

Bristol Pegasus  
Motor Club



Club Motorsport at its Best

# Getting Started In Motorsport

A guide to help those new to the world of Motorsport understand the different types of event that are available to them, and what they need to do get started in the sport.

# Getting started in Motorsport

## **A few fundamentals....**

Without any doubt your first step is to join a motor club like the Bristol Pegasus Motor Club (BPMC) which is recognised by the governing body for motorsport in the UK, which is the Motor Sport Association (MSA). Rather like football which has a structure where FIFA is the World governing body and organises the World Cup, each country then has its own National Association, in England this is the FA, who organise the England team, the FA Cup and the Premier League. Then as you go down the scale you have County Associations who run the Amateur game, down to the individual clubs themselves who could be, Semi-Pro or totally amateur like those who play on Bristol Downs.

Motorsport has a similar structure, the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) is the world governing body and they own the rights to run things like the Formula One World Championship (which they lease to Bernie Ecclestone). Each country then has its own governing body; in the UK this is the MSA. The MSA is responsible for administrating and controlling the rules governing the sport, as well as owning the rights to British Championships, like the British Touring Car Championship which is shown on TV.

Then you have Motor Clubs which are registered to the MSA, and by doing so are authorised to organise and run events. BPMC is a registered club and so can organise events but, on top of this,

it also has the advantage of being very low cost to join and we take pride in it being the most friendly, well run and sociable club in the area.

Whilst we're explaining some of the organisational fundamentals (a bit boring but important) a "Regional Association" is an association of organising clubs. BPMC is part of three such associations, the ASWMC (Association of South Western Motor Clubs), the ACSMC (Central Southern) and AWMCM (West Midlands). These Associations run their own Championships and being a BPMC member you are eligible to take part in them. A "Recognised Group" is a club, or association, that does not have individual members, but consists of a number of independent clubs, registers or associations, that need not, themselves, be recognised as organising clubs. The Cotswold Motor Sport Group (CMSG) is one of these recognised groups which BPMC belong to. Again, being a BPMC member, you can take part in the CMSG championships. This is all a bit confusing to take in at first but, in essence, you can happily trust that the BPMC is very well connected and very well placed to provide for your needs.

To take part in events competitors must have a membership card for a club recognised by the MSA; in fact for many UK motor sport events that's all you need. However, this does of course beg the question "But what is an "event"?"

## What is an “Event”?....

Apologies here for another ‘boring but important bit’, but taking things pretty much straight from the MSA rules is often the best way to provide an explanation. An “Event”, for most practical purposes, is an activity with the purpose of getting competitors together to challenge each other in a controlled environment. An event will have its own results (e.g. awards on the day, such as “First in Class” and “Fastest Time of the Day”) but is also likely to contribute as one of a series of events where the accumulation of points will count towards a championship. To quote the rule book, “A Championship is an event or series of events organised to establish the right to a title” (for example the “Bridge Tyres & Wheels ASWMC Sprint Championship”). No event or Championship can be held unless the MSA has issued a permit or granted exemption from needing a permit (in both cases this means that the activity is formally under the umbrella of the MSA).

There is a structure to events, and a grading system is in place for the type of event run and who can take part in those events. The basic level of event can be entered by being a member of BPMC, this build’s up to National level events where you will need a licence from the MSA and a level of experience. You can of course keep going up the ladder and enter International events, these type of events are mostly limited to racing and rallying.

The opening level of event is a ‘Closed’ event; this means it is closed to members of the organising club only. Then comes events that are termed “Clubsport” and are confined to members of the organising club and not more than six invited clubs; thus they tend to be relatively smaller scale. In addition, the range of events that can be organised as Clubsport events is limited. Next are “Clubman” events which are confined to members of the organising club and not more than fifteen invited clubs – hence tending to be relatively larger-scale.

