

OUR CLASSICS

TELLING THE BRM STORY AT BLYTON

David Brown takes part in a historic parade of Rover 200 BRMs for a memorable event at a former RAF airfield in Lincolnshire

David Brown

ASSOCIATE EDITOR



1999 ROVER 200 BRM

- OWNED SINCE July 2014
- MILEAGE SINCE LAST REPORT 154
- TOTAL MILEAGE 82,642
- LATEST COSTS Nil

A former airfield in Lincolnshire is an apt place to enjoy the sights and sounds of BRM racing cars in action, as British Racing Motors (1950-'77) used the former Folkingham base near Bourne for engine testing and trials. Blyton Park Driving Centre is based at the former RAF Blyton (1942-'52), near Gainsborough in the north of the county, and provides an ideal venue for the BRM Association's annual Track Day.

More than 200 BRMA members and their guests enjoyed the sight and sound of BRMs from the 1960s and 1970s running with Lotus-BRMs and other Grand Prix cars from the period in the spring sunshine.

One of the highlights for the 2015 event was the appearance of the Rover-BRM gas turbine prototype from the Motor Heritage Centre, Gaydon, to mark the 50th anniversary of its 1965 Le Mans run. On that occasion it was driven by Graham Hill and Jackie Stewart and it was the first British car home in the 24-Hours race, finishing in 10th place overall and seventh in the prototype class.

To complement the prototype's participation, I arranged for a lunchtime parade of Rover 200 BRMs from members of thebrm.co.uk and a line-up of 10 cars greeted visitors as they arrived at the event.

In fact, all the elements that contribute to the Rover 200 BRM story were there to be seen at Blyton Park on this occasion. Out on the track were BRMs in their dark green livery with that distinctive bright orange band that adorned the noses of the cars from 1962 onwards, which, in turn, inspired elements of the exterior design of the Rover 200 LE. Alfred Owen of Rubery Owen had taken control of BRM in 1952 and orange was the Owen Organisation's corporate colour. Later in the 1960s, the orange panels switched to the cars' wings, then disappeared in the 1970s with the emergence of sponsorship liveries.

Rover came up with the idea of a limited edition 200 in the late 1990s based on their links with Rubery Owen and BRM on the gas-turbine prototype. While BRM ceased racing in 1977, Rubery Owen retained the name (and still do) and Rover approached them to seek approval for their project. David Owen, son of the late Sir Alfred, agreed to the proposal, stating that he hoped they would make a good job of the cars.

David was obviously impressed with the result as he actually bought one of the first LEs, but sadly this was later stolen. He currently owns a secondhand Rover 200 BRM, but while he was present at the Blyton Park gathering (he is a patron of the BRMA), he did not travel there in his own 200 as he is keen to keep its mileage as low as possible (the mileage currently stands at about 30,000 miles).

As the lunchtime break neared, the 10 Rover 200s lined up ready for their parade laps. This did not pass without incident, however, as a BRM P201 returning to the paddock area from the track accidentally caught the rear of one of the Rovers, removing its rear bumper (this was later fixed for its journey home, but no doubt gave its owner an interesting story to talk about later – after all, how many road cars can claim to have had an incident with a racing car?).

Blyton Park's Richard Usher provided the pace car in his Lotus Elise, while leading the parade of Rover 200s was Colin Young, the Bourne-based auctioneer often to be seen on BBC TV's *Bargain Hunt/Antiques Road Trip*. Young was driving V909GAP, which carries his company's sponsorship on its rear side windows. The auctions are held in a former BRM workshop.

Blyton Park circuit is about 1.5 miles in length, with a couple of chicanes (one of which breaks up the long, back straight) and some sharp bends. It was while exiting Bishops, a sharp left-hander at the end of the back straight, that I became aware of a disturbing noise coming from the rear offside wheel, suggesting that all was not well with the bearing. As a result, I had to be careful for the five laps – and there was the journey home to consider, too.

We got back OK and a new bearing is on order, but I wonder if the opportunity to drive the car at a circuit among such wonderful company will ever arise again? It was certainly a day to remember.

- www.thebrm.co.uk
- www.blytonpark.co.uk
- www.brmassociation.org



The Rover-BRM gas turbine prototype (above and below) was marking the 50th anniversary of its Le Mans win.



The 1965 Rover-BRM gas turbine car whistles round Blyton Park, chased by the 3-litre V12 BRM P126/1 complete with orange nose.

Ten Rover 200 BRMs lined up to greet visitors to the BRM Association Track Day at Blyton Park.



David Owen of Rubery Owen poses with David Brown's Rover 200 BRM. Mr Owen left his own example at home.