

Mid-Cheshire Motor Racing Club 70 yr History

There are still many myths and legends left to uncover but here is what we currently believe. The club was originally called The Mid-Cheshire Car Club, but changed its name to the Mid-Cheshire Motor Club around 1952/53 when various members became involved in the project to open Oulton Park as a motorsport venue for cars and bikes.

So where did it all begin? In 1926 Sir Philip Grey Egerton's property Oulton Hall which was situated on the outside of Old Hall corner, burned down. During the war the grounds were used by the US Army who would have kept many of the estate roads reasonably intact.

Around 1947 two members of the club, Ray Dawson and Eric Grimsditch were looking for a venue for trials and sprints. It's difficult to be certain who had the first idea but initial negotiations with Sir Philip Reginald le Belward Egerton of Dawson, the current land owner, failed. Paddy Denton a local businessman began to work on the idea of a sports car circuit and recruited Howard Wright of Kelsall as a backer.

The problem was that Sir Philip still wasn't keen, so Rex Foster was called in and over cocktails he finally persuaded him to lease Oulton Park for Motor Racing.

The newly formed Cheshire Car Circuits' Board consisting of Howard Wright, Maurice, Faulkner, Paddy Denton, Norman Johnson, Ken Roberts and Rex Foster signed a lease of 21 years in 1952. Mid Cheshire Car Club was by this time called Mid Cheshire Motor Club.



I learned over the years that all the local clubs worked together and that it is probable that "Car" was changed to "Motor" because motorcycles were most definitely on the plans and Chester MC was a club steeped in Motorbikes and big friends of Mid-Chesh.

The magazine MotorSport was also instrumental by publishing an appeal for volunteers to help clear the site and mark out the proposed course (<https://www.motorsportmagazine.com/archive/article/march-1953/37/oulton-park-racing-circuit>) and work went ahead progressively so that, by August 8, the new track had been created, the lap distance then a sinuous 1.504 miles.

On August 8th 1953 the first meeting was held on a 1½ mile circuit behind closed doors, the paying public not being admitted until the R.A.C. were satisfied that the track was suitable and the organisers, Cheshire Car Circuit Ltd and Mid-Cheshire Motor Club Ltd were competent enough to hold a modern race meeting.

The first event was an unqualified success and the circuit was rapidly extended to Island bend and then for the International Gold Cup Meeting to the new half mile extension including the banked hairpin at Covert Bend.

It is interesting to note, that Covert Bend is almost unknown, quickly becoming Esso and in more recent times Shell Oils. Another forgotten name is Range corner which still exists and shows how narrow the original circuit was in places, it runs from Cascades to Clay Hill. The news hacks of the time didn't always get it right either, Druids being translated into Davids bend. Try writing it longhand and you can see how that error occurred!

One name that hasn't been mentioned yet is one Reggie Tongue, a pre-war racer, original owner of ERA R11B and Spitfire Pilot who was persuaded to become circuit planning consultant who together with Colonel F S Barnes of the RAC became primarily responsible for clearing the circuit and developing the first track.

The Gold Cup meeting was organised by Mid-Cheshire from 1954 to 1974 becoming the only non-national club (world wide) to hold an International F1 race licence and run the event. It wasn't always F1 however, F2 was a regular alternative, Mid-Cheshire often changing the regulations to show off something new.

By the time of the 1966 Gold Cup, Mid-Cheshire Motor Club had finally become Mid-Cheshire Motor Racing Club and was boasting 5-600 members. Many members were well known racing drivers and indeed John Surtees became president.



Since 1974 the club continued to hold club race meetings, Single Venue Rallies and Sprints at the track until finally during the days of the Foulston ownership clubs like ours could no longer get dates. The club also ran the Wilshire Sporting Car Trial for more years than I can remember, Production Car trials, Sprints, Hillclimbs, Autotests, Grass track racing, in fact if it moved on four wheels we would have an event for it. Our history has undoubtedly helped in our survival as many of our contemporaries have fallen by the wayside and we are keen to grow once again as more opportunities become available.

In more modern times there were many social weekends, scatter rallies, and a couple of very successful hillclimb and sprint championships. Today we still run two events, at Scammonden Dam and Curborough. Visitors are always welcome to see what goes on. We are looking to grow the club and bring more people back into motorsport.

Many thanks should go to Kerry Kirwan who wrote the excellent history of Oulton Park under her maiden name Kerry Fletcher called "From a Dream To a Reality" and I have borrowed some of her work above! If you can find a copy I urge you to buy it, not only is it a good read but an excellent history reference book.

Another source of information was an article by the great motoring journalist Bill Boddy.
<https://www.motorsportmagazine.com/archive/article/may-1997/59/park-life> You may need to be a subscriber if you have used up all your free article reads

Another history book is my “Whatever Happened To The Gold Cup” which is available through the club.



Peter Crummack with Ron Moore, Reggie Tongue and Hilda Grimsditch.



Circuit Map
John Young Stewart on the Skol Lunacycle