



a short story

Unreliable memories

James Nairn takes another nostalgic look back at the 1970's

With The Anorak writing about the Production Saloons in the November issue of the HSCC News I thought it might be time for the second instalment of my unreliable 1970's racing memories. The previous story centred around my inability to find a set of overalls that fitted and the purchase of a Diamond White Escort Mexico from the forecourt of my local Ford dealer, for £1000.00.

I am not sure whether the introduction of Production Saloons had anything to do with the oil crisis of 1973 but from a political perspective it created the impression the sport was no longer immune from outside influences. I don't whether a parallel can be drawn between this situation and the current one of environmental pressure or whether it is just the joining of another circle in motorsport history.

Monday 23 April 1973, my first race in Production Saloons. The series was sponsored by Castrol and the entry list contains 4 Chevrolet Camaro's, including cars for Richard Lloyd and Les Leston, 7 Capri's including cars for Stuart Graham and Gordon Spice, 2 BMW 3.0Si sponsored by Shellsport and Rothmans for Tony Lanfranchi and Motor magazine editor Roger Bell.

The class structures were based on the showroom price, the £1050 – £1500 class contained 4 Vauxhall Firenza's, drivers included Barry [sic] Williams, the Chrysler Dealer Team entered a Hillman Hunter for Bernard Unett with 3 others entered independently including one for Ian Ashley, of the 7 Mexico's, the

drivers included Neil McGrath and DJ Mike Smith.

There were also 5 Moskvich 412's, drivers included Tony Lanfranchi and the mysterious "Olinkha". In total 54 cars were entered for 10 laps around the triangle that was the Silverstone Club Circuit. The innocence of youth is a great asset when dropped into the middle of a grid full of drivers who were no longer on the way up but already at the top of their game.

My second race at Brands Hatch, was dominated by monsoon conditions, but this was before global warming so was regarded as just rain. I had not been to Brands before and came out of the pit lane to be greeted by a scene similar to the one viewed by Kirk Jones as he became the first man to plunge over Niagara falls in a barrel. The series sponsors had provided Production Saloons with a hospitality Portacabin located at the top of the paddock. The paddock was built on the hill (now car park) and consisted of a series of pens resembling a Welsh sheep market which the water cascaded through.

In the race Tony Lanfranchi provided me with the benefit of his local experience and demonstrated the difference between dry lines and wet lines, Barrie demonstrated the art of 'drifting' when it was just a part of a racing drivers trade, many years before it became a sport. Drinking tea with biscuits in the cabin after the race Barrie gave me a piece of paper, it read: 'Engine Pershore Tel 3494, Suspension Pershore Tel 3804' I wrote 'Barrie Williams' on the top of the piece of paper just in case I forgot his name!!!

