

Castle Combe Circuit

Speed Trials and Sprints

After six years of car race meetings at Castle Combe the Bristol Motor Cycle & Light Car Club relinquished their lease on the circuit they'd created in 1950, unable to afford the track safety improvements required in the aftermath of the 1955 Le Mans disaster. That wasn't a complete end to their involvement at the circuit however, as on 26th May 1956 they organised their first speed event at the venue, the "Standing Quarter Speed Trials". Using a ¼-mile course taking in Camp Corner, the cars were run in pairs, using a staggered start to equalize the distance, with the two lanes being separated by a row of straw bales. Best time of the day was recorded by John Buncombe in his sports-racing Tojeiro-Bristol, ahead of Maberley Parker's C-type Jaguar. There were around 100 entries, all saloons and sportscars, and among others gaining awards were Henry Liddon, 'Tiny' Lewis and Ashley Cleave in his rapid Morris Special.

Over the next few years, a handful of further sprint meetings were held at the track, but it wasn't until the BRSCC re-opened the circuit for car racing in 1962 that speed events became a frequent occurrence at Castle Combe. The remainder of the 1960s saw numerous sprints, peaking in the middle of the decade with nine or ten meetings per year.



*Austin-Healey club sprint, June 1963
(photo by Brian Dennis)*

Depending on the organising club, the courses used were many and varied, ranging from ¼-mile to three laps. At some meetings cars ran singly, at others in pairs, while most using the longer courses were run as pursuit sprints. The most unusual format was the one-mile course used by the Dursley MC&LCC, first negotiating Camp Corner, then on to make a hairpin turn around a barrel in the middle of the track and return to the start line.

Clubs regularly organising events included local ones from Bristol, Burnham-on-Sea, and Dursley; from further away the Vickers-Armstrong club from Hurn, near Bournemouth; marque clubs such as Austin-Healey, Singer and MG, and the local branches of national organisations such as the BARC, the Civil Service Motoring Association (CSMA), and the 750 Motor Club. While most were dedicated sprint meetings, between 1965 and 1968 the Frazer Nash and Porsche clubs also included a sprint within their annual 'AFN' race meeting. Along with habitual speed event competitors many regular racers, such as Ron Fry, Geoff Mabbs, Vince Woodman, John Chatham, Brian Cutting, Richard Longman and Jonathan Buncombe also often appeared in sprints.

At the start of the 1970s the imposition of restrictions on the number of 'noisy' days allowed at the circuit drastically reduced sprint activity, and the last of that period was run by the CSMA in September 1971, and won by Paul Hull in a 1500cc Brabham BT6/9. Apart from a one-off event organised by the Welsh Counties Car Club in 1981, when a 'noisy' day became available, no more sprints would be run at the track until the 1990s.

Then, in 1991, permission was granted for the Bristol Aeroplane Company MC (now known as the Bristol Pegasus MC) to hold a trial event for road-silenced cars. The first Pegasus Sprint took place on 26th October 1991 over a ¾-lap course, Tony Michael recording best time of day in his V8-powered Westfield 7. This paved the way for further sprints at the track, the Bristol MC&LCC joining in with an event (now known as the Dick Mayo Memorial Sprint) in 1992, and 2008 saw the start of a third annual event, the Great Western Sprint, a round of the British Sprint Championship.



