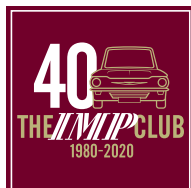


The Imp Club – the early years, 1980-1984

Kimberley Starkie (Librarian), Darlington, Co. Durham



To mark 40 years of the Imp Club I have been looking back through the Archives to put together a brief history of the club. I wasn't around at the beginning, although many current members were so I am happy to be corrected and would very much appreciate hearing any memories or stories from the early days of the club.

In October 1980 Richard Knight sent a letter to car magazines asking if anyone was interested in starting a club for the Hillman Imp. In December 1980 a group of like-minded people came together to form the Imp Club. The first Imp Club newsletter was produced in February 1981 and two months in there were 50 paid-up members. In September 1981



the winner of the competition to design

the first club logo (above) was announced as Grahame Pearson. By the end of the club's first year, membership had increased to over 130.

By March 1982 the cost of membership was £6 a year, there were 17 area centre contacts and Croydon was the first area to have regular monthly meetings, held at the White Hart in Godstone, Surrey. ACO was Grahame Pearson.

In April 1982 *Impressions*

changed from a basic A4 newsletter to an A5 magazine (above) and the following month the first regalia items became available with sunstrips for 90p and windscreen stickers for 45p.

The early years of the club were informal with Richard Knight and his wife Sue putting together the newsletters and dealing with membership but the club had progressed enough by January 1983 for the inaugural general meeting. This was held at The Holcombe Hotel, Deddington in Oxfordshire and was attended by around 25% of the membership with over 30 Imps crammed into the car park. The first committee was elected with John Simister as Chairman, Richard Knight as Secretary, Bruce Merrett as Treasurer, Grahame Pearson as Editor and Martyn Jones as PRO.

The first few years saw the club have stands at various indoor shows including Bristol and Brighton and the first Imp Club National Day was arranged in 1983 to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the launch of the Imp. All members were invited to a large Imp Club gathering at the



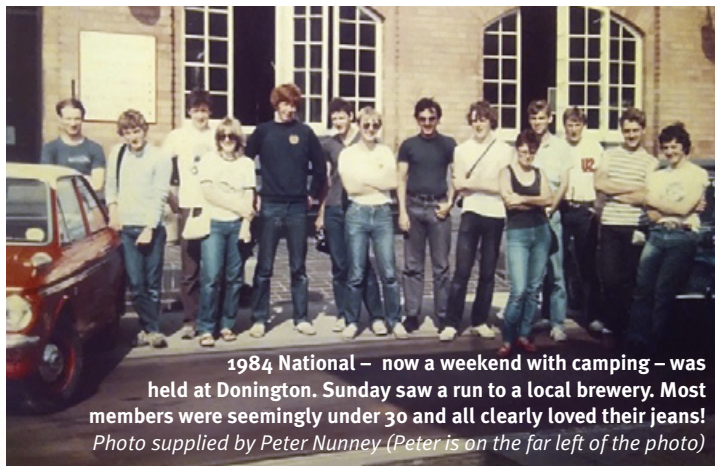
Above: inaugural Imp Club AGM, January 1983 saw over 30 Imps in the Holcombe Hotel, Deddington car park. Most Imps back then were daily drivers; we don't get this many Imps at our AGMs now! **Right:** rare photo of club founder, Richard Knight, emerging from his Sunbeam Imp Sport, talking to club's first Chairman, John Simister

Photos: Peter Nunney



Brighton Classic Car Show, Metropole Hotel, 1983. Cars are Simon Clemens' Oasis Green Husky, Peter Nunney's Mango Metallic Sport and Grahame Pearson's Polar White Stiletto. Grahame had carried out a bottom half respray on Simon's Husky two days prior. The new paint was compounded on the setting-up day of the show on the stand!

Photo: Grahame Pearson



1984 National – now a weekend with camping – was held at Donington. Sunday saw a run to a local brewery. Most members were seemingly under 30 and all clearly loved their jeans! Photo supplied by Peter Nunney (Peter is on the far left of the photo)

Secretary. Under Grahame Pearson's Editorship *Impressions* was now printed by offset litho printing rather than Richard's Roneo duplicating machine. With the rise in quality came an increase in cost so the decision was taken to issue an A4 news sheet – *Impromptu* – on alternating months.

The 1984 Imp Club National Weekend was held at the Melbourne Loop, Donington in conjunction

once again in Deddington. Peter Nunney was voted in as Chairman, Valerie Andrews taking over as Membership Secretary, Alan Smith as Events, John Simister as Historical Officer, Bob Hawes and Adrian Chant as ARCC reps, Adrian Chant as Spares Officer and Rod Hunt as Competition

with the Ginetta and Clan clubs on the weekend of 1st/2nd September. Over 65 Imps attended and four events to take part in: obstacle race, blindfold slalom, driving test and hoop-la slalom. The *Imp Concours de Character* was won by Ian Pescud with his Imp GUL 309N.

By the end of 1984 the club had over 650 members and five active area centres with Croydon, South Coast, Bath/Bristol, Manchester and the Up North Get Together all having regular well attended meetings.



One of the driving test events at Donington, 1984. (It would also be used for 1985 and 1986) Photo: Peter Nunney



The Imp Club's first National was held in 1983 at Knebworth House, Hertfordshire. Several of those present are still members including owners of the foreground Imps: Grahame Pearson (Stiletto), Martyn Morgan-Jones (Highly modified 998 Deluxe) and Huw Crowther. This photo was previously published in *Impressions* Sept/Oct 1983. Here it is in colour, 37 years later! Photo: Grahame Pearson

