

2017 Historic Touring Car Championship

Simon Benoy, Stevenage, Hertfordshire

2017 has been another great HTC championship and I am delighted to be able to report that a stalwart of the series for longer than I have been racing, Steve Platts, has won Class E and has also been crowned overall champion, joining Adrian Oliver, Mike Hanna and myself as winners in an Imp, though Steve has the 'posh version' as the commentators often say, a Singer Chamois!

The Imps have been developed over recent seasons and Steve has been running a 1,050 cc engine with a five-bearing crank for the last couple of seasons; this has helped to ensure complete reliability, even though we have been racing harder and faster than in previous seasons.

The year began slowly for Steve. He was second in class at the season opener at Donington; unfortunately it was at this meeting that David Heale wrote off his Imp when running into an Anglia which was cruising slowly at the bottom of the Craner curves on the racing line but which should have pulled off the circuit. Steve was unable to compete at the second round due to work commitments so returned at Cadwell Park. He has won class E at every race since except for one of the races at Croft where he was caught out by oil from someone else's blown engine and the resulting spin left him second in class. He ended the season with 76 points, 12 clear of the Ford Mustang in second place.

Of course, you cannot win unless there are other cars in your class to beat – other regulars were myself (except for Croft when I was at the Imp National at Hole Park) and a very rapid 1,140 cc Austin A40, with a few races each from David Heale (in a very hastily prepared car), Shaun Hazlewood and Stewart Kerr, as well as a last-minute appearance from perpetual racer Adrian

Oliver who finally got his new car on track for the finals.

The other aspect of racing that is very important to the competitors is the fantastic support that we get at every meeting from Imp Club members, whatever the weather or how far flung the circuit. I know, I'm sounding like Lewis Hamilton now, but it's true. At Silverstone we had some cake to say thanks, a small token of our appreciation.

Steve, like all the Imp racers, competes on a very small budget. He uses an elderly camper as his weekend accommodation and relies on the support of his family, so to win the championship is a fantastic achievement, especially when you see the huge transporters and professional teams that accompany many of the cars in our championship. He does almost all the work on his car himself in the evenings, including repairing the inevitable dents, as happened at Silverstone when a Ford Anglia (old shape) was tipped into a spin by a Mini as Steve was lapping it and the rear wing of the Anglia left Steve with considerable damage to the side of his car and door, but it wasn't enough to stop him finishing the race.



You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs...
Photo: Phil Smith

Steve Platts with friends
Photo supplied by Simon Benoy





Simon Benoy cuts the cake!
Photo: Nigel Stringer

I have looked back at the results from 2013 when Steve managed 1 minute 14.9 seconds around Silverstone's National circuit – the best Imp time then was 1 13.3. This last weekend, Steve was down to 1 12.7, so a magnificent improvement in outright lap times as well as a strong determination to succeed. Very well done!



Steve with his well deserved trophy (see also front cover)
Photo: John Hall