

50 years of Racing Mallocks

Arthur Mallock is, to a great many, the embodiment of the 750 Motor Club. That he is sadly no longer with us does not change what he achieved in his lifetime – the ability of ordinary people to take part in motor sport, which was previously the preserve of the more privileged members of society.

Arthur did this by example, from early trialing in his doorless Ford 8 Saloon through his famous Austin Seven specials to the U2 series of clubmans racing two seaters, each was conceived to get the most out of the least costly components.

He was a founder member of the 750 Motor Club and he wrote many influential articles on entry level motorsport in national magazines and filled the 750 Bulletin with his ideas, truly one of the great figures of British Club Motorsport and one of the fathers of our motorsport industry.

That 50 years have now passed since he created his first U2 only makes sense in the context of sons Richard and Ray and their families having for many years continued where Arthur left off, and the Mallock motorsport dynasty has now moved on another generation with Arthur's grandson Michael well into his driving career.

Racing Mallocks of many types have been with us since about the mid 1960's, frequently one of the most prolific marques in the paddock and usually winning the races and hill climbs that they enter, most particularly in various Clubmans categories.

Before they were known as Mallocks they were named U2s, not after the rock band, but after the then well known advertisement for Charles Atlas body building courses "you too could have a body like mine". Before they were U2s they were entered as Austin Fords and before that variously named Austin Seven specials at the very dawn of the 750 Motor Club, which is where we begin.

Arthur Mallock was one of life's great characters and an original thinker, and all his cars were and are very individual. Given a Meccano set as a small boy he later treated his cars just like grown-up Meccano and changed bits about with some regularity, so much so that his earliest Austin Seven Specials and those of his contemporary and great friend Jack French tended to share not only components, but even number plates. It seems that during the petrol rationing of the second world war, he also swapped number plates with Holland Birkett too, as Holly being a vet had a usefully generous petrol allowance.

Arthur's first Austin Seven special was based on a 1932 van chassis with a Bill Williams lowered front suspension, and double valve springs to allow him more revs, and a small petrol tin mounted on top of the cylinder head, and he sprinted this at the July 1939 Hartlepool Speed Trial on the sea front. This skimpy and cheap device inspired his much quoted "If it weighed anything, that was too much, and if it cost anything, that also was too much".

Also sometimes attributed to Arthur [but also to Colin Chapman] is "There is nothing as light as nothing", in any event his early cars can best be described as stark in the extreme.

His next identifiable entity of a car is another Austin Seven multi-purpose special later in the war, which registered as EPG171 was christened "Bren", also worked on extensively by Jack French and entered for Trials and various speed events.

With this experience behind them, Arthur and Jack French built up another multi-purpose Austin Seven special, this time named "Bombsk" after a cartoon character and given the soon to be famous registration of WJ 1515. This car was initially supercharged and again sported minimal bodywork, but was street legal for economical transport, and after some trials success was in September 1947 entered in "the motor race meeting that never was" at Tolthorpe RAF airfield at an event organised by Arthur, and also at the Luton Hoo sprint. Arthur wrote up articles on trialing, sprinting and racing for the 750 Bulletin.

If there was four wheeled motorsport to be found then Arthur and WJ 1515 were up for it, mud plugging, sprints, hill climbs, rallies and races. A disastrous F3 season with a CRM proved to Arthur that development of a competition car was just as important as bright new ideas so that was the path that he took, his cars have therefore gradually evolved in a very considered manner.

Over a period of 10 years WJ 1515 evolved using Austin Seven power, a JAP 500 for International F3 in 1951 and Ford 10 power for the first 1172 Formula race at Ibsley in 1953. By 1956 Arthur's A7 based 1172F special was nearly catching the all conquering 1172F Lotus Elevens, and for 1957 his Austin axles and cable brakes made way for Ford axles front and rear and proper hydraulics, but by the end of that season, Arthur faced up to the reality that the development of the Austin frame had come to its end and that a new chassis design was required, in 1958 the U2 was about to be born. During all this time, Arthur continued to write freely of his thoughts and ideas in the 750 Bulletin.

