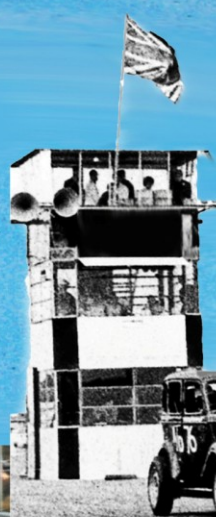
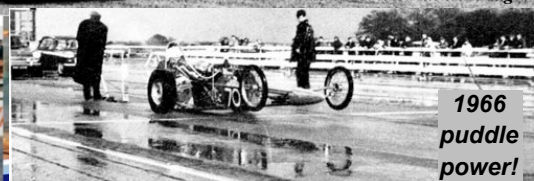


words & photos
mike collins

"Santa Pod goes back to the way we were..." the opening words on Dragstalgia's flyer always made me chuckle, but shooting the main image below really did take me back to the Pod's 1966 roots when Juggernaut was AD/76 racing a slingshot, sadly obscured, not by clouds but a flag waving Brian Holmes in this iconic image that flashed into my mind with a "Yeehaw," at that outrageous lookin' heap of a Pontiac torque twistin' off the line ahead of the cool lookin' slingshot with its wild nose art, j'st like you'd find back in the day – on Stateside slingshots! Yep, Dragstalgia was a great way to spend a few hours revelling in the awesome summer sunshine, sometimes thinking 'bout the way we were, always feeling thankful to have been heavily involved in those halcyon days of yore, and generally enjoying the way we are today



Brian Sutton photo courtesy ttdvds



1966
puddle
power!



Wide open and haulin' the mail,
Roy Wilding hikes the front end
late, charging hard to a 7.18 at
193.71 after Joel Kerr's hole-shot
aided 7.61, 181.41mph win

Derek Metcalfe (15.13, 86.51mph in May '67), our original King of the Wheelies in Wombat, his Triumph slingshot – even in the rain!



Even without a big blown motor, you gotta admit the back-seat-driven Jagwhar powered Model Y with its leather tie down strap and skinny wheels is in its own way every bit as outrageous as Stiff Shifter. It was as popular with fans back in the day as I'm led to believe the wild wheel standin' Pontiac is today – but it never matched that awesome launch!

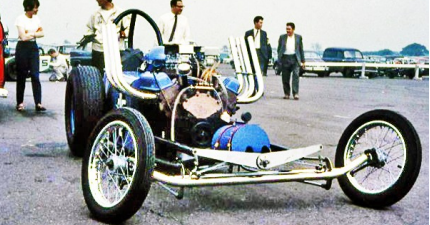


Checkout Nick Pettitt's Saturday show to enjoy this race and more from Dragstalgia 2018

Although Juggernaut raced on, the Model Y never made the transition to our new track - neither did Owen, Hicks and Lingard's Purple Heart, a genuine 1966 slingshot from Manchester, fans enthralled 'cos they'd never seen the likes of its wild Lincoln power plant!



Totally outrageous even when parked!



Paul Hicks
photo
courtesy ttdvds



BBLF courtesy Asphalt Archives
Photographer unknown

Fans loved Keith Sales' Megalomania

First time out in 1967 a 13.54 at 104.6 mph won Comp Altered



David Copper photo
courtesy UKDRN

Having become track commentator, yours truly gave up parking in the mud for a prime spot behind the tower!

Sadly I was told it meant no more racing, but that problem was resolved a few hours after 1968's first race at Easter, perhaps with a touch more drama than I'd have liked, but these lines from DragRod made light of things, "Half a Min, Mike Collins' well known custom Mini van expired after attempting a double somersault on a bend outside Bozeat, luckily the pilot managed to bale out after the first somersault." Shortly later I stepped up into a 1954 Bel Air sedan, its huge rear seat a lifetime away from Half a Min although its spacious interior was so vast there was no need to climb back onto it! A touch on a chrome topped lever and the front seat slid way back leaving room enough to stand up and dance - almost! But unlike my ol' leather chairs the bench was wrapped in vinyl - until relaxing après a wild frolic and finding a split seam (from a wayward high heel perhaps!), sliding a finger in and stroking wool cloth, the material suggested by Jackie at upholstery specialist CE Moore. Either way it was cool, and no, that's not my '54, but let's get back to the track and check out a couple of the fans favourite drivers and cars that made the transition from old track to new with more than a little style, Ian Demaine and Joe Copp, both driving street machines in every sense of the words. Ian's 1956 Zephyr Zodiac was probably the **first Mustang powered Z car on the planet!** Starting 1967 with a



17.62 at 76.28, he got things sorted, running a best of 14.2 and 98mph to become the BHRH Street Champion. The engine wore a cross-ram ali inlet manifold, a pair of 4 bbl Holley's with an Ed Iskenderian 310 cam kit beefing things up.