Above Clubman events are “National ‘B’” status events and these are open to members of the organising club, of other invited clubs, Associations or Groups, or (in certain special circumstances) persons having some other particular qualification agreed in advance with the MSA. You can appreciate that the organisation and scale of an event at this level now becomes quite sophisticated. Next come “National ‘A’” events which are open to any holder of a valid competition licence issued by, or acceptable to the MSA (so no limitations related to clubs or associations). At the top of the scale are “International” events which are open to any holder of a valid International competition licence issued by the MSA, or any foreign competitor holding a valid FIA International competition licence.

So with your BPMC membership card you can take place in Closed, Clubsport and Clubman events organised solely or jointly by BPMC. There are a very large

number of variations on the names for events (about 100!) but the ones that BPMC tends to get involved with are as follows:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Where held</u>	<u>Class of Event</u>
• AutoSolo	Held on private ground	Clubsport / Clubman
• Autotest	Held on private ground	Clubman
• Navigational Rally	Held on the public highway	Closed / Clubsport
• Navigational Scatter	Held on the public highway	Closed / Clubsport
• Production Car Trial	Held on private ground	Clubsport / Clubman
• Treasure Hunt	Held on the public highway	Closed
• Twelve Car Rally	Held on the public highway	Clubsport
• Sprint	Held on airfield / race circuit	National B

BPMC has separate publications to explain each of the above in detail but it is worthwhile pointing out before we move on that, within the above list for BPMC, only driving in a Sprint requires an MSA licence (see next section).

championship since only BPMC members qualify. The award for the highest score is made at the club's AGM but note that helping to organise (in any capacity) one event is a qualifying requirement.

Also, we mentioned Championships above and BPMC members competing in any event will automatically be given points in the BPMC "Clubmans Championship" – this being an example of an organising club's

Lastly and worthy of note in this section is that BPMC organises a "Track Day" each year at the Castle Combe race circuit but this is not an event within the meaning of an MSA event. Therefore the Track Day is not covered by these guidelines.



Martin Emsley driving his Fiat in the 2007 Production Car Trial



Andy Moss finishes his run in the AutoSolo – and seems to have enjoyed it!

### Licences (& the “Blue Book”)....

Motor Sport Association (MSA) licences are divided by types, namely:

- Race
- Kart
- Speed
- Drag
- Stage Rally
- Off Road
- Non-Race
- Entrant

and by grades, namely:

- Clubman
- National ‘B’
- National ‘A’
- International.

Within the Blue Book (see a couple of paragraphs down for what this is) in Section E – Competitors, there is a table giving the minimum acceptable licences for events according to the type of event and its status. So, for example, for a Sprint being run at National ‘B’ status you would need any type of

National ‘B’ licence. For events run by the BPMC and to which the club is invited (where a licence is needed) having a **Non-race National ‘B’** licence will cover you for all. Of course, if you have a higher grade licence (for other reasons) then this will cover you equally.



Cars join the Start Line queue for the Wessex Sprint at Colerne

To apply for a licence you must complete an "Application for Competition Licence Form" and send it to the MSA with the appropriate fee and a passport type photograph. For a Non-race National 'B' licence you will not need anything medical (e.g. doctor's declaration) and there are no prerequisites such as training or experience. Forms are available from the MSA website ([www.msauk.org](http://www.msauk.org)) or by post from The Motor Sports Association, Motor Sports House, Riverside Park, Colnbrook, Berkshire, SL3

OHG or by phone/fax on 01753 765000/01753 682938. Note that if you wish to apply for a Race or Stage Rally licence you will first have to attend a course at an approved racing or rally school (the closest schools to Bristol are located at Castle Combe circuit). You apply for a beginners pack from the MSA, this includes some reading material and an instructional video and will include your licence which must be signed at the school before you enter your first event.

When you receive your licence you will also get the "MSA Competitors' Yearbook" which is almost universally referred to as the "**Blue Book**" (for the obvious reason that it's blue and for the less obvious reason to differentiate it from

companion publications called the "Red Book" and the "Yellow Book"). During the membership year (Jan 1<sup>st</sup> to Dec 31<sup>st</sup> no matter when you join) you will also receive four issues of the MSA's own "Motorsport" magazine.

