



Annual Review

2010

A classic season for sure

For Peter Shaw in 2010 the stars were in alignment, all he needed was a constant turn of speed, a bit of luck and the prize was his for the taking. An opportunity he grabbed with both driving gloves to win the 70's Road Sport Championship against fierce opposition.

In the 70's Road Sport circus, Peter Shaw was the tightrope act, combining skill with an extraordinary level of balance. His TVR Tuscan looked superb from race one, resplendent in a period green offset by black wheels. And remained immaculate throughout the season.

Peter's nemesis was 2009 Champion Julian Barter on the high trapeze, who made it clear from race one that he wasn't going to relinquish the title easily. Julian's TVR 3000M carries the patina of an interesting life, it may no longer be a concourse example but in Julian's hands is certainly effective.

In the first two races the spoils were evenly split, Peter relying on precision, Julian redefining the concept of 'the edge'. Separated by just 0.005 sec in practice at Silverstone in May a technical problem resulted in Julian failing to score and then the season became serious.

Snetterton in June is usually hot, except when it is extremely hot, as it was on the day 70's Road Sports experimented with a 40 minute non-stop race format. Whilst others wilted in the sun, the pace set by Peter and Julian was relentless, their lap times fluctuating within a tiny 2 second window for 29 laps and separated by just 0.594 seconds as they took the flag, an amazing display of racing at its best without a safety net.

Peter took another 3.164 sec victory over Julian at Mallory Park, a class win at Brands Hatch where Julian again failed to score, followed by a 0.452 class win over Julian at Castle Combe, creating the impression the cup was in the bag. And then Julian pushed 'the edge' just a little further, taking a win from Peter at Oulton Park by 1.119 sec and two further class wins at Brands Hatch and the Silverstone finals to round off the season in style.

When the points were totalled, Peter stepped off the tightrope as 2010 champion and the winner of a very competitive Class B, to the applause of a very appreciative audience – and a can of warm beer.

Paul Stafford in his venerable Datsun 240Z was presented with a class trophy at Mallory Park which he initially mistook for a long service award. During the Brands Hatch Super Prix, Paul was rudely awakened from his afternoon slumbers, when Dr Hugh Powell's Lotus 7 attempted a rectal examination with an optimistic run up the inside into Druids.

Ringmaster Charles Barter took a fine win in his very smart 240Z at Croft, whilst Mark Bown and Chrissy Totty put up a strong fight in their TVR's at the beginning of the season but both machines wilted under the intensity of the challenge with engine failures.

Mark Bennett's Renault Alpine A310 was probably the most photographed star of the season and whilst it is difficult to believe these cars came from the same decade, Ashley St.John-Hart added to the variety with his Stag. Initially displaying the handling characteristics of a canal barge, as the season progressed Ashley dragged the hulk into the midfield, a triumphal effort and a terrific addition to the championship.

Michael Parden in his Appendix K, TVR 2500 and Clive Fosket 240Z completed the class B point scorers in the final championship table.

Third overall and winner of Class D2 was Will Morton in his Alfa Romeo Alfetta. Not the fastest or the most developed car in the class but certainly a testament to what can be achieved with a length of bailing twine, a gallon of sheep dip and deceptively understated talent.

After boiling his engine at Snetterton, Will's lame horses gallantly dragged the car into regular point scoring positions, surviving a scare at Croft when the oil pressure gauge dropped to zero before finally expiring as they passed the finish post at Oulton Park. But by then Will had already done enough to bring home the bacon.

The Jensen Healeys were the prima donnas of the grid, like strutting ponies constantly requiring their fragile Lotus engines to be preened and fettled, with their irascible temperaments they promised so much and consistently failed to deliver.

Bob Trotter's example was the best of a bad lot, its con rods often trying to break free from captivity, requiring three engine rebuilds to complete the season. Robert Barter is a most civilised competitor and his Jensen reciprocated with an excess of petulance.

There aren't enough words to describe all of Roberts car failures but he did provide the comedy moment of the year by giving the car a disconsolate shove through the timing beam in the Croft pit lane to record a class win.

David Lane was convinced that his car had turned feral, trying to break free at every possible opportunity resulting in the cockpit area being filled with the distinctive smell of adrenalin.

John Dobson and Dave Erwin both enjoyed unprecedented levels of reliability from their Alfa Romeos by understanding the secrets of tuning a 105 series engine – don't.