Clutches were expensive, so he used a single-plate Tiger unit, relined with a competition lining at £3 a time when needed. They obviously worked as he set a new track record early in 1968 at 14.88 that lasted through the season! My main memory of the ride I took in it was the way the bungee cord holding the rear doors together twanged as the engine torque twisted the chassis at take-off! In 1957 Joe Copp bought a new Chevy, spent a very careful year running it in then went to his home track, Lions Drag Strip and raced in Junior Stock. His driving skill was good for class wins, but without any budget Maverick spent most of its early years resting while Joe got his kicks in a D/dragster! Late in '66 flew to USAF Ruislip for a tour of duty and soon Maverick and Joe were running strong the Pod. Joe ran it stock for awhile, but at 3700lbs it was a lot of car, and he soon fitted a hogged-out Chevy, had it clearanced and balanced by Jakes Automotive then ported and polished the heads at the base Auto Hobby Shop, added hi-po hard-chrome valves in Crane springs and a rare (45 made!), '65 Duntov "Experimental" Corvette road racing cam and it certainly did the job. Although the car was always street driven, Joe raced in Competition Eliminator, set the speed record

of 100.21 at the same race as Ian D that also lasted the year and then won the BDR&HRA Championship title with a 13.64. Later that year he set the ET record at 13.869 (they had "record sessions" back then), with a best of 13.52 and 103.6mph, not too shabby for a heavy ol' Chevy! They also had handicap racing, which is why Joe's chasing a Ferrari, but it seems Ian Demaine's got out on Ken Obee's wicked little Lotus Super Seven, now let's go back to the future...

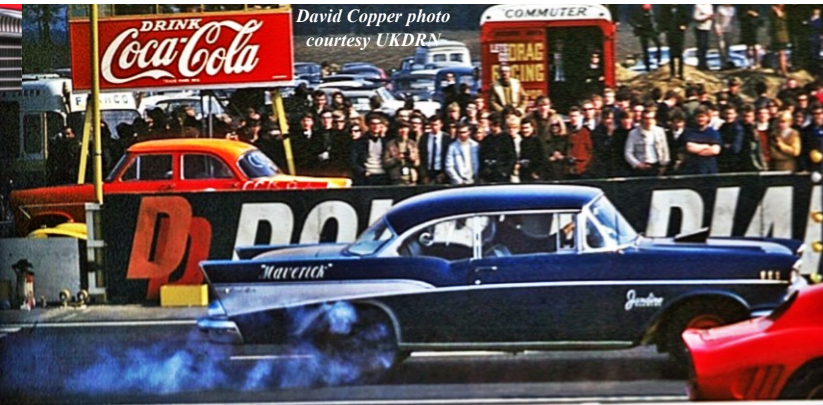


David Copper photo courtesy UKDRN



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Love these cool lookin' rides in Brian Sutton's great shot of the new fire up road in 1968 - fans also loved this view as they had a chance to scope out their favourites. From the left there's a new AAR Mercury Cougar, an MG Magnette with "frenched" looking tail lights, US airman Joe Rico's gorgeous '67, 289 fastback 2+2 Mustang, soon racing as Lil' Maverick, and Gary Goggins 350GT Shelby Mustang, desirable then, even more so today! A glimpse of a Cortina tail light on a TVR Grantura and drag racing pioneer Gerry Belton's pre-Shelby Cobra. Not sure about the injected V8 powered sporty car, but Nick Pettitt suggested it mighta missed the turnoff for Silverstone! Talking of which, I not only drove Rico's Mustang at the Pod, but also into Silverstone with a police escort, but that tale's for later, we're going to check the Pod's #1 driver to make that transition, the first Top Eliminator in 1966, Tony Densham... And that can only mean one thing...



David Copper photo courtesy UKDRN

NitroAlert!



Brian Sutton photo courtesy ttdvds



LET'S GO DRAG RACING



SEE OVER 300 EXCITING RACES ORGANISED BY BRITISH DRAG RACING & HOT ROD ASSOCIATION
SANTA POD RACEWAY
PODINGTON AIRFIELD, NEAR HINWICK HOUSE
TURN OFF A509 AT WOLLASTON, 5 MILES SOUTH OF WELLINGBOROUGH, NORTHANTS.