The Blue Book is a weighty publication and it can be daunting when you first see it, but read the introductory part carefully and you will see that only some parts of it

will apply to you. The important point is that it lays down the rules and you are expected to know them!



Members get a close look at the Lancia rally cars of the David Sutton Motorsport Collection during a Club organised social trip

### **So how do you get involved?....**

Step number one is always to familiarise yourself with the sections in the 'Blue Book' that apply to you, your car if you drive and the particular type of event in which you have chosen to be involved. It is surprising the

number of people who do not do this at all, or do not do this well enough, yet when you sign on to an event you will be assuring the organisers and the MSA that you have read and understood the rules!

Let's be clear at the outset that there are a lot of differing ways to be involved in motorsport without driving in an event. Many people

turn to driving only after experiences from the 'backroom', 'sidelines' or as a passenger.



Lewis Bird in action at the Colerne Sprint where he is off to replace a cone hit by an errant competitor. Lewis helped to marshal for several years, before entering as a Competitor. Photo Steve Wilkinson

Probably the most common way to become involved is to support an event as a marshal and BPMC guidance notes on this subject are given separately.

Being a passenger in a competing vehicle is also very popular especially as you then become part of the driving team and will contribute to the result and benefit

from any ensuing awards. On some events, such as a Navigation Exercise, you will contribute mostly with your brain trying to solve clues and to navigate. On others, such as a Trial, you will contribute mostly with your brawn by using your weight and best bouncing technique to maximise the grip of the tyres.



Matt Marples sliding his rally prepared Peugeot on the Autotest

One special case is when an organiser of a Production Car Autotest permits entries from drivers who are as young as 14. If the driver is under 17 years of age

Other ways, which are characterised by less direct involvement with the moving vehicles, involve the organisational side of motorsport. Clubs are run by committees and these have the typical roles of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Competitions Secretary, Magazine, Promotions, Charity, etc, etc. and these roles do not

Now let's turn to considering the option that you do want to compete as a driver. As a member of BPMC you will only need an MSA licence

Obviously if the event is run on the public highway then you will need an RTA licence and a road-legal vehicle (tax, MOT and insurance). If the event is on private land then you might well not need an RTA licence and might be able to drive well below the RTA licence age. Within the Blue Book, in section E – Competitors, there is a very useful table which gives minimum ages for all those who might be in a vehicle whilst it competes. Note also that you

Regarding you, it's really a case of dressing in a common sense style paying special attention to footwear; for example it's easy to get wet and muddy shoes during

Regarding the car and apart from the obvious need to ensure it is up to the rigours of the event, there is

then they will need a passenger who does hold a full road (RTA) licence and who is also experienced in Autotesting.

require people to have had driving experience. There are also organising committees for each event with the opportunity to contribute and learn plus the chance to train to become a club or even an MSA Official. If you have engineering / mechanical skills or experience then you could also become involved in the scrutineering of vehicles at events.

and various other mandatory things if you enter a Sprint. So let's deal with all the other (non-Sprint) events first.

might not need a road legal vehicle although it will have to be mechanically sound and suitable (and will be checked at the event to ensure that it is!). The simple fact is that most people will have an ordinary road car and this can be used very well for all the events for BPMC (as listed above) and, incidentally, most other events. Bear in mind that cars are put into classes so some degree of fairness in a competition is usually guaranteed.

an event held in a farmer's field so smooth soles and canvas uppers might not be a good choice on that day.

little to do. The safety record for club level motorsport is very high indeed so you should be fine with a

combination of a car of road-going standard and some common sense driving. For events not held on the public highway the car will inevitably jump around more so it is

particularly sensible to remove wheel trims and to ensure there is nothing loose to fly around inside the car (such as loose car jacks!).



