

JO BLAKENEY-EDWARDS

My father, Tim Pryke, has had vintage cars for as long as I can remember. We went on holiday in them as children, he raced and hillclimbed them and they were always just there - and were part of what Dad did. Sometimes we'd go and watch, more often we didn't. Then came the 1989 Frazer Nash raid to Bolzano and everything changed. I had just graduated and was at a loose end so he asked me to accompany him in our newly acquired Nash to the South Tyrol. Suffice to say, two weeks with the Nash section and I got the bug and have never looked back.



Oulton Park 1991 Photo: Alex Cox

When we returned to England, I applied for my National B licence and the following season started competing. I don't remember my father ever saying that it was unusual for a girl to be racing, and there were, quite rightly, never any allowances made. If I messed up a hill he'd quiz me about it, usually telling me what I'd done wrong. If I came second in a race he'd ask me what happened to first.

He was never interested in the fact that I was a female driver, he was far more interested in seeing his cars being driven well. And he is just the same with his two grandsons, my sons Tommy and Archie, who both now compete with the VSCC, as well as husband Simon. Dad is the first to phone during an event where any of us are competing, to find out how practise went, what our times are, how the cars are going etc. and this level of interest and support has never waned.

Back when I started, there was less acceptance of women competitors in the club, but happily times have changed, and apart from the odd "well done for having a go" comment that leaves my family holding their collective breath, no one is particularly bothered or interested in who's behind the wheel. And rightly so. I like to think that my fellow VSCC competitors see me as