August 17th **LAST CHANCE** August 17th
TO SEE THE FLAMING FUELERS AT SANTA POD'S SPECTACULAR NIGHT DRAGS

Saturday, August 17th Racing from 4 p.m.
48 OF EUROPE'S FASTEST CARS AND BIKES
ADMISSION 10/- INCLUDES CAR PARK AND PROGRAMME
today - but thanks to our ol' pal Albert Einstein we still felt the thunder!

The time immediately preceding any race day has always been manic in this business, but after Tony Densham drove Commuter to an 8.45 at 180mph to back up the first eight by an Englishman at the Pod on the same day that Dennis Priddle shoed Tudor Rose into the 8-second bracket with an 8.53, backing it up with an 8.88 while racing Clive Skilton over in Sweden things were truly crazy!

DRAG RACING

LET'S GO DRAG RACING. BATTLE OF THE GIANTS. Commuter (Ford) at 8.4 secs and 180 mph vs Tudor Rose (Chrysler) at 8.5 secs. 180 mph. Santa Pod Raceway, 5 miles south of Wellingborough, Northants. Saturday, Aug 17th. Racing from 6 p.m.

For one thing we needed fresh publicity as a simple "combined night race" had become what was now an important event being billed as the **Battle of the Giants!** We'd already put out the ad' at left and were too late for the weekly mags to take any words, but a young lady named Anne was a fan and gave us the para below in a London paper to go with the mini-ad above. And I know the PR worked after calls from a couple pals asking when it began - they didn't want to miss the "Flaming fuelers," and did they really go 180mph!

For me to be putting this page together on the third weekend of August is truly a buzz as the 17th was the 50th anniversary of one of the truly great Saturday night races ever held at the Pod, the track's first ever green light AAFD race, that was up there with that final AA awesome quarter mile

Santa Pod's thrills

I am told there could be quite a bit of excitement at the Santa Pod Raceway tomorrow, where drag racing enthusiasts gather.

Tony Densham, the official world record holder, will be racing Rex Sluggett. They are the only two Englishmen who have exceeded 180 m.p.h. over the quarter mile.

Densham has done it in 8.4 seconds, and Sluggett in 8.5. The action starts at 4 p.m. at Podington Airfield, five miles south of Wellingborough., Northants.

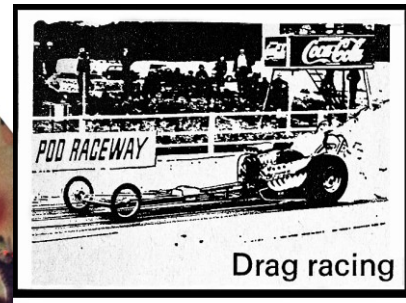
Q session of 2011 - but without the NitroFire! Thing is, back in the day there was basically only a 40/60 mix which might have added the power, but flames from the headers were not the same kind as Priddle Chrysler powered rail Tudor Rose. Owner/driver Rex Sluggett was still riding a crutch as a result of his mishap in Sweden, so once again the driving chores were turned over to ace wrench Dennis Priddle and it wasn't long before he was out with Tudor Rose easing through on a gentle warm-up run in 9.4sec. Ten minutes later the big Chrysler returned to the line and Dennis poured it on, smoke pouring from the slicks as he fought to hold the rail in a straight line, having to lift off at early for a time of 9.0sec. All the while I'd been busy pumping up the fans, with JB popping in to grab this shot just before Tony D fired up the Commuter, its motor sounding stronger than ever and shaking the floor beneath my feet to such an extent it felt like the Colt 45 can would bounce off of the desk. Happily it wasn't open yet! The lights ran, Tony left hard, setting fire to the tarmac on an out of shape blast that saw the M&H slicks boiling all the way to stop the clocks with an 8.68 to send fans nuts. Back in the pits, final preparations were made for the big race, with tension mounting as skies blackened overhead, soon coming so dark the strip promoters were beginning to worry. Shortly later, as the machines moved out onto the fire-up road we had a slight sprinkling of rain, and it's thought this was in part responsible for the mind-bending race that followed. Now my Colt was cracked, a Cuban cigar freshly lit as Tudor Rose staged first with a thumbs up from Priddle, then Commuter swung round with Peter Billinton giving a final check to the heads, thumbs up and Tony Densham stood loud on his big 427 Ford as he rolled to the line. Then we saw big green lights lit for the first time with our AA/FDs, the feel of their power unreal as both cars were unleashed at the same moment, but there was no smoke, then a couple feet out they both started to smoke like express trains, the sound of their thunder so exciting my cigar cracked, my Colt 45 crushed and they stormed off into darkness ahead of a wall of thick smoke over 30ft high, wow!



