

BFPCR
Report from the Publicity Officer 2004

2004 obviously began with our biggest publicity stunt pulled off to date as 3 cars travelled to London to take part in BBC's "They Think it's All Over".

A full report of that day has appeared elsewhere but basically Darren Carter was the first "feel a sportsman" special guest (a lot more special than the rather lame David Beckham look alike who was the second!). Whether it was him who was the star or Geoff Brown's rather nice looking machine is a good question but it was the machine which prompted the comment "It's the new Renault Papier Mache!"... Following that, four of the show's stars had a race around the studio in a couple of Apollo's resulting in some devious driving, a few dents, and the demolition of a rather expensive camera.

Following the airing of the show, our website registered a record number of hits. Whether you like the show or not, a whole lot more people now know that pedal car racing exists than knew this before.

Thanks must go to Neil for masterminding the day. All I had to do was assist Phil in preparing two cars for the show (1 of which had tested the day before in Preston!). So another first was putting the cars together and then spray painting over anything which didn't look shiny and new. Seemed a little redundant considering the hammering they then took – but there was no lasting damage to either the machines or the celebrities.

With the demise of Spokesfest in Leicester, there was no big show this year at which to display our sport but, through the contacts we have maintained over the years in the cycling media, we were able to offer a car to a team from Singletrack magazine in which to compete at the second day of the Leicester European Championship meeting.

The report (published in August) has once again made many more people aware of us and, being the story of a specific race, has given a good background into what the sport is all about.

I think anyone who has seen the article will agree that they gave us a very fair write – up and showed the sport for what it is: Fast Friendly and Fun. As far as I know, this is the first time that we have bagged quite so many column-inches in a "mainstream" cycling magazine.

At least one contact, interested in trying the sport for size, has already made themselves known due to having seen this magazine and Singletrack themselves are interested in having another go when time and editorial deadline permit.

Two non-championship events were once again visited (and competed in) this year and at both we gave a good impression of ourselves, sold the sport (as hard as you can when you are guests at someone else's race) and handed out lots of fliers.

The BAE charity challenge remains a bit of an enigma with sadly differing rules to ours but we are still nurturing the friendship we have with both them and the Ringwood organisers.

I feel it is absolutely essential that we maintain and seek to build upon the good relationships we have built up over the years with organisers of events such as these, particularly Ringwood which runs basically to the same rules as the BPCC and offers a wealth of competitive teams just waiting to find that pedal car racing happens more than once a year. The most striking example of this is the fact that BSE Racing were contacted through our attendance at this race several years ago. One team such as this is justification for many years hard work in my book.

Because of the commitment to Castle Combe, I was unable to visit the Scoutcar Nationals this year but luckily Adrian was and I have every confidence that he spent the day telling another set of potential new teams what an excellent time they would have in BPCC events.

Thanks must also go to 105th Manchester for their excellent article in Scouting magazine about the scout car nationals and their participation over the years.

Elsewhere, Paul from Oaktec entered a round of the BHPC and far from disgraced himself. This sort of contact is also very important because it shows people that pedal cars are progressing and that they are proper racing machines rather than the "flintstone mobiles" that we were (perhaps sometimes rightly) associated with in the past.

In between these publicity “stunts”, I don’t believe that anyone who has enquired about pedal car racing over the past few years has gone away with anything less than all the information they could desire on our sport. This has resulted in several new drivers (potential team managers) being found seats in cars (this year at Preston and Curborough amongst others) and we are in the lucky position to be able to give these people drives in competitive, reliable machinery to really get a feel for racing. I feel this is also important if a good impression of the sport is to be given, just as it was for Singletrack.

Generally, the job of publicity officer is becoming easier.

Firstly, we are now well and truly in the digital age and are forever building on our stock of fliers, newsletters and information in digital format. It is so easy to point people at the website, much easier than trying to explain what the sport is about in the perhaps thirty seconds you have to “sell” something to someone who has never heard of it before.

Secondly, and perhaps just as importantly, we now have a sport that we really can “sell”.

With the level of competition, the fine looking cars, and the variety of circuits coupled to the open and friendly nature of the sport itself, it is now a whole lot easier to be enthusiastic than it was just five or ten years ago. The variation in teams which we have now is also a big bonus compared to the days when there were, essentially, only two adult teams in existence.

Tracks such as Blackbushe are also much more appealing to the casual observer than tracks such as the old ALSTOM car park in Rugby!

“Come and race at a go-kart track” sounds a lot better than “Come and race around a half - closed factory”.

I have to confess that, being involved in PC1 and PC2, I find these easier to promote than the younger classes simply because I have no PC3 or PC4 experience (or machinery suitable to let people have a go in). Luckily the Barlestone team have stepped into this breach and lent cars out on a number of occasions this season but any other help would be very much welcome.

For 2005, the emphasis switches a little away from promoting the BPCC as a whole to promoting the single races individually and targeting the junior teams a little more.

There are new junior teams already in the pipe-line for next year that I am aware of but that is a matter for another report.

Finally, any help that can be given to the publicity team would be most appreciated.

Particularly, we are looking like we are going to be short of “spare” cars for next season but even if people can take some fliers to events, or be a “local contact” for potential new teams then that would be fantastic.

Thank you for your support this year and I look forward to this continuing into 2005.