

Classic Circuits

As 2012 dawned, I had completed just over twelve months of my 924OC membership. We had purchased our 'one owner from new' 1988 Porsche 924s Le Mans in November 2010 and it had been an active year attending events and festivals in the UK.

The award of 'Best 'S' at the AGM was a complete surprise and the highlight of the year was being part of the 924OC display at the NEC Classic Car Show.

For the New Year, we had the idea of a little change of direction, and enjoying some Continental touring. We decided that we would make the pilgrimage to the Le Mans 24hr in June and take the camping option with a pitch on Houx Annexe. After successfully compacting the camping gear into the hatch, we were able to enjoy the drive back to the 'spiritual home' of our 924s Le Mans and experience all the atmosphere that goes with the festival which is Le Vingt-Quatre du Mans! A drive south with a bed and breakfast stop at Folkstone, made the Channel Tunnel the easiest crossing. It was our first experience and it was so quick!

This year, Nissan were showcasing cars at the 24hr. The first evidence of this was the V6 RML built, mid-engined, Micra leaving our hotel amongst a convoy of GTRs.

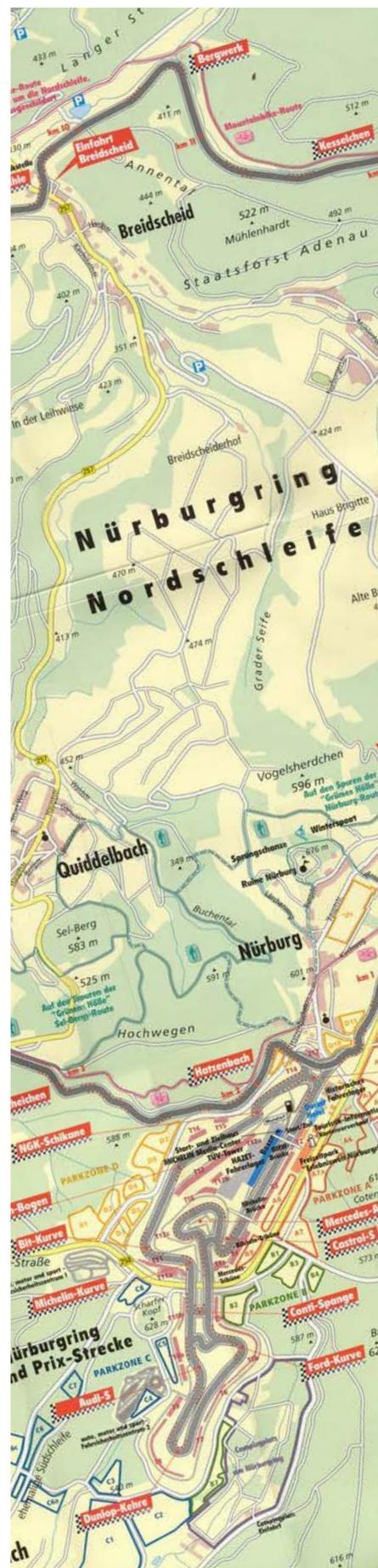
The highlights of the trip, apart from the race action, were the 'mobile' classic car shows while on the road to and from the circuit

and the Piston Heads' Sunday Service on Friday! A great gathering of all shapes and sizes from all things Cobra, BMW, Ferrari, Aston Martin, Lamborghini and Porsche to an Austin Allegro with gull wing doors + caravan, also making an appearance was a replica Top Gear BMW endurance racer complete with Larseons Biscuits and Penistones Oil advertisements. It was a typical 924OC afternoon where no one took themselves too seriously and everybody had 'the craic'.

The car behaved impeccably, with good fuel economy and, best of all, the weather was kind.

Later in the summer we had to decide how to spend another spare week - were there not two more Classic circuits in Europe? Ferry booked, it was on the road again. The most convenient way for us to cross is the ferry from Hull to Rotterdam and then drive down through Holland, across the border at Aachen onto the B258, which follows the German/Belgian border, southbound, to Monschau. This fabulous driving road then continues south towards our favourite little hotel five kilometres from the Nurburgring.

I had not realised it had been ten years since we last visited our hosts, the Families Friedrichs, at the Hotel Hullen. Things had changed somewhat at the Nurburgring, with a new conference centre and that condemned, unfinished, roller coaster thing!



We did catch a glimpse of the new Porsche 918, being driven to the track by non-other than Walter Rohl. No photo from me, unfortunately, but YouTube has a video of his laps on that day. Ticket purchased, it was off on a steady lap of the famed 14.1 miles of the Nordschleife, not the slowest of the day, but certainly not the quickest with Walter in the area!

It was an early start the next day for a run out over the Ardennes into Belgium and Spa Francorchamps. A stop for lunch at the village of Stavelot, with all its history from WWI and the 'Battle of the Bulge' was a must and the menu at the pavement café did not disappoint.

Then it was on to Spa. The new Grand Prix circuit is magnificent, but it is the old 14 km road circuit that holds an interest for me. A change from my last visit of ten years ago is that one can no longer drive the Eau Rouge section of the track. This has been sealed to accommodate track days and a new perimeter road constructed. It was not a disappointment, as the main reason for the visit was to drive the old section of

circuit from Haute de la Cote around to Blanchimont. This takes in the villages of Burnville and Malmedy followed by the superfast Masta Kink and the sweeping bend at Stavelot. To park up at the side of the road and imagine the 1970's Sports Car heroes hurtling along, what is basically a 7k section of downhill, with the 'flat out' Masta Kink half-way down, was spine tingling to say the least. Then there is the thought of racing in the Belgian Grand Prix or the Spa 24hr race of the 60 and 70's. It was incredible to think I was actually standing on the same piece of tarmac as the likes of Moss, Clark, Siffert, and Ickx had driven over, and the spots where they were so lucky to survive!

Again there were no issues with the 924s and only one incident marred the trip. It was a small dent to the rear bumper inflicted by..... shall we say elderly gentleman of dubious parentage whilst we were parked up on a car park! He did not stop to explain; obviously habits are the same across the whole of Europe.

Later in the year, while in London during the Olympics, I was lucky enough to visit

two more classic circuits. I took time out to experience the Brooklands Museum. The Banking is an iconic feature and should be on the list for a future 924OC meet and photo-shoot.

During the Olympic Events, I was appointed as a Motorcycle Commissaire for the Road Races at Brands Hatch, which, of course, included riding the Grand Prix circuit on two wheels, care of BMW, again, not at racing speeds, but who cares...

Looking back, it is interesting that during our continental excursions, we only saw a small number of 924's and certainly only one other Le Mans edition which was a GB registered white 924s model, also camping on Houx Annexe.

Most of the routes and places visited are well documented elsewhere, but I would recommend a trip to experience these Motorsport Monuments to all. Considering the weather has not been best, I think we have had a wonderful summer!

Words & Photos: Rob