His new frame was designed by the delightfully simple method of sitting all the components on the garage floor, cutting the various tubes to length and then getting them welded together. The old running gear, including the rear quarter elliptics from WJ 1515 together with the famous registration, were all transferred to the new stiff multi tubular structure.

This car was significantly quicker [by almost 4 seconds at Brands] than its Austin Seven framed predecessor and, fitted with an ex-Lola nose cone mounted upside down, Arthur ran it in 1172 Formula for two seasons, selling it on to 750 member Allan Butcher who continued with it for some years.

Retrospectively calling the car U2 Mk1 Arthur refined the design to create his first truly production series with the U2 Mk2 of which 10 were built in various guises as 1172F, 1100 Sports and Formula Junior with John Harwood winning an international FJ race at Nurburgring, and Arthur was our Club's 1172F Champion in 1962 and 1963.

At £75.00 for a chassis and basic body panels, the U2 was the cheapest pukka competition car out there and many replicas were built each year, which financed Arthur's own racing.

As even a current Formula One engine is simply, in engineering terms, a development of a 200 year old reciprocating steam engine design, so Arthur looked backwards before going forwards and at one time used variations on suspension linkages first used by James Watt.

Everything was considered in its simplest form. Arthur's original computer for suspension design being a ball of string, giving an infinite range of elemental node centres.

Arthur had married Kay in 1940, daughter Carole being born in 1941, Richard in 1947, Raymond in 1951 and Susanne in 1957, and the Mallocks family lived

conveniently close to Brands Hatch in the 1950's, finally moving to Roade near Silverstone in 1958.

Richard got involved in his father's racing at a very early age, being chief painter of battleship grey chassis frames as soon as he could pick up a brush, and he continues to run Mallock Sports & Racing with wife Sue in the next village, Hartwell, to this day.

Richard is a very quick driver and has been well known in motor racing paddocks for forty years, whilst Ray has from 1980 broadened the Mallock story with links to Ralt and into historics, via Viscount Downes Aston Martin projects, and RML Motorsport, which has offered complete motorsport services since 1984. Watching Ray handle the Aston Martin DBR at Silverstone brings back memories of Arthur's Formula Junior U2 at GP Stowe in 1961, where Arthur seemed to simply rotate the whole car under him into the bend by small flicks of the steering wheel.

Both Richard and Raymond, and now Michael, have won national championships driving Mallocks. The RML website describes in detail the breadth of services offered and the catalogue of satisfied customers is very impressive.

The RML Group facility includes development of sporting models of production cars and tuning ride and handling up to complete ground up design and build from one off concept cars to low volume road cars.

RML designed and developed the Mercedes-Benz McLaren 722 GT and the design and management portfolio includes the mid engined Nissan Micra 350SR, the Saloon S7 Supercar, a run of GT40 style road cars, the Nimrod and Ecosse projects, Nissan 200SX, Chevrolet Lacetti WTC programme, MG-Lola Sportscar, Aston Martin AMRI Group C1, Opel Corsa and many others.

Well known names that have forged their driving careers in Mallocks include Hugh Chamberlain, Will Hoy, Patrick Head, Max Mosley, Frank Sytner, Andy Priaulx, Harvey Postlethwaite, amongst countless hundreds of club drivers out there just enjoying themselves.

The Mallock effect in British Motorsport is immense and their input incalculable. Without Arthur, his example, encouragement and relentless enthusiasm, we would not have the vibrant club racing scene which we have now been enjoying for 50 years, and which has placed Britain at the heart of motorsport world wide.

When Paul Lawrence started writing his biography of Arthur Mallock and his racing cars, Arthur himself, an immensely thoughtful and perceptive man, chose the title 'The Lone Furrow' which is a brilliant metaphor to describe his patient and persistent nature – perhaps separate from the mainstream but unwavering in pursuit of his goals.

The celebrations at the 750 Motor Club meeting on the 23rd and 24th August 2008 will be the largest gathering of Mallocks of all types and a must for all club enthusiasts.

July 2008
David Morgan