*Warwick Banks in diesel Westfield.
1993 Pegasus Sprint. © John L E Gaisford.*

Best Time of the Day Results

Date	Organising Club(s)	Driver	Car	Notes
26-May-56	Bristol MC&LCC "Standing Quarter"	John Buncombe	Tojeiro-Bristol	
25-May-57	Bristol MC&LCC, Burnham MC & MGCC(SW)	-	-	Cancelled - event moved to Whitchurch
17-Sep-60	Dursley MC&LCC			1st Dursley. Results unknown.
10-Jun-61	Bristol MC&LCC, Burnham MC & MGCC(SW) "3 Clubs"			Not known if event ran
19-Aug-61	Dursley MC&LCC	Wally Cuff	Cooper-JAP	
19-May-62	Bristol MC&LCC, Burnham MC & MGCC(SW) "3 Clubs"	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250GT	
28-Jul-62	Austin-Healey CC, White Horse MC, Weston-s-Mare MC	Don Balm	Lotus XI	1st Austin-Healey CC
18-Aug-62	Dursley MC&LCC	EG Willmott	Elva Ford FJ	
6-Apr-63	BRSCC (SW)	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250GT	
13-Apr-63	BARC (Bristol & Bath)	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250GT	1st BARC
18-May-63	Bristol MC&LCC, Burnham MC & MGCC(SW) "3 Clubs"	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250GT	
15-Jun-63	Austin-Healey CC, White Horse MC, Weston-s-Mare MC	Colin Watts	Lotus XI Climax	
22-Jun-63	BRSCC			Results unknown.
17-Aug-63	Dursley MC&LCC	David Good	Cooper-Daimler	
12-Oct-63	BARC (Bristol & Bath)			Results unknown.
11-Apr-64	BARC (Bristol & Bath) "Northey Trophy"	CD (Colin) Watts	Cooper-JAP	
6-Jun-64	Bristol MC&LCC, Burnham MC & MGCC(SW) "3 Clubs"	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250GTO	
13-Jun-64	Austin-Healey CC, White Horse MC, Weston-s-Mare MC			Results unknown.
4-Jul-64	Salisbury & DCC	Neville Trickett	Mini-Cooper	
11-Jul-64	BARC (Bristol & Bath)			Results unknown.
29-Aug-64	750 MC (Southern)	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250GTO	1st 750MC
12-Sep-64	Austin-Healey CC (SW)			Not known if event ran
3-Oct-64	BARC (Bristol & Bath)	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250LM	
17-Oct-64	Singer Owners Club	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250LM	1st Singer Owners Club
3-Apr-65	BARC (Bristol & Bath) "Northey Trophy"	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250LM	
8-May-65	Vickers-Armstrong (Hurn) CC	Ralph Wilding	Mini-Cooper S	1st Vickers-Armstrong
15-May-65	Frazer Nash CC/Porsche Club(GB)	AJ (Arthur) Gibson	Frazer Nash	Within race meeting
29-May-65	Singer Owners Club	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250LM	
19-Jun-65	Austin-Healey CC, White Horse MC, Weston-s-Mare MC			Results unknown.
18-Jul-65	Burnham MC, Bristol MC&LCC	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250LM	
7-Aug-65	CSMA			Results unknown.
11-Sep-65	MG CC/Austin-Healey CC	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250LM	
2-Oct-65	Vickers-Armstrong (Hurn) CC	Alan Shaw	Jaguar E-type	
23-Oct-65	BARC (Bristol & Bath) "Hippocrates Trophy"	Ron Fry	Ferrari	
7-May-66	Austin-Healey CC (SW)	Ron Fry	Ferrari 250LM	
14-May-66	Frazer Nash CC/Porsche Club(GB)	Neil Corner	Jaguar D-type	Within race meeting
28-May-66	Singer Owners Club	GW Holland	Lotus 20/22	

Date	Organising Club(s)	Driver	Car	Notes
2-Jul-66	Burnham-on-Sea MC	Ian Swift	Swift-Ford V8	
16-Jul-66	Vickers-Armstrong (Hurn) CC	G (Bill) Holland	Lotus 20/22	Pursuit
13-Aug-66	CSMA (Bath)	Terry McNally	Ford Anglia	
3-Sep-66	MGCC (SW)	-	-	Cancelled, insufficient entries
15-Oct-66	750 MC / Vickers-Armstrong	RS (Tiny) Littler	Cooper Mk3A	Pursuit
22-Oct-66	BARC (Bristol & Bath) "Hippocrates Trophy"	Ron Fry	Ford GT40	
10-Jun-67	Singer Owners Club	Mike Miles	Jaguar E-type	
17-Jun-67	Burnham-on-Sea MC	Chris Boulter	Marcos	
8-Jul-67	Vickers-Armstrong (Hurn) CC	Jeremy Lord	U2 Mk.6	Pursuit
5-Aug-67	Frazer Nash CC/Porsche Club(GB)	Bob Marsland	Reliant Sabre	Within race meeting
12-Aug-67	CSMA (Bath)	Ted Stephens	Lotus XI	
23-Sep-67	750 MC(South) / Vickers Armstrong (Hurn) CC	Jeremy Lord	U2 Mk.6-Ford	Pursuit
21-Oct-67	BARC (Bristol & Bath) "Hippocrates Trophy"			Not known if event ran.
15-Apr-68	Hagley & D LCC	Jonty Williamson	Felday 6	Pursuit
18-May-68	Singer Owners Club	MJ (Mick) Miles	Jaguar E-type	
29-Jun-68	CSMA(Wessex)			Believed not held.
3-Aug-68	Frazer Nash CC/Porsche Club(GB)	Peter Skidmore	Jaguar D-type	Within race meeting
17-Aug-68	Vickers-Armstrong (Hurn) CC	Jeremy Lord	U2 Mk.6A	Pursuit
28-Sep-68	750 MC			Not known if event ran.
29-Mar-69	Vickers-Armstrong (Hurn) CC	Tony Shaw	Jaguar E-type	Pursuit
17-May-69	Singer Owners Club	J Gray	Milmor GT	
20-Sep-69	CSMA (Bath)	Ted Stephens	Lotus XI Climax	
21-Mar-70	Vickers-Armstrong (Hurn) CC	JR (Jeff) Hill	U2 Mk.5-Ford TC	Pursuit
16-May-70	Singer Owners Club	John Burbidge	Jaguar E-type	
19-Sep-70	CSMA	Ken Cooper	Lotus 7 Ford	
18-Sep-71	CSMA (Bath)	Paul Hull	Brabham BT6/9 Ford	
31-Oct-81	Welsh Counties CC			Results unknown

