

## Podium place at Brands

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After a mostly uneventful season so far competing in the Classic Touring Car Racing Club, we came to the Brands Hatch meeting held on the Indy circuit on 31st July/1st August.

Imps of James Ibbotson and Michael Loveland  
Photo: James Ibbotson



the Dartford crossing. My two class competitors Freddie Brown and Michael Loveland were already set up in the paddock; Michael had spent the day testing in very wet conditions.

We woke up on the Saturday morning to an overcast sky but not much chance of rain, qualifying was at 11 a.m. I wasn't expecting much as Michael holds the class lap record here but I got into some clear space and managed a 1:00.144. Happy with that in a 998 cc, all steel Imp on crossplies! This secured me first in class and P4 overall but not before being swiped by the big Ford Falcon on the pit straight. Not too much damage and all knocked back into shape by Dad when we got home.

Unfortunately Freddie Brown's Imp had issues meaning he couldn't take part in the races.

Our two 15-minute races were on the Sunday so we had plenty of time to check the car over and planned to watch some racing for the remainder of the Saturday.



Ouch! Pit lane damage by Ford Falcon  
Photo: James Ibbotson

I'd managed to get myself enough points to take the overall championship lead so I needed this weekend to go well to extend my lead.

We arrived at the circuit quite late in the afternoon on the Friday having sat on the M25 car park for a couple of hours before finally making it over

The first race on the Saturday was the slightly more modern touring cars. They got underway without issue but as they came round to start lap 2, a couple of cars made contact causing a horrific accident on the pit straight. The racing was stopped and didn't resume for the rest of the day. An air ambulance landed on

Paddock Hill bend and switched its engine off which is never a good sign.

Unfortunately a volunteer marshal had lost his life in the accident, not something I ever thought I'd see what with all the safety measures in place in motorsport.

Sunday came round and our first race was at around 11 a.m. A minute's silence was held on the start line in remembrance of the marshal. I didn't feel very comfortable in the car as we lined up on the grid knowing what had happened the previous day.

I got a poor start and fell backwards straight away, and as I came round to start lap 2 I spotted Michael by the side of the track. Unfortunately his clutch had failed on the start line.

I had a good race with a red Mini but he outgunned me in a straight line with his extra 300 cc. Around halfway into the race I began to hear a noise I've become all too familiar with, the centre pad in the clutch cover had started to rattle so I had to cross my fingers and hope I'd make it to the end. I think I finished P8 but I was glad for the race to be over.



Photo: Clive Berry





Speedy clutch change with a little help from friends enabled James to keep in the race.  
Left to right: Jakob Knappitt, James Ibbotson, Harry Edmonds and Andrew Waghorn  
Photo: Clive Berry



Back in the paddock we made the decision to remove the engine and fit the spare clutch I had with me. A couple of hours later and I was driving round the paddock, albeit with a high bite point but driveable.

Waiting in the collecting area before our second and final race, it began to rain heavily, perfect! I've come to like the rain as the Imp does very well in the wet against the big cars. I made a good start and tucked right in behind a Lotus Cortina. After a couple of laps I began to pick off cars until I got myself up to P4 behind the three leading Minis. If you've seen the live stream you'll know the commentator was enjoying my sideways style of driving Brands in the wet conditions. I managed to pull alongside the 3rd place Mini coming out of Clearways at one point but lost him again on the following lap coming into Graham Hill bend where I locked the rear wheels.

I crossed the finishing line in 4th position but later on received the results which said I'd managed to get 3rd overall, my first podium. One of the leading Minis had made a false start landing him a ten-second penalty. This was a nice end to a tragic race weekend.

Thank you to my good mates that helped get the engine out and back in again and cheering me on, Dad for the support and help preparing the car, my other half Chloe for putting up with me driving her mad, and Andy Jones of Shrigley Engineering for the fantastic engine, support and advice.



A damp track enabled the Imp's handling to keep larger cars like the Falcon at bay  
Photo: Clive Berry