

# The BRITISH MOTORSPORT

# MARSHALS CLUB



SAFER MOTOR SPORT

MOTOR SPORTS ASSOCIATION RECOGNISED

FOUNDED 1957

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“ Don’t call me Baby”

The story of Baby Bertha.

**NORTHERN IRELAND REGION MAGAZINE**

# Newsletter

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## Cover Story.

**With Vauxhall refusing to partake in Motorsport events in 1970 it was left to 600 British Vauxhall dealers to fund a race and rally programme under the banner of DTV ( Dealer Team Vauxhall ).**

**They employed Bill Blydenstein , a highly respected tuning specialist and owner of his own racing team to prepare Vauxhall cars for competition.**

**The breakthrough came at the end of the 1973 series when it was suggested that DTV might want to consider an entry into the British Super Saloon Championship. This was a bold step as up to then Vauxhall cars were only looking for class wins in races with little chance of a outright win.**

**Not only had Blydenstein an idea about the new Firenza model he had lined up one of the most exciting drivers of the era , Gerry Marshall, a man who in todays political mad world would never get a race seat. Marshall was a larger than life character , too heavy to be a racing driver thanks mainly to his love of craft beers , but on track he was famous for his sideways driving style. “ Win it or crash it” he once said. Blydenstein took a couple of Firenza shells , stripped of all excess weight , designed a light spaceframe chassis for the body and fitted a race tuned 5 litre V8 Holden engine , the car reaching 0 to 100 MPH in under 7 seconds.**

**Gerry who would go on to win 600 race and class wins in his career fitted the Vauxhall perfectly and in 1975 won 20 out of 24 races to win the British SuperSaloon Championship. In a curtailed season in 1976 he won 10 of the 13 races taking the title for the second time.**

**Rule changes ended the cars career and it was left in a DTV garage until in 1986 current owner Piers Ward’s father found it and bought it for an undisclosed sum.**



**Fitted with an uprated Chevy engine as part of the restoration it was not eligible for any current race class until Goodwood heard about it and invited it to take part in the 2019 Festival of Speed. Of the many million pound cars appearing at the Festival Baby Bertha proved to be one of the most popular. An important part of the U.K.'s rich motorsport history which without the Ward family might well have been scrapped !**

**Sad to report the death recently of several of Motor Racing hero's.**

**Firstly Chris Craft who started racing in a home built Ford Anglia in the early 1960's before being spotted by Broadspeed and offered drives in both U.K. F3 and the British Saloon Car Championship. In 1969 he finished second in both the BSCC and the British Sports Car Championships before joining Alain Dd Cadenet LeMans team. Not only did he compete in 14 LeMans 24 hour races he won the European Sports Car Championship in 1973 in a Lola and also managed 2 races in Formula 1 in Canada and Watkins Glen in America.**

**Secondly the Queen of the Ring.**

**Sabine Schmitz ,aged 51 , was born within walking distance of the Nurburgring circuit and aged 17 ( the legal age for driving at that time was 18 ) bluffed her way onto the circuit in her mothers BMW. After a couple of visits officials started to**

**take notice of this young girl who , driving an elderly BMW was passing modern Porsche 911's and the like and setting faster and faster lap times.**



**She was soon to get drives from BMW and Porsche and became a racing instructor at the Ring in the late 1970's Unknown outside Germany that changed when she was instructing Jeremy Clarkson in his supercharged Jaguar round the 'ring. After he set his fastest time she joked " I could go as fast in a Transit Van" leading to her becoming a Top Gear star. In spite of the Jaguar having 400 BHP And the diesel Transit 100 BHP she got to within 9 seconds of Clarkson's fastest lap , a remarkable achievement ( the video is still on You Tube ) This lead to several appearances on Top Gear 5<sup>th</sup>. Gear ang German Motors T.V.**

**In 1986 she became the first woman to win the Nurburgring 24 race driving a BMW M3 , she one it again in 1998 and in 1999 the first female to become European Endurance Sports Car Champion. She also became one of the top Nurburgring BMW Taxi drivers driving hundreds of people round the 'ring in an M5 usually scaring them silly.**

**In 2015 and 2016 she competed in the World Touring Car Championship scoring points in both years before finally admitting she was suffering with a rare form of cancer. She continued driving for BMW's Nurburgring Taxi service until 2019 when the cancer returned , ending her young life last month.**

**Johnny Dumfries Aged 62 died in March. Successful in Formula Ford 1600 and going on to win the 1984 British F3 Championship calling himself Johnny Bute and driving a van for the Williams F1 team few people knew he was in fact a**

**distant member of the Royal Family. He raced Formula 3000 in 1985 before signing for Lotus in 1986 as teammate to young driver Ayrton Senna. He had a couple of decent results but could not match Senna and was fired at the end of the year.**

**He then entered World Sports Cars winning the LeMans 24 hour race in 1988 for the TWR Jaguar team and racing sports cars in 1989 and 1990.**