Both drivers lifted off as they fought to control their rides, Dennis telling me he'd have shut off if Tony hadn't been close, but he was hurting for a win and kept on it just that fraction longer, popping the chute before he cleared the traps in 8.87sec to win the Pod's first green light AAFD race. Back then drivers sat very low and could only see the back of the blower, and last year I asked what it was like, "It looked like a lit track, but it was very dark but we got to the end it was black, and when I'd stopped it was silent, a voice calling "Dennis?" "Is that you Tony?" "Yes, where are you?" Dennis said he couldn't see a thing until the push car came. "I was on the outside edge of my lane and Tony was on the outside edge of his lane" adding with a chuckle, "I promised myself next time I'd go to the end of the track and see how dark it was." What a ride, and what a wait!



This pair of John Bennett images has been top of my list since that memorable weekend and happily I still have a large print of our two NitroWarriors after that great race, but that truly iconic race image exists only as a 6x4 wrinkled print! After every race JB would drop off the films for processing and I'd visit later to check out the contact sheet and order prints needed for magazines later in the day. The first time I saw John's launch shot it blew me away so I asked about a large A3 copy, and as we gave the dude lots of work he took the time to make me a stunning print that was duly signed by the team members and survived for years on my wall, then some scumbag nicked it, but that's his problem... For me the memories linger on, and yes those great races between the Commuter and Tudor Rose did come to mind at Dragstalgia, especially when Bob Hawkins made this awesome burnout, looking just like "the way we were," but when those two cars raced! Not only that, it was a good run, his Time Traveller II hitting 202.47mph in 6.75second ahead of the Villain's 7.87 at 171.76, but driver Chris Manning did pick up Best Appearing car award with his cool full-bodied rail – mind you, it was Bob's awesome burnout that did it for me...



Drag racing

SATURDAY August 17's night drags saw the addition of the final ingredient required for the "Santa Pod Spectacular" cocktail, as Tudor Rose and Commuter blasted through the quarter leaving a 30-foot tall wall of tyre smoke that was so thick you couldn't see the other side of the strip.



The way we really were back in 1967 with the aptly named Purple Passion, one of the forefathers of Outlaw Anglias in that the team built the UK's first flip front end!

And I was happier still as these two home-grown Nostalgia Fuel Coupes filled the air with [good ol' NitroThunder](#) on side-by-side six second passes – my type of entertainment thank you very much. But let's get back to the present and yet another awesome third weekend in August, this time for Rune Fjeld Motorsports and especially our own Liam Jones, the Bomber finally getting his first race win at the NitrOlympix with a string of three second passes over 300mph down the 1,000foot short track including a new PB of [3.88 at 311mph – way t'go Liam](#), can't wait for you guys to bring it back to the Pod in September - good luck at Tierp! RFM's FIA Top Fuel Champion Duncan Micallef ran a 3.94 at 306 and team mate Antti Horto ran a trio of threes with a best of 3.96, but his slowing 4.07 was eaten by Liam's 3.99, 304.5 in the finals



[Remco Scheelings photo](#) courtesy Drag Racing Europe



Meanwhile a few days earlier over on the other side of the Atlantic, my ol' pal Bill Schultz was making some NitroNoise, helping a stellar team put Geoff Stilwell's 7707 Salt Shaker, Blown Fuel Rear Engine Modified Roadster (a former Kuhl & Olson car), into the Bonneville Speed Week record books with a new mark of 258 mph and top speed of 265mph. A problem getting the engine to fire was taken care of when Bill Schultz sat down and worked his magic while ol' Nitro Nostrils got the shot, and then things ran smoothly. Below the salt team of Carl, Bob, Tony, Bill and Sparky chill out after much hard work made Geoff's dream become reality



Ed Iskenderian, Isky, the Cam father, a true legend and team sponsor with Geoff in the cool lookin' shirts from main sponsor Lucas Oil



[Geoff nails it](#), powering off to glory on the Bonneville salt

My favourite Snip with Bob Muravez aka Floyd, at whose workshop the car was prepared, taking the helm en route to the course for the 258mph record run
All mcSnips courtesy [7707 Salt Shaker Facebook](#)

