

A return to Oulton Park

Michael Loveland, Tisbury, Wiltshire

An introduction from Mike Dent: As your Joint Competition Secretary I would like to submit some articles for Impressions promoting Imps in competition. Here, Michael Loveland and James Ibbotson report back from Oulton Park, 29th May 2022.

Not having raced at Oulton Park since 2019 the expectation of competing on this challenging circuit was palpable. To reacquaint myself with the geography of the circuit I signed up for the 15 minutes practice at the start of the day. This meant an early start to push the car to scrutineering at 7 a.m. – at least it wasn't pushing a Ford Falcon!

With a 29-car grid I managed to qualify 16th, third of the four Imps behind 'the New Boy' James Ibbotson (8th), 'the Seasoned Veteran' David Heale (12th), but ahead of 'Fast Freddie', Freddie Brown (20th).

I got off the grid well in the first race but was soon passed by an Anglia and a BMW 1800ti and was running 18th. I managed to get back up to 15th place before my gear linkage

parted company with the gearbox and I cruised to a stop at Cascades after only two laps.

I started the second race 25th out of 29 with David Heale alongside me who had a distributor jump out. James started 7th having had a storming first race, even though the last two laps he had only three wheels on his wagon having sheared the offside driveshaft, and Freddie started 20th having had the alternator bracket shear.



Michael Loveland on his way to 14th place in the second race
Photo: Mike Dent



The Imps did well, James Ibbotson (foreground) placing 7th
Photo: Mike Dent

All four Imps, having been fixed between the two races, with the assistance of the extended Imp community, finished the second race with James 7th, David 11th, myself 14th and Freddie 20th. All four drivers had fantastic battles throughout the race.

The weekend was a huge success for the 'Imp Boys' but a special thanks must go out to the normal supporting crew (other halves) with the addition of Simon & Karen Benoy, Keith Evans, Andy Jones & family, Mike Dent (who else carries two pairs of driveshafts in their rucksack?!) and Darron Bowden.

Having owned a Sunbeam Imp Sport while at University (OGP 794E) I was always keen to one day own another. I had also long had the desire to participate in Classic Touring Cars.

In 2018, thirty years after finally selling my Imp (I sold it and bought it back) I met Freddie Brown as part of the design team working on a property for the Saudi Royal Family. Freddie had been racing the previous weekend and was sharing his enthusiasm. The rest, as they say is history. Freddie helped me source a car, the Saudi Royal Family sponsored Formula 1 and I started Classic Touring Car Racing.

The car I bought had been prepared by Colin Rooney – to his normal high standard – and having now competed for four seasons and moved to the Shrigley Engineering power, I am hopeful of improving further on what has been a steep learning curve.

Finally I must mention my sponsor, Frome Scaffolding (01373 830152), who have been most supportive throughout.

Freddie Brown ahead of
a Minor and A40
Photo: Mike Dent



My first time racing at Oulton Park

James Ibbotson (Joint Competition Secretary), Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

My first visit to Oulton Park didn't disappoint. Having not been there since I last watched the HSCC guys race probably twelve years ago I made sure I put the hours in on the Xbox to familiarise myself with where the corners go.

I decided to do the extra early 15 minutes of practice which was a big help as it meant I could go into qualifying already up to speed.

A busy grid of cars made it hard to find space for a quick lap but I achieved P6 on the grid out of just over 30 cars.

Race 1 went well, unfortunately Michael Loveland's gear selector failed, and David Heale's distributor popped out meaning they both had to pull off. Freddie Brown's Fraser Imp replica finished well after a good dice with some more powerful machinery. I took the class win, but just before the end of the race the brake pedal started to go long and the rear of the car felt looser than usual. I cruised it to the flag and pulled up in *parc fermé*.

A quick look round the car confirmed the nearside driveshaft had lost its thread and nut meaning the wheel was free to float about held on by only the brake caliper. Not good!

Back to the paddock and the Imp community came together to repair the four Imps. Michael found a bolt to repair his gear selector, David Heale sorted his distributor issue, Freddie's alternator bracket had sheared but I found a spare adjustment bracket in my toolbox and he managed to fix it for race 2.

Mike Dent very kindly let me use a driveshaft from his collection, so between me, Dad and Simon Benoy we replaced the outer part of my driveshaft and the car was ready for race 2.

The Imp community is great and the support from them was fantastic. It was lovely to see some faces I hadn't seen since before the pandemic hit.

Race 2 went well for all four Imps with all of them finishing well after a big accident involving a Lotus Cortina rolling several times brought the day to an end. (Thankfully its driver is OK).

I'm starting to see more Imps being prepared to come out for some racing which is good to see. If you're thinking about it and need some advice on how to start please don't hesitate to contact Mike Dent or myself.

Again a big thank you to the Imp community that helped get the Imps back out for race 2. Also Shrigley Engineering for a fantastic engine and all the support I could ever need.



James Ibbotson. David
Heale behind
Photo: Mike Dent