**In 1993 his father died and he returned to Scotland as the Marquis of Bute to manage the families large estate.**

**Last but by no means least is MURRAY WALKER .**

**I met Murray twice , first at , I think the 1996 British G.P. , where he came to the marshal's briefing and secondly at the N E C some 10 years later when I was working on the BMMC stand at the International Racing Car Show. A total petrolhead he was in awe of Irish rallying and talking to him it was clear he knew more than I did about Bertie Fisher , Jimmy McRae ,Billy Coleman etc.**

**Without Murray there would have never been the "Coleman Balls" series ,and he will go down in the history of motorsport when many F1 drivers have been forgotten.**

**Some of his favourite quotes are worth repeating.**

**This new Lotus is unique , apart from the one behind it.**

**Mansell can clearly see him closing on his earphones.**

**Do my eyes deceive me or is the Lotus engine sounding rough ?**

**The leading Ferrari is O K apart from it's on fire.**

**Car News.**

**The Auction houses continue to report record sales as people stuck at home , at least those who have not been financial hit by the lockdown , seem to want to spend money. Biggest surprises recently was a restored 1973 Bond Bug selling for £29160 against a £12,000 estimate and an unrestored Mini Clubman 1275 GT selling for over £18,000. For some reason any Saab 900 Turbo with under 100,000 miles is now in demand with what was a couple of years ago banger money**

**(£2/3000) now selling for up to £12,000. Two rather rare Italian car also made way over estimate , a 1972 Lancia 2000 saloon selling for £24,000 and a nice 1957 Alfa 1900 c coupe reaching over £200,000.**

**Local golfer Rory McIlroy is taking advantage of the situation selling his 2010 Bentley Continental with special Matt Grey paint for £40,000**

**Fords continue to throw up surprises with a 1974 Granada Ghia Mk1 selling at Anglia Auctions for £13,230 , way above estimate.**

Robert's RallyBuzz

## We Could Have A Busy Autumn Ahead!

At last, we here in Northern Ireland might just be getting stage rallying back up and running later this year. While we are still in a lockdown situation until the NI Executive decides otherwise, a number of local clubs are planning events for October and November. This is great news. By that time most people in the country will have had their complete set of vaccinations and things should be returning to something approaching normal. Listed below is a diary of events, more could follow. Of course all of these dates are provisional and totally dependent on the situation in Northern Ireland at that time with regard to COVID-19.

### Rally Diary

Sat. 16th October The Tour of the Sperrins

Organised by Magherafelt and District Motor Club this closed-road tarmac event takes place over six stages in and around Maghera and Draperstown in Co.Derry. Based At Walsh's Hotel with a central service park nearby. BRMC marshals should be assisting with rescue, timing and other duties on the one-day Northern Ireland Championship event.

Sat. 6th November Tyrone Stages Rally

Cookstown MC are running this event. Another closed-road tarmac rally, this time with four stages run twice in the Stewartstown/Newmills/Pomeroy areas of Co.Tyrone.

We will be out in force once again. A counting round of the 2021 McGrady Insurance Motorsport UK Northern Ireland Rally Championship and the Protyre Asphalt Rally Championship.

Sat. 13th November Forest Rally

This gravel stages event could be organised by as many as four motor clubs. No further details yet but we have been asked to assist with radio and possibly other marshalling duties.

Sat. 20th November Today's Ulster Rally

The final round of the 2021 British Rally Championship. Organised by the NI Motor Club the closed-road tarmac stages will be in the same area of Co.Down as the 2019 event, with a base in Newry. We will be assisting with rescue, radio and timekeeping plus other marshalling duties. If you are marshalling on any of these autumn events, don't forget your warm weather clothing. We could have rain, sleet or even snow on any of them!

# Looking Back

Marshalling Memories

40 Years Ago.....1981

The Golden Jubilee Circuit of Ireland saw Jimmy McRae take his second win on the bounce. He and Ian Grindrod were aboard a Dealer Team Opel Ascona 400. Ger Buckley was second in his Vauxhall Chevette HSR and Russell Brooks third in a Talbot Sunbeam Lotus. Of the 134 competitors who started the five day marathon only 33 finished. The rally started and finished in Belfast on April 14th with a Good Friday run around Northern Ireland sponsored by The Clock Shop. Killarney was the overnight halt on Saturday and Sunday. There were 61 stages, the shortest being SS1 Ormeau Park at 0.79 miles and the longest Molls Gap which ran to it's maximum length of 14.97 miles. Having just joined BMRMC/BRMC in March, I was marshalling at scrutineering before timing the finish of SS1 and then went spectating in Donegal on Monday night before marshalling at the Tuesday Belfast City Hall finish. There was no overall Circuit sponsor in 1981. Longtime backers, the Gallaher Tobacco Group (with their Benson & Hedges brand) withdrew their support following a row with Rothmans the previous year. 1981 was the year of the black and gold anniversary door number plates, not always popular as they were so hard to read.

30 Years Ago.....1991

The BMRMC/BRMC NI training day was held over two days in mid March. Attendance figures were average 27 members (plus a few potentials) signed on. This was just 60% of the 1991 membership. We were making plans for a quiz night in the Cavehill Inn our then venue for our monthly club meetings.

