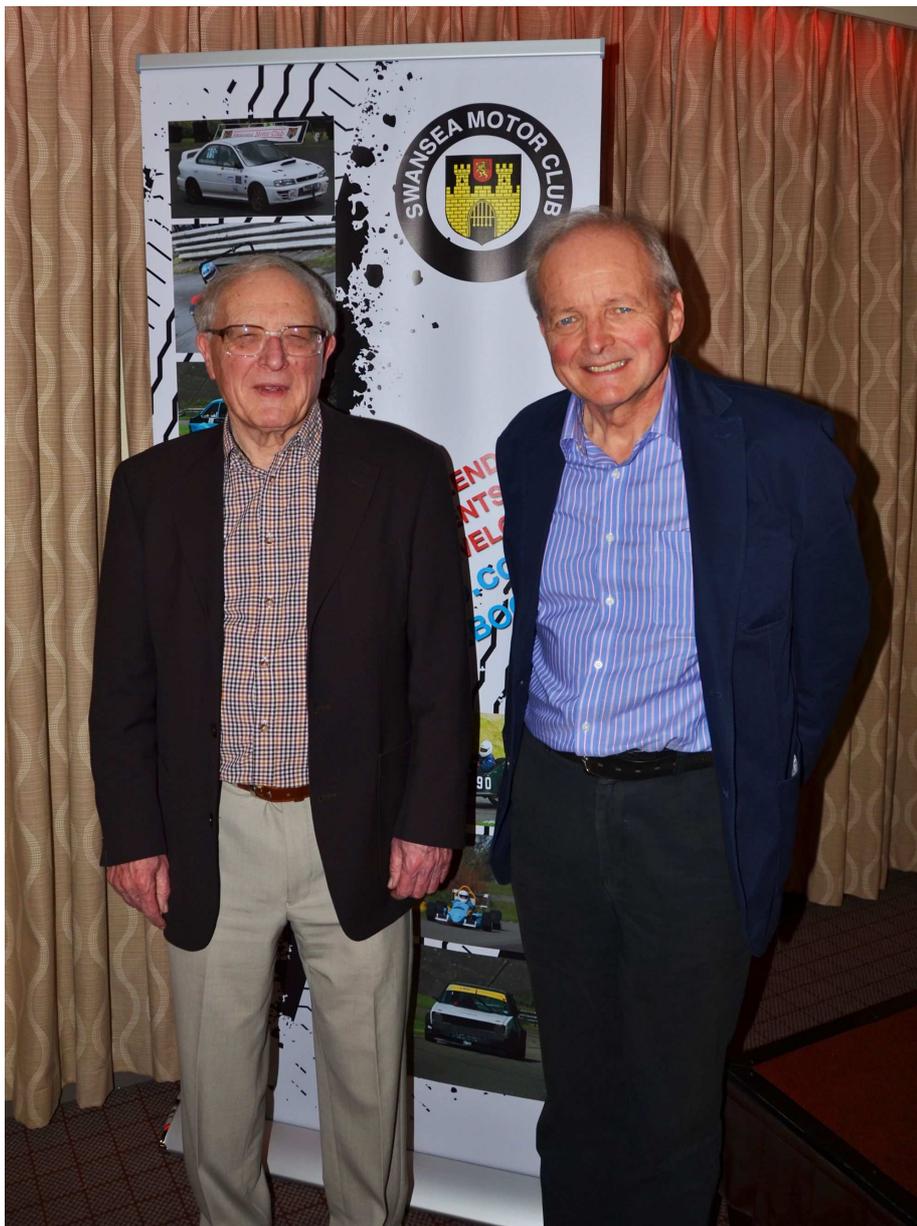




# WINDSCREEN

The Magazine of Swansea Motor Club



**July 2013**

# CLUB OFFICIALS

President	Ken Davies 33, Pennard Road, Kittle, SA3 3JY 01792 232069
Chairman	Huw Richards 446, Hendrefoilan Road, Killay, SA2 7NU 01792 527978
Vice Chairman	Christine Gibbon 51, Pennard Road, Pennard, SA3 2AA 01792 232644
Secretary	Julie Samuel 4 Highpool Lane, Newton, SA3 4TT 01792 360887
Treasurer	Neil Watkins 24, Carnglas Ave, Sketty, SA2 9JQ 01792 422589
Membership Sec.	Stephen Lloyd 16, Southward Lane, Langland, SA3 4QE 01792 368684
Chief Marshal	Huw Richards 446, Hendrefoilan Road, Killay, SA2 7NU 01792 527978
Newsletter Editor	Neil Samuel 4, Highpool Lane, Newton, SA3 4TT 01792 360887



## Editors Intro

Welcome to the latest edition of Windscreen.