Dave Cutcliffe sprinting his Van Dieman racing car at Colerne airfield. Dave has prepared and modified the car himself over many years and has won events at British Championship level. Photo Steve Wilkinson

Turning now to the subject of driving in a Sprint takes us into a whole new arena. Not only will you need an MSA licence, you will need protective clothing and you will have to make a few minor adjustments to your car. However,

do not be downhearted or dismayed as many of the BPMC members join us in order to take part in Sprints and there really is nothing difficult to do. It is quite a sizable subject in itself though and is therefore covered in a separate BPMC guideline.

Whatever you decide to do, as a potential driver, you will first need to formally enter an event and this starts with keeping a eye on what events are in the calendar. Always

remember that the onus is on you to find out what events are planned and to keep an eye open for when you can enter them.

## Entering an event....

You will have no difficulty finding out about forthcoming BPMC events because:

- You will receive a list of the year's events when you join/rejoin.
- The calendar of events is on the club website ([www.bristolpegasus.com](http://www.bristolpegasus.com)).
- Forthcoming events for the near term are listed in the monthly club magazine.
- Part of the Competition Secretary's role is to be a source of such information.

The entry for each event is 'opened' by the issuing of the "Regs". "Regs" is short for Supplementary Regulations (SRs) and these, plus an event entry form, are issued to give detailed information regarding the specific event including, for example, the date and location, invited clubs, license requirements, classes and awards. The Blue Book, if you like, is the standard set of rules but

within these things are laid out that Supplementary Regulations must contain and things that the SR's can 'adjust' for want of a better word. To be precise, the full set of regulations for any event is the combination of the Blue Book, the SR's and any Official Instructions that are issued after the SR's (including information posted at the event 'on the day').

Note, again, that the onus is on you to keep your eyes peeled for the issuing of the SR's, but regular contact with the club members and officials will mean that you won't suddenly find that the 'Regs' are out and you didn't know it.

If you wish to enter BPMC events other than Sprints then it's usually a case of reading the Regs to understand what's been planned and then turning up on the day to sign on just before the start. Sometimes you might be asked to

contact the organiser(s) as soon as possible to let them know of your interest (but still just turn up on the day). If you wish to enter a Sprint then, again, it's significantly different in that you must formally submit an entry form plus an entry fee and then wait to see if your entry has been accepted (they are usually oversubscribed so the secret is to be early!). This is described in detail in the separate "Sprint" guidelines.

## How much does it cost?

(Please ensure you read the section below on insurance)

If you decide to support an event as a non-driver then there are no fees and you might well receive a free lunch and a 'thank you' gift afterwards. The cost will be that of getting to and from each event plus one off costs associated with anything you might feel you need for your own comfort (such as good wet weather gear). If you decide to drive your road going car in a non-

If you decide to enter your road going car in a Sprint then there will be one off costs for your protective clothing (minimum of about £150 for items bought new) and then the entry fee for each event (about £80). It probably goes without saying but you can spend as much as you want to of course. If you

Sprint event then the cost will be that of getting to and from the event, plus possibly a small nominal entry fee. There are non-recurring costs which are every much down to you such as small costs for such things as navigational aids and map lights and anything you might feel you need for your own comfort (such as good wet weather gear again).

choose to spend £100,000 on a car and keep on spending thereafter then that is entirely up to you – be assured you will be just as welcome as anyone else. However, bear in mind that it doesn't follow that the more you spend the faster you will go!



You do not need an expensive racing car to go Sprinting. There are classes for road going cars, kit cars as well as single seat racers.

## Insurance – as an ‘official’....

One of the major advantages of organising an event under the umbrella of the MSA is that all those involved in the event are covered by their insurance – but there are limits to its cover of course. Remember that the MSA insurance programme is only in

The Public Liability Policy provides the MSA, Landowners, Organising Clubs, Officials and Competitors with cover in respect of any claims made against them as a result of an incident occurring at an MSA event. Cover is limited to £30 million for each and every incident.