The Circuit of Ireland Rally at Easter was sponsored by BIF and dominated by Colin McRae and Derek Ringer in their Rothmans Subaru Legacy. Bertie Fisher and Rory Kennedy were second but 4 MINUTES and 41 seconds behind the flying McRae. Fisher was in a Ford Sierra Cosworth 4x4. James Cullen and Ellen Morgan finished third in a two-wheel-drive Sierra. There were only 45 starters in the main part of the rally and 29 finishers. The rally started from the Dunadry Inn in Co. Antrim on Saturday 30th March and finished on Monday 1st April in Dun Laoghaire Co. Dublin after 29 special stages. On Sunday four of us were timekeeping at the finish of SS21 Ballyfoyle 2 in County Kilkenny, the final stage of the day. Rally leader Colin McRae had a suspension damaging mid-stage off, but carried on with a loss of two minutes. Prodrive mechanics descended on the ailing Legacy down the road after the stage and completely rebuilt it. Going into SS21 Austin MacHale was second overall, 3 minutes down and running second on the road behind McRae. Austin crashed his BMW M3 at the same location as Colin had minutes before, blocking the stage for the remaining competitors. By the time MacHale finally reached the end of the stage, 37 minutes were lost! The rest of the competitors were later awarded McRae's stage time. Dropping to almost last place, and with only eight stages remaining, there was no point in Austin MacHale continuing. He withdrew from the rally that night. We still refer to the whole affair as "The Ballyfoyle Incident ". By the way; 1991 was Colin McRae's only Circuit of Ireland victory.

20 Years Ago.....2001

Due to the 2001 Foot and Mouth outbreak, the Bishopscourt Stages Rally due to run on March 17 was postponed until May 12. Events cancelled so far included the Circuit of Ireland and the Donegal Rally. It was unclear what would happen later in the year regarding the Foot & Mouth crisis and how it would effect motorsport..... Fast forward 20 years and uncertainty prevails once more in 2021!

10 Years Ago.....2011

The Donnelly Group Circuit of Ireland took place at Easter. The two-day 16-stage event started from the City Hotel in Armagh on Saturday April 23 and was a counting round of both the Irish Tarmac and Northern Ireland Rally Championships. There were 101 starters for the 80th Anniversary Circuit, organised by Bobby Willis and his team. As Chief Timekeeper I had around 60 people deployed to cover the various controls. A full BMMC/BRMC timing team were running four stages over the two days. One of the highlights was the innovative Lisburn Power Stage which attracted a huge crowd of 15,000 spectators while around 9,000 more logged on to watch the stage live on the internet. Derek McGarrity scored his fifth Circuit win while Kenny McKinstry was second and top of the NI Championship runners. Both men were in Subaru Impreza WRC's. A total of 42 competitors finished the rally.



Jimmie McRae Opel Ascona 400. 1981 Circuit.



**CRAP CORNER.      Saint Patrick's Day jokes.**

I often wondered what our parents did in the days before iPhones , the internet and social media. I asked my 18 brothers and sisters but they had no idea either.

Two English business men are fitting out their new store in Dublin's Grafton Street. With only a few shelves up there is a lot of work still to do but as they work they notice every now and then a local will stop and peer through the window. " Sooner or later one of those nosy beggars are going to stop and ask us what we are selling" says one. Sure enough an elderly woman rapped the window and asked in a broad Dublin accent if they were selling anything. "Yes we are selling assholes" " Doing well then" was the reply " Only two left" !

Captain of the cargo ship stuck in the Suez canal finally revealed



Poor Paddy is dying , surrounded by his wife , daughter ,two sons and his two care nurses he called for a camcorder to record his last wishes. To Mary my wife I leave the big house in Cultra , To my eldest son Patrick Junior I leave the two office blocks in Royal Avenue , to Sean I leave the 3 Apartments blocks on the Malone Road and to my lovely daughter all the houses on the Upper Lisburn Road. "God bless us" says one of the Nurses " We had no idea Paddy was so rich , he must have worked hard all his life."

"Wish he had" says the wife " The silly old sod was a window cleaner."

Mick buys everyone in the pub a drink after his wife gives birth to a 20 pound boy. A 20 pound boy , never heard the like. A week later he goes back into the Pub and the Landlord says " What about the baby , what weight is he now ?" " 17 pounds" says Paddy with a smile. " We had him circum sized yesterday".

**After 100 years lying on the sea bed, Irish divers were amazed to find that the Titanic's swimming pool was still full.**



**FANTASY GRAND PRIX First Result.**

- |                               |                                   |                               |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>1 Roy Bowman 33 Points</b> | <b>2 James Connelly 32 Points</b> | <b>3 Wright Holland 28</b>    |
| <b>4 Rory O'Neill 21</b>      | <b>5 Colin Wilson 21</b>          | <b>6 Daniel Connelly 20</b>   |
| <b>7 Paul Boyle 18</b>        | <b>8 Tony McClenahan 17</b>       | <b>9 Elizabeth Holland 13</b> |
| <b>10 Robert Coursey 10</b>   | <b>11 Chris Wilson 10</b>         | <b>12 Ian Culbert 10</b>      |
| <b>13 Duncan McGregor 6</b>   |                                   |                               |

