



Middlesex County Automobile Club Ltd

Affiliated to The Motor Sports Association

A Brief synopsis of events in 4 wheeled Motorsport

Circuit Racing

Circuit based racing is the most viewed motorsport on TV, whether Formula 1 or British Touring Car events. Below this level is a host of different formulae and formats and there are events on at the British circuits most weekends.

Time Attack events are held on circuits, but think of these as a Qualifying session where you are setting a quick time for a lap, but that is the goal, rather than it leading up to a race grid position.

Track Days are usually open to all to practice driving on a circuit, no prizes given for best times etc.

Sprints, Hill Climbs and Drag Racing

Sprints and Hill climbs are almost identical in format in that individual cars are set-off on an A to B course and are timed accurately. Sprints can use race circuits, airfields or similar, where Hill Climbs are, as the name suggests, uphill! Drag Racing is on a very short course and tremendous acceleration is seen. Usually 2 cars race with the winner progressing to the next race.

Rallying.

In the top level, Special Stage Rallying is seen on the TV as the World Rally Championship travels all over the globe. In the UK, we have both Gravel events and Tarmac events, with a team of 2 in each car, the driver being given instructions by the co-driver from previously made notes, or sometimes from maps. Stage lengths can be from 1 mile up to about 30 miles, depending on location. Time from the individual stages are added together to give an overall score. We call these events Multi-venue because cars will travel between stages at different areas.

Single Venue events are held on areas like old airfields or at race circuits out of season. The basic principle is the same in that each stage is timed, but on these events, the cars stay in the same area, but changes in the layout and direction are made between runs, allowing servicing to take place.

Road Rallies.

This sport has changed somewhat over the years and been “tamed down” from all-out racing to a much more acceptable form. Emphasis is on navigating through the route on a pre-set time schedule, with marks lost for mistakes. Targa Rallies are similar, but usually held on closed areas with cones and markers to navigate round, rather than country roads.

Autocross and Rallycross.

Both similar, but Autocross takes place on a big field, whereas Rallycross uses a part tarmac, part loose surface. The cars are usually unlicensed and highly tuned and race or are timed in Autocross, but are raced (fiercely!) in Rallycross. The latter has National and World Championships.



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Cross-Country Events (Usually 4x4 vehicles)

A wide range of events are given this title, from small club events for 4x4s upto events in the World spotlight like the Dakar Rally. Cars have to be very strong with long-travel suspension to absorb the varied terrain.

Trials: A popular event in many parts of the world involving driving within a section bounded by tapes to achieve a climb up a hill, or through other difficult ground.

Cross-Country: Similar to Special Stage Rallies, but over rougher ground.

Team Recovery: An exercise in getting stuck in a muddy location and having your team-mate winch you out!

Dakar (Raid) type events: These events are often very long and can cover thousands of miles. Competing vehicles travel from point to point across difficult terrain and the Organisation moves in parallel, but over easier roads so that a bivouac situation is created in a different location each night.

Autotests and Autosolos

Both being timed tests of manoeverability that take place over a short course, sometimes only a few hundred yards. Autotests may contain reversing and driving into a coned box, making sure that the wheels cross a certain line before leaving the box to continue. Handbrake turns and reverse flicks are needed to be competitive. Autosolos are simpler in that there is no reversing and cars are driven over the coned course with almost constant changes of direction.

Sporting Trials, Production Car Trials and Long-Distance Trials

All of these events involve driving up a steep, usually muddy hill. Sporting Trials are the domain of some very small cars that are specifically built to a formula that has evolved over the years and the cars have very narrow wheels on the front and somewhat wider ones at the rear. There is just enough room for the driver and the bouncer passenger and individual rear wheels are controlled by separate handbrakes to stop wheelspin.

PCTs and LDTs are similar but involve road-going cars. PCTs are usually held on one location, but as the name suggests, LDTs are “Multi-Venue” and involve driving between hills.

Scatters, Treasure Hunts and Touring Assemblies.

These are less competitive events, at least as far as driving is concerned. The Scatter is a navigational exercise where the organisers have chosen search points at a variety of locations. The competitors not only have to work out where these points are, but also have to drive there to find the answers required. There is no set route, hence the name scatter, and only 75% of the search points are needed to get a full-house. Treasure Hunts are similar, but usually easier in navigation.

Touring Assemblies are events with a “recommended route” from a start venue to a finish point via other venues. These are usually places of interest, and the relaxed timing allows for refreshments to be taken, or a visit to the Stately Home or whatever the venue is. This type of event will invariably use a “Tulip” road book for the competitors in their classic cars to follow.

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