Providing a tantalising glimpse into what might be in 2011 the stalwart pair were joined on track for the final races by the Alfa Romeo Bertone's of Mark Dudley, Peter Smart and Jon Wagstaff and I even managed to encourage my car to flex its creaking joints for a end of season whizz.

Over the previous winter Mark Oldfield's Alfa Romeo engine had been lavished with gold, frankincense and just a little mirth from fellow competitors. The Markborough Special arrived at Silverstone in May surrounded by an air of expectation and returned home surrounded by a large puddle of oil. Mark acquired a Lancia Monte Carlo in time for the Silverstone Finals, finished in mock Delorean brushed aluminium its (non) reflective surfaces were more back to the primer than back to the future.

Steve Cooke's Lotus 7 and Alan Harper's Lotus Elan provided a classic demonstration of an immovable object competing against an irresistible force in Class C. Time and again their cars were drawn towards the same area of tarmac, separated by 100ths of a second, the thickness of a glass fibre and the skill of the drivers. Steve collected the greatest number of points, Alan had the consolation of winning two races outright at Mallory Park and the Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit.

Third in Class C was Stuart Richardson, who tragically lost his life in a road accident on Friday 13 August, in these situations it is traditional to say 'rest in peace' however during the time Stuart raced with 70's it was apparent that he lived life to the full, so we hope he is adapting well to movable aerodynamic devices and for all our sakes ensuring that the hereafter is loud and fast.

Howard Bentham had a relatively low-key year, not helped when a rabid Jensen took a bite out of the rear of his Elan at Silverstone in May. Nigel Ashley's season in the Lotus Europa just ran out of mechanical get up and go at the beginning of August and Bill Braithwaite put in an occasional appearance in his Europa to maintain a variety of colour in the class.

The munchkin Classes D1 and E put on a great display throughout the year, the irrepressible ankle biters fearlessly ducking and diving throughout the grid. Ken

Rorrinson is the series' wilderness and bushcraft expert, resolutely driving his Lancia Fulvia to every race and camping in a tent the size of a dustbin liner.

Winning Class D1 was just reward for Ken after surviving another British summer of lashing rain, wild winds and temperamental Italian electrics providing many anxious journeys home.

Class E winner Ralph Harwood-Penn was easily the most resourceful competitor of the season, building an potent racer from a fire damaged MG Midget, found in a shed up at Heathrow (actually Hemel Hempstead) but it was still cool for cats, maintained with parts scavenged from an ex competition Austin Healey Sprite.

Previous Class D1 winner Alex Childs alternated between an unreliable Alfa Romeo GT Junior and temperamental Lancia Fulvia Sport. When running, Alex easily covers more race miles than any other competitor rushing up and down through the field, discovering new uncharted parts of the race track, always accompanied by a big grin and huge armfuls of talent.

Classes D1 and E were supported by Carl Oldfield and Stuart Downward in Lancia Fulvias, David Castledine's Triumph Spitfire, James Bailey's Fiat 128 3P Berlinetta and Brian Rides in a rare Clan Crusader.

The human cannons in Class A are huge crowd pleasers, using combinations of 8 and 12 cylinders to fire themselves towards the horizon at great velocity. Class champion Paul Anderson, supported by Richard Armstrong in another Porsche 928, is a talented exponent in the art of horizon chasing. Awesomely fast, once set on a trajectory, the Porsche doesn't change direction easily and it is a testimony to Paul's skill that he performs equally well on the undulating Brands Hatch Grand Prix circuit as the billiard smooth surfaces of Silverstone.

Big cat trainer Paul Aslett XJS put up a gladiatorial fight in the middle of the grid against feisty opposition who displayed no respect for the large cat's history and heritage. Paul was joined later in the season by Adam Bagnell who put on a very lively show in the prowling V12 E-Type to ruffle the established order.

Ian Jacobs clearly enjoys a challenge, his Mercedes 450SL assailed the senses both visually and vocally, such was the car's power that Ian spent the best part of the season trying to keep all the engine components within the crankcase, but when everything held together the earth shook. Book ending the season were Paul Conway and Richard Plant in their powerful V8 wooden catapults from Malvern.

Initially concerned by the threat of an unstable economy, as the months passed, the sun warmed the soul and the excellence of the competition dominated the mood. The skill of the drivers throughout the grid and the sense of being part of such a great series shone through to make the 2010 season tremendously enjoyable for everyone involved. Three cheers for Peter Shaw, 70's Road Sports Champion 2010.