Note: this is not necessarily a complete list of events, there may have been others currently unknown.

Information source: Castle Combe Circuit Archive.

Image sources: Castle Combe Circuit Archive, Bristol Pegasus Motor Club Archive.

*Pete Stowe
2020*

All results of the 'Pegasus' sprints from 1991 onwards can be viewed at :
bristolpegasus.com/archive/pegasus-sprint-results

Results of the 2011 'Wessex' sprint at Castle Combe can be viewed at :
bristolpegasus.com/archive/wessex-sprint-results

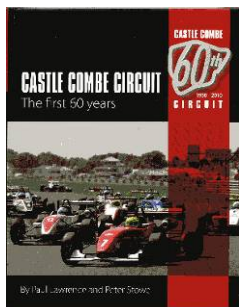
Some results of the 'Dick Mayo' and 'Great Western' sprints may be viewed at :
bristolmc.org.uk/cabinet/Results_Archive_index.htm

Westcountry Motorsport History
Website <https://bpmc.org.uk/petestowe/wmh.htm>
petestowe @ talktalk.net

The comprehensive story of Castle Combe is available in a book published for the Circuit's Diamond Jubilee in 2010

Castle Combe Circuit – The First 60 Years

by Paul Lawrence and Peter Stowe



From the days of the Castle Combe estate and RAF airfield, the book charts the first 60 years of the circuit's history, including a section on speed events. 154 pages with colour and black & white photos, many never previously published.

ISBN 978 1 903378 74 8, Published by TFM Publishing Ltd.

Copies are available from the Castle Combe Circuit online shop:
www.castlecombecircuit.co.uk/offers/60th-anniversary-book
 or from the Circuit Shop at major events.

Castle Combe Circuit Archive

Since the Circuit Archive was established in 1997 we have assembled a collection which includes programmes, results sheets, and press reports covering every meeting from the circuit's beginning in 1950, and also a small collection of photographs and memorabilia.

STILL WANTED FOR THE ARCHIVE

Although the archive includes much information, with many people having generously donated items, there are still a number of gaps to fill. Particular wants are:

- An original programme for the AFN/Porsche Club(GB) car race meeting on 15 May 1965
- results or race reports for the New Era MCC motorcycle race meeting on 21 May 1994
- reports, programmes or results sheets for the following sprints:
 - 17 September 1960 Dursley MC&LCC 1st Dursley Sprint
 - 10 June 1961 Bristol MC&LCC, Burnham-on-Sea MC & MG CC(SW) 3 Clubs Sprint
 - 13 June 1964 White Horse MC, Weston-super-Mare MC & Austin-Healey Club
 - 11 July 1964 BARC (Bristol & Bath Centre)
 - 12 September 1964 Austin-Healey Club (SW Centre)
 - 19 June 1965 White Horse MC, Weston-super-Mare MC & Austin-Healey Club
 - 7 August 1965 CSMA
 - 21 October 1967 BARC (Bristol & Bath Centre) Hippocrates Trophy Sprint
 - 28 September 1968 750MC
 - 31 October 1981 Welsh Counties CC

We are also interested in obtaining:

Pre-1979 race results sheets, and sprint programmes & results sheets.

Bristol Motor Cycle & Light Car Club magazines 1950-56.

Photographs or film from 1950s-1980s, especially photographs from the Formula 5000 meetings of 1970 and 1971.

Any other memorabilia.

If you can help please contact [petestowe @ talktalk.net](mailto:petestowe@talktalk.net) or

call the Castle Combe Circuit Office on 01249 782417