It is the Personal Accident Policy that is likely to be of more interest to officials. In all cases the term 'officials' embraces all persons who are actively involved in the organisation of the MSA authorised event. It thus includes, clerks of course, scrutineers, timekeepers, stewards, observers, flag marshals,

- death £65,000
- loss of two limbs, or loss of sight in two eyes or loss of sight in one eye and loss of one limb or permanent total disablement £65,000
- loss of one limb or loss of sight in one eye £32,500

In addition, there is a loss of earning benefit, should such a loss be incurred, this being related to the individual's income, making allowance for tax and National Insurance. This is capped at £225 per week and limited to 104 weeks. The Personal Accident is in place

The policies are in force throughout the duration of the event but also provide cover for activities that are

place if the activity in which you are engaged is covered by an MSA Organising Permit or an MSA Certificate of Exemption. There are two strands to the insurance programme, Public Liability and Personal Accident.

Typically this policy deals with claims made by third parties in respect of property damage or personal injury. The only involvement officials are likely to have in dealing with such claims is being asked to provide witness statements etc.

incident marshals, paddock marshals, rescue crew, recovery crew, etc. Whatever names may be dreamed up, if you are actively involved in the organisation of the event then you are an official. The Personal Accident benefits are provided solely at the discretion of the MSA, these being, for officials:

from the time you leave home to travel directly to the event and continues until you return home. If you pre-volunteer for a meeting you will be on the organisers list and thus there will be a positive indication that you are an official of the meeting.

directly related to a specific event. As an example, if you are setting up a rally stage the day, or even

the weekend before the event then the policies are in force. A story doing the rounds is that once the course closing car has gone through a stage, the insurance is no longer in place. This information is not true, the insurance remains in place provided the activity has a

direct relationship to the event. As an example, if a recovery unit is dragging a car out of the trees and a rescue unit is giving assistance or simply standing by then the crew(s) continue to have the benefit of the MSA insurance.



Accidents can happen, but are very rare. The driver emerged from this Darrin sports car uninjured after the engine blew and caused petrol to leak onto a hot exhaust. This accident happened at a test session.

### **Insurance – as a competitor....**

Basically, as a competitor, you must look to yourself but there are specialist insurers who cover associated risks and the internet is good place to start. Think along a number of lines, such as life/injury

insurance for yourself, insurance for your car in case you damage it and third party such as another competitor claiming against you for damages.

If you are competing in an event on a public highway then you can try extending your existing motor policy but bear in mind that most 'normal' car insurers won't want to know; they specifically exclude motorsport and any hint of such involvement will nullify your cover.

However, the sort of events that BMC organises on the public highway are really just social excursions and fit more into the "Social domestic and pleasure" category than "competition", but it is down to you to decide how you manage things.

Off road things are different and you can forget your standard car insurance – it is effectively null and void. For most people the cost of writing off a car (rare, but it happens) is a painful but not life-changing experience so they don't bother to try to cover the risk. Either being injured through someone else's fault or injuring someone else is another matter but fortunately you will not be racing against other drivers on the track/course in BPMC organised

events, so additional insurance really comes down to death/injury resulting from your own actions. If you are a single person (e.g. widow(er)) with no dependants (e.g. aged parent) then you might not bother with life insurance but it is worthwhile considering injury cover in case the rest of your life is spent in a wheelchair needing 24 hour care. Again, the internet is probably your best option as it would not be prudent for us to make any recommendations.



Alan Spencer drives the Dave Parsons Special. This car was designed and built by club member Dave Parsons to compete in Trialling events.

## Conclusion

If you are interested in getting involved in motorsport, we hope the guide has been of some help. However the Bristol Pegasus Motor Club has a lot of enthusiastic members who have a lot of knowledge of the many different types of events. They will be very

happy to share their knowledge and experience with you. Please come along to a Club Night or an event and ask if you have any questions – if the person you ask does not know the answer to a specific question, they are sure to know someone who does.

We look forward to seeing you in the future.

BRISTOL PEGASUS



MOTOR CLUB

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