Since our last update the club has run two major events but sadly has lost a number of members and friends.

In April, thanks to the efforts of our President Ken Davies and generous sponsorship from Trainer MINI, we were able to welcome motorsport legend Stuart Turner to the Village Hotel for a most entertaining evening of chat and reminiscences. Our cover photo shows Stuart with Ken during the event.

We have also run our first hillclimb at Llys y Fran which was blessed with an excellent entry, 68 cars eventually taking part. Despite almost constant rain the competition was hot, the usual horde of Caterhams joined by SMC's own Andy Dunbar in his Westfield, who put on a great show vying for FTD with Simon Rogers, Andy taking the win by a quarter of a second.

Sadly I must also record the passing of SMC members Gwyn Passmore, Pam and Dave Lloyd and ex-members and friends Howard Strawford, Bryan Davies and Brian (flying postman) Davies.

Let us hope that the next few months will be kinder to us from that point of view

Neil

# An Evening with Stuart Turner

It was at one of our monthly committee meetings that Ken Davies casually raised the subject under Any Other Business. "I was chatting with Stuart Turner the other day and he mentioned that he would be happy to come and spend an evening with us to talk about his life in motor sport. I thought we ought to make a bit of a do of it so I've lined up a sponsor."

That bit of a do became 'An Evening with Stuart Turner' at the Village Hotel and thanks to generous sponsorship from Trainer MINI we were able to invite numerous guests from other local motor clubs. All in all some 120 people were able to enjoy the evening.

Stuart Turner has had a lifelong interest in motor sport and has competed as co-driver on most major international rallies partnering such illustrious names as Pat Moss. He told an anecdote of his first long distance event with Pat when he broached the subject of toilet breaks, which had to be taken en route in the Big Healey. Matter of factly Pat replied "front right wheel is mine, rear left is yours."

He later became Sports Editor of "Motoring News" then Competition Manager for BMC, managing the rally team when the Mini Cooper 'S' regularly won the Monte Carlo Rally in the 60's, both roles that Stuart claimed to have fallen into without much effort on his behalf.

After leaving BMC Stuart spent two years at Castrol as Publicity Manager before he joined Ford as Competitions Manager, guiding the team to wins on the Safari and London-to-Mexico rallies and many others. Later he headed a special Ford Division which designed and manufactured performance cars and then was made Director of Public Affairs at Ford in 1975.

Stuart was appointed Director - European Motor Sports in 1983 with responsibility for Ford's race and rally programme across Europe. Another of his anecdotes was around pitching the idea of building the RS200 to Ford senior management, confessing that even he was astonished when they gave the go-ahead.

Such was the manner in which Stuart speaks that two hours seemed to fly by and all too soon he was wrapping up his tales. A thoroughly enjoyable evening was had by all.



## **Howard Strawford 1935 - 2013**

Motorsport lost a great ambassador and champion when Mumbles born Howard Strawford died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February at Bath Royal Infirmary aged 77. He was best known as the entrepreneur, dynamo and motor sport enthusiast who rescued the Castle Combe circuit from closure, developing it into arguably the UK's finest venue of its kind, but all this evolved from Howard's early participation in 'grass roots' club motor sport.

Although principally associated with circuit racing, Strawford was first introduced to motorsport in 1952 when, as a teenager working at his father's café business, he was persuaded by one of the customers to volunteer to assist the Welsh Motor Racing Club who was organising post-war races at Fairwood Airfield on the Gower Peninsular attracting all the top 500cc F3 drivers of the era.

He became hooked and joined Swansea Motor & Motorcycle Club at a time when it had over 250 members and organised 20 top line events annually. He was a versatile and successful competitor, winning many awards on wide range of events driving a variety of sports & saloon cars, some provided by wealthy club members who wanted to see their cars driven properly! He even won his class on a road rally in his business Ford Anglia Estate!

But it was as a motor sport entrepreneur and organiser that Howard saw his future. He met and in 1959 married local girl Pat Rees, also a keen competitor and for the next 54 years the partnership became synonymous in motorsport circles for their organizing expertise. Pat was an efficient and accomplished event secretary.

