

TASMANIAN MOTORSPORT HALL OF FAME

BRIAN BOWE (Inducted 2016)

Brian Bowe was a motor mechanic by trade and his introduction to motorsport came through his job, which involved tuning a number of race cars, in particular MGs, for customers.

Brian was inevitably bitten by the motorsport bug and being a fan of the MG marquee, purchased an MG TC in the 1950s, competing in numerous standing quarter events (400m straight line time trials) and hillclimbs, meeting with mixed success.

With marriage and a mortgage, followed by a family on the way, Brian opted for a more family friendly four-seater MG Y-Type.

In 1960 Brian bought a supercharged MG TC, competing at Longford and in hillclimbs, again with mixed results, but including a number of class victories, while still tuning engines for other drivers, at times having as many as 13 MGs and seven Austin Healeys in his driveway at home.

In the early 1960s, Brian acquired an HEA Special Lotus 11 replica, built by Harry Atherton and powered by a Simca engine - it was one of Brian's favourite cars and he tasted a number of victories in the car, but they were hard to come by as much of the racing in those days was handicap racing.

It was around that time Symmons Plains Raceway was also built, and with a permanent circuit, as opposed to the temporary Longford town circuit, Brian knew it was time to get serious about his motorsport, so he purchased an Elfin single seater, built by Gary Cooper.

Unfortunately, Brian wrecked the car in practice at Symmons Plains, spinning at 120 mph (192 km/hr) on the back straight sweeper and crashing into an advertising sign, which narrowly missed his helmet, and although Brian escaped serious injury, the sign was subsequently relocated by officials.

Brian was racing in what many consider a golden era of Tasmanian circuit racing against the likes of John McCormack, Bob Wright, Ray Long and Brian Dunstan – who have all previously been inducted into the Tasmanian Motorsport Hall of Fame as well.

Brian later sold the Elfin to concentrate on his growing business in Devonport, but by 1971 all three of sons, had been bitten by the motorsport bug as well, with Terry and John racing circuits and Robin competing on motorcycles.

Brian was racing an Alexis Formula Two car at the time, but John in particular was showing plenty of promise and recording better lap times than Brian, so he stepped back to form a Formula Vee team for Terry and John.

It was as a team manager and engineer where Brian really shone, working on and tuning his son's cars, and guiding them to many successes/

John and Terry progressed to Elfin 600s and Formula 2 cars, meeting with much success in the mid-1970s, recording a brotherly 1-2 on a number of occasions, due in no small part to Brian's efforts behind the scenes.

John in particular went on to great heights and is himself an inductee of the Hall of Fame.

In the 1990s, Brian was still at it, mentoring his grandson George, in karts, and helping the North West Kart Club as a scrutineer, capping off a colourful career as a driver, mentor, team owner and engineer.

*Profile by Martin Agatyn
Some photos by J Barry Laurance*