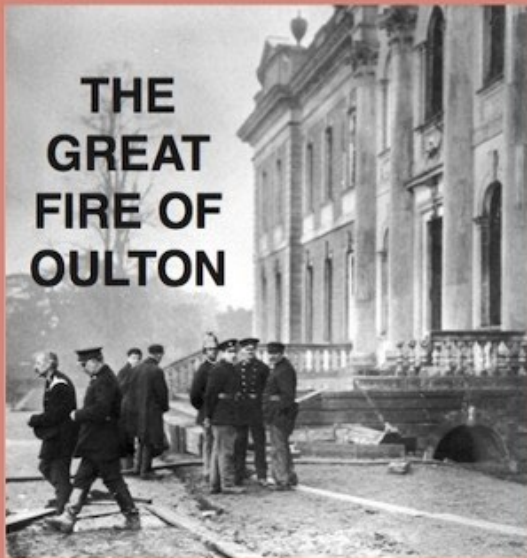
When was the viaduct opened?

What river does the viaduct cross?

Thanks to Michael Broadbent for setting the questions. Answers in the next edition!

BBC – Broadbent's Book Corner

Michael Broadbent reviews his favourite books



R.M. BEVAN

www.cc-publishing.co.uk

The Great Fire of Oulton

By R. M. Bevan

[Available Here](#)

February 2026 saw the 100th anniversary of the fire at Oulton Hall which destroyed the grandiose building designed by Sir John Vanbrugh in the early 18th century. He was also responsible for the design of Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard. The Hall was in 300 acres of forested parkland and full of antique furniture, pictures, crystal, and items from the Orient including porcelain, carpets, jade, and gold collected over the years by the Egertons.

At the time of the fire, the house was rented out to Frank Cooper, a wealthy business owner from Manchester. The owner, Sir Philip Grey-Egerton was spending more time in London after his second marriage had failed. His first marriage had borne twins – Philip and Rowland and are the subject of the second book – *Marching as to War*, also reviewed this month.

Like many late Victorian landowners and gentry, Sir Philip had sought out a bride from the USA who could bring wealth and beauty to Cheshire, also helping to support the finances of running Oulton Hall and the land.

However, the marriage did not last long and in 1904 they were granted a divorce. Sir Philip remarried an Australian divorcee, but again, the marriage was doomed. Eventually, Sir Philip would end up spending more time in London, leasing out the property to Mr Cooper.

It is thought that the fire was started by an electrical fault in one of the roofs. In a rush to get the house wired up with the new-fangled electricity (which was DC), bare wires were often laid over 200+ year old timber.

Four fire brigades attended the fire over four days – and tragically, six people were killed, all of them trying to either put the fire out or rescue some of the antiquities.

They were:

Fireman Joseph Hunt from the Tarporley Fire Brigade

George Wallace Sinclair – Head Gardener

Mary Spann – Maid

Bertha Lloyd – Head Housemaid who raised the alarm initially.

Fred Crank – Gamekeeper

Harry White – Farm Labourer.

All of them died at the scene, making the tragedy even more awful for the survivors and the families of those who perished.

The book goes into detail about the fire, the postmortems and inquests that followed along with a catalogue of other mansion fires in the UK. However, they did not suffer the same number of casualties as Oulton Hall did. The 80-page book is well illustrated and gives an insight into Edwardian gentry life, how the fire was dealt with and the loss of life and how the surviving families came to terms with their sudden and tragic bereavement.

Marching as to War

By Roy F Ramsbottom

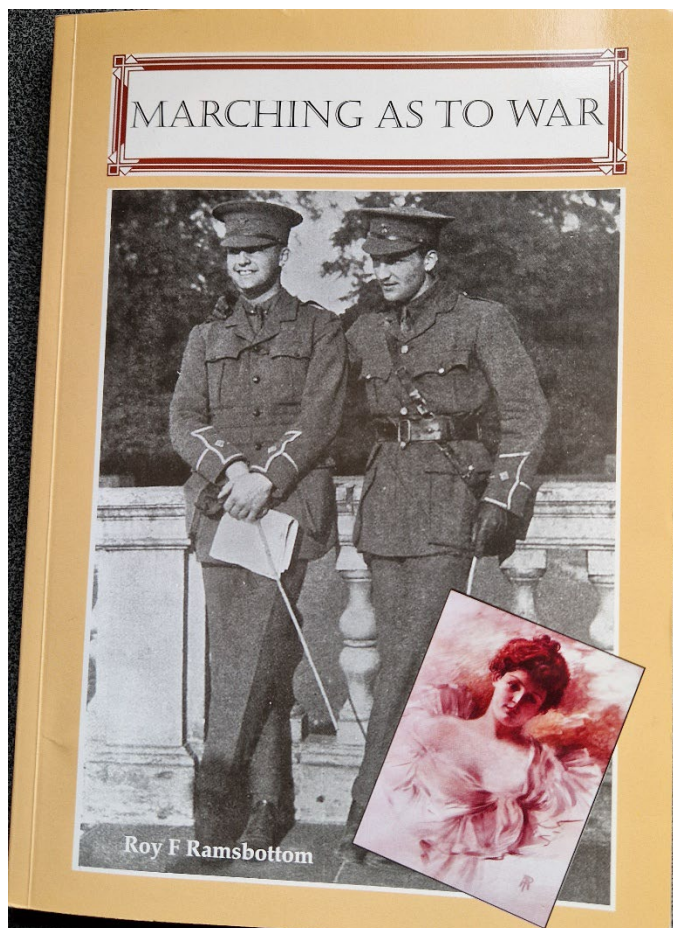
Out of Print

Marching As To War charts the lives of the Egerton twins Philip and Rowland who were Sir Philip Grey-Egerton's children from his first marriage to Mary Carolyn Campbell Cuyler from Baltimore.

The twins enjoyed the privilege of growing up on a grand estate in mid-Cheshire and at the outbreak of the Great War, joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers. (*The regiment uses the archaic spelling of "Welch" – ed.*) Tragically, both were killed and Rowland's body was never found.

What the book explores and delivers well, is the human side of loss during conflict. Many of us will have read about the Great War – 1914 to 1918. However, the book humanises the loss of family and brings home the sense of grief to those who had been affected.

Although out of print now, second hand copies can be found, and it is well worth looking out for.



REARWARD GLANCE



ERA R11B at Oulton Park November 1953. Thanks to Adam Ferrington for the photo