Soon Howard's energy, enthusiasm and leadership qualities were recognised and he was elected to the club's august committee and quickly elevated to chairman, a position he held for almost 10 years. Under his inspirational leadership Swansea Motor Club moved from strength to strength, becoming known as a premier club in South Wales for competitors, organising championship rallies, speed events, sprints and autotests.

I first met Howard in the spring of 1966 when Derek 'Prof' Davies and I joined the club as little more than naive schoolboys, displaying more enthusiasm than common sense, but he was patient and took time with us and soon had us roped into his team, carrying straw bales and assisting on club events. He also provided advice, wise counsel and encouragement when we started competing ourselves.

Howard went on to become founder of the Welsh Association of Motor Clubs, a regional motor club body that functions to this day.

During the 60's Howard obtained the lease for Castel Farm Speed Hill Climb near Maesteg for Swansea Motor Club and it was also his vision that brought racing to the WW11 airfield at Llandow in the Vale of Glamorgan in the mid-sixties, until it closed in the late seventies. It was he also who identified the potential of Pembrey as a circuit and Swansea Motor Club organised sprints there in the late fifties into the early sixties.

Howard's career as sales manager with the hard-nosed American food conglomerate Kraft provided him with robust commercial, marketing and public relations training and he would call on this good learning many times in his future career, using their mantra of 'customer care' to good effect.

In 1968 Kraft moved him to a new base in Bristol, where he became increasingly involved in the running of race meetings at Castle Combe circuit as competition secretary of the British Racing & Sports Car Club.

However, 1971 was scheduled to be the final season of racing at the venue and it seemed the days of Castle Combe circuit were coming to an end due to planning objections. Strawford now moved up a gear and started a vigorous campaign to keep the circuit open (this would last for over twenty years).

After many hard-fought planning enquiries; he even had the foresight to employ James Hunt as an expert witness on behalf of the circuit, his efforts succeeded and he eventually took control in 1975, later becoming owner of Castle Combe circuit.

During the following 35 years, Strawford, wife Pat and their team took Castle Combe from the brink of closure with one part time employee and a turnover of £15,000 a year to a thriving multi-million pound operation employing 20 people full-time and over 100 part- time.

Strawford spent nearly two decades as national chairman of the BRSCC and later created the highly successful Castle Combe Racing Club. He was a respected international race clerk of the course and RAC steward. He also sat on the board of trustees of the Motor Sport Safety Fund.

A proud Welshman, Strawford was one of life's natural leaders; dynamic, inspirational, modest and unpretentious. He didn't suffer fools gladly and was very direct when he needed to be, but possessed a dry self-deprecating sense of humour and showed a warm and loyal affection for his friends; who reciprocated that long-lasting loyalty.

In 2010 Howard was honoured with a lifetime achievement award from the Motor Sport Association, one of the highest accolades in UK motorsport and presented for outstanding contributions to the sport behind the scenes. This was an honour that Howard valued greatly, demonstrating motor sport's thanks and appreciation for the many years of hard work he had contributed to the sport.

Strawford is survived by wife Pat, daughters Karen and Emma, son-in-law Graham and grandsons George and Oscar. The family remains the majority of the management team and the circuit is in good hands.

*Ken Davies*



**Howard Strawford 1935 - 2013**

## Santa Pod Raceway - European Finals Sunday 9 September 2012

Anthony Bailey, my son Tim and I had been promising ourselves that if we ever got some good weather, a trip to see some drag racing was a must. Unfortunately, with the summer of 2012 being less than spectacular in the sunny department, it looked like it may be a forlorn hope once again.

Miracles do happen however and the 'Countryfile' forecast for the beginning of September was rather encouraging, so some tentative plans were put in place.....just in case the sun kept shining.

The European Drag Racing finals were scheduled to take place at Santa Pod, Northamptonshire, with eliminating heats from Thursday 6th September, culminating in the ultimate finals on Sunday 9th. As the week wore on the weather got better and better so we decided to go for broke. Saturday afternoon, after Tim finished work in Verdi's, we set off. We arrived safe and sound in a local well known chain (cheap) hotel late in the evening on Saturday. A few social drinkies in the bar then off to bed for an early start.

Sunday morning came around with probably the hottest day of the year to date in 2012. Perfect for drag racing. We got to the raceway about 9am and already, it was busy. We selected a good spot on the bank, settled down for the day and waited for the entertainment to start.

If you have never been to a big drag race meeting, such as this, put it on your 'to do' list. As some of you may know, I am more of a hillclimb/rally enthusiast, but top fuel dragsters are utterly awesome. The top cars were doing the quarter mile in just over 4 seconds, with the top terminal speed of the day over 330mph. Yes, you read that correctly, 0 - 330 in 4.1 seconds! The ground (literally) shakes and is recognised on the Richter scale (really).

There were Jet cars (fantastic) and a madman on a jet/rocket motorbike, which did the quarter mile in under 5 seconds at 255mph (seeing was believing). 40,000+ people go to these finals and they are a blast, really. For £35.00 you get a full day of fantastic action.

All in all a truly memorable day, one never to be forgotten.

*Neil Watkins*



## **Gwyn Passmore**

Swansea Motor Club lost a loyal long-term member in December when Gwyn Passmore died peacefully at his home in Killay Swansea. He was 80.

Born in Swansea, Gwyn was a fellow student of Jeff Clement when they both attended Swansea Technical College, Jeff in the mechanical engineering department and Gwyn studying civil engineering.

On leaving the Tech, Gwyn became an articled trainee with architects Crock, Rees & Taghorne however he never took his exams and subsequently joined Swansea Council County Surveyor's department where he remained throughout his working life.

With Jeff's encouragement Gwyn joined Swansea Motor Club around 1963 and was persuaded to enter his Triumph Herald Coupe in the novice class on the Reynolds Cup Rally, with Jeff Clement navigating. They successfully won their class whereby Gwyn promptly announced his first retirement as a competitor!

The Triumph Coupe was replaced with a charismatic two stroke 860cc Saab 96 and Gwyn became a regular marshal on club events in Wales. Following a driving misjudgment on the uncompromising Epynt ranges the Saab was reduced to a ball of scrap in a spectacular barrel roll but was swiftly rebuilt and your writer remembers this car as the first he saw Gwyn drive.

A dedicated supporter of the Swansea football team Gwyn was happily married to Eurwen, a schoolteacher, for 48 years and they were both keen caravaners, dog-owners and popular helpers on club events. Eurwen sadly died in 2006. Gwyn was also a short term interim chairman of Swansea Motor Club in the sixties.

Twenty-six years after retiring as a competitor, Gwyn's taste for competing was reawakened in 1989 and he purchased a pristine Ford Cortina GT which his great friend Jeff Clement prepared to his usual high standard for historic rallying.

The intrepid duo entered two events in the Cortina with Jeff driving and Gwyn navigating but a glitch with the Halda on the first and car sickness on the second meant early retirements despite the car setting some competitive stage times. This resulted in Gwyn retiring from motor sport again and the Cortina has remained parked in his garage for 23 years.

Several SMC members attended a short Humanist funeral at Swansea Crematorium for Gwyn who is survived by a sister, currently living with her family in Canada.

## **Bryan Davies**

Bryan Davies who died at the end of November was an active member of Swansea Motor Club in the 60's and 70's. For most of his working life Bryan was school teacher at Bryngwyn Comprehensive school and together with Tony Chin, Niven MacKay, Colin 'Smasher' Davies, Gareth Williams and Alvin "The Coal" Rees formed part of the Llanelli Mafia; a group of SMC competitors living in this area.

BD was an active co-driver, competing on several Motoring News Championship events of the era with a variety of drivers. These included Lyn 'Twin Cam' Jones, Gareth Williams, Keith Thomas and Alun Morgan who remembers competing with Bryan on Carmarthen Motor Club's traditional Good Friday tulip route book event in one of Alun's MG Midgets and also The Bath Festival Rally.

During the sixties Bryan drove an immaculate Ford Cortina GT in which he competed in club autotests and trials. Aged seventy-five when he died, Bryan looked a great deal younger and was married to Enid. They had 2 daughters. He was cremated at Llanelli on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

*Ken Davies*

## **Odds and .....**

Approximately 35 of us enjoyed an evening cruise up the River Tawe for our June social. An excellent evening and a real surprise to see what Swansea looks like from the river.

Our annual barbecue has taken place alongside the car show. At long last we were greeted with weather which, although far from perfect, did not result in us all getting soaking wet. Report and pics next issue.

July 28<sup>th</sup> is our second hillclimb. As ever we need help with all aspects of the running of the event so come along and help out.

**..... Ends**