

A typically chilly November 5th evening greeted drivers, teams and fans as they gathered in huge numbers for the final stock car meeting in Scotland of 2016 at HRP Lochgelly Raceway. Hardie Race Promotions had a mammoth programme of events scheduled with something for everyone!



The event began at the slightly earlier time of 5pm with the annual Charity Ladies Race in 1300 Stock cars. This year saw the proceeds raised go to St Andrews Hospice in Lanarkshire with the race sponsored by GA Autos and Ringtone Racepaints. With the experience levels among the ladies varying from one extreme to the other, the expected chaos came during the race but it was Janice Crawley who took an emotional win ahead of Shirley Thomson and Alana Forrest. Janice is a member of the Purdie family who have campaigned tirelessly in aid of St Andrews Hospice throughout 2016 following the loss of Joan Purdie – an emotional and fitting tribute.

With most of the 1300 Stock Cars surviving their use by the lady racers; they returned to the track under the control of their more familiar drivers. With this being the final meeting of the season, several drivers had opted not to attend as they ready themselves for the 2017 season. Having claimed two race wins on his debut; James Ellis began the evening's meeting from the yellow grade, however, this clearly did not

deter Ellis who went on to take yet another win ahead of Kev Baird and Jock Whyte – Whyte making his debut from the red grade in this race. Heat Two saw an exact repeat of heat one with Ellis claiming victory with Baird and Whyte taking the podium spots. The feature final would see the destiny of the Ringtone Racepaints sponsored race tyres decided and, despite his promotion to blue grade, it was Ellis who claimed an incredible hat-trick and five wins in his early career. Baird posted second place while Craig Haxton continued his recent good run of form as he beat Whyte to the podium though Whyte should be pleased with his debut from red grade. The tyres were won by James Dalrymple (White), James Ellis (Yellow), Kev Baird (Blue) and Craig Haxton (Red). The 1300 Stock Cars will be BACK with a vengeance in 2017 as HRP Lochgelly Raceway has been confirmed as the venue for the 2017 World Championship!!!

The 2.0 Hot Rods were back on track and it was great to see James Gray making his debut in the formula – a debut that nearly never happened after an encounter with the fence in practice! British Champion Kenny Purdie emulated sister Janice's win earlier in the evening as he took victory in the first heat ahead of Gordon Alexander and English visitor Chris Crane. Scottish Champion Alexander went one better in the second heat as he managed to best Gill Anderson and Crane to take the spoils. The feature final was another fantastic race with the drivers racing in close quarters and displaying supreme skill and control but it was Alex Wilson who signed the 2016 season off in fine style with an excellent win ahead of Alexander and Crane. The 2.0 Hot Rods will have a major title race held at HRP Lochgelly raceway in 2017 and Alexander, Purdie, Wilson and Crane will all fancy their chances even at this early stage.



The CC Rods were also racing in their season finale which, as has now become tradition, would be for the Bill and Ciaran Hawkes Memorial Trophy. Gary Paul had recently enjoyed a race-winning double in his Citroen Saxo and he took another victory this past Saturday in heat one as he held off the fast-moving duo of Kevin Connor and Colin Wotherspoon. Paul Muir took the second heat ahead of Connor and Scottish Champion Ian Donaldson. Connor's consistency saw him claim pole for the memorial race with Muir on his outside. Chaos ensued almost immediately with Connor being spun out and a lot of unnecessary contact happening as the drivers battled for every position. Once the race settled down, it was Colin Wotherspoon who was in the lead and he would hold on to that lead until the chequered flag despite the close attentions of Paul Muir. With Muir subsequently disqualified for his part in misdemeanours during the race; Craig Watson and Brandon Gourlay claimed the remaining podium spots to conclude a thrilling season for HRP's own budget class.



The National Hot Rods were also in action but this past Saturday was a pretty special occasion for the formula. Not only did the number of cars on track mean that it would be the biggest domestic event since the reintroduction of the formula to Scotland but the track was graced by some visiting interest including West Lothian's Robert McDonald who races in the English Series plus no less than three drivers from Northern Ireland in the form of David Kernohan, Tommy Maxwell and World Champion Adam Maxwell. Father and son duo Sean and Paul Cusack had made the trip up from their northern English base as they continue to support the Scottish Series. The racing from the National was exceptional with all the drivers clearly enjoying themselves in the larger pack. McDonald underlined his pace at HRP with a fantastic win in heat one ahead of World Champion Maxwell and Paul Yule. Top Scottish points scorer Billy Bonnar beat Maxwell to the line in heat two to continue his race-winning ways while McDonald had to settle for third. This past Saturday was the first time that a Scottish National Hot Rod meeting had sufficient cars to merit utilising the new system whereby the top points scorers start the race at the sharp end of the grid. With McDonald and Maxwell making up the front row anticipation was high for a cracking race. Despite the close attentions of Maxwell, McDonald managed to keep him at bay for the entire 25 laps to claim a heat and final winning double with Maxwell taking a trio of runners-up spots with Bonnar coming home in third. McDonald and Maxwell then headed south to race at Hednesford Hills on the Sunday and McDonald again took a thrilling heat and final double – four wins in six races since his return to action following a tyre declaration infringement resulted in a two-meeting suspension.





The final formula on show was the sensational Micro bangers and Saturday saw a little bit of history made as Essex's infamous Gladiators Banger Team made their HROP debut as Phil Milner and Nicky Bell made the long trip north to race. With a field nudging thirty, it was perhaps a surprise that only three cars finished the first heat but it was Connor Jones who claimed the win. The second heat was won by HRP regular Lee Kopacz while the feature final was claimed by John Taylor in another race of attrition as the drivers got well and truly stuck in. The 2016 Scottish Stock car Season concluded with a bruising Demolition Derby for the Micro Bangers and this ended in a tie when Josh Heeps and Lee Moore were the only two cars running – shortly before they smashed into each other in a solid head-on to bring the curtain down on a great evening and an historic season at HRP Lochgelly Raceway.

Thank you to all drivers, teams, staff and fans who have visited HRP Lochgelly Raceway during 2016 – it is the people in the sport that make it what it is and 2017 promises to be even bigger!!!