



# a short story

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## Coffee and walnut cake

In the spirit of historic motor sport and the HSCC, when Swiss competitor Jonathan Hartop's Alfa Romeo developed a gearbox malaise during practice for the Historic Road Sport Championship at the Brands Hatch Superprix I felt that offering him the use of my car which was entered for the 70's Road Sport race slight compensation for dragging himself from Geneva to Kent for 8.30am scrutineering.

This offer was made with little consideration for the fact that I am built with the figure and capaciousness of an antique oak wardrobe (fortunately without the turned feet) whilst Jonathan has the finesse and physique of a finely tuned Swiss watch. Despite this potential set back we tackled the task of moving the seating position with more enthusiasm than AAability, equipped with tools purloined from the AA.

With minutes to spare Jonathan set off for the grid unaware that despite the similar(ish) colour of both cars the considerable the time and funds I have lavished on my car over the previous 12 months have honed it to the point where it is now less reliable than when built by militant Italians in the early 70's and possessing the handling characteristics of a pantomime horse – but confident that the car, now renumbered 39 was full of fuel.

Launching off the grid when the lights went out with the alacrity of a cuckoo out of a clock, despite his home nations declaration of neutrality he was soon fighting his way through the field taking no prisoners until stuttering to a halt 2 laps from the end – so that would be car 39 parked in the paddock with a broken gearbox that had a full tank of fuel!!!

For my race, with home comforts re-established inside the car, the radio retuned into something less central European and fuel added, I achieved a new record by losing even more places at the start than my previous best set at Donington in April, with acceleration becoming a random option due to gunge in the carburettor from the previous draining of the petrol tank, common sense, uncharacteristically prevailed and was watching from the spectator enclosure moments before the paintwork of Matthew's Datsun gained the patina of a builders skip and was filled with gravel.

We concluded that our day could have been worse and that both slices of the coffee and walnut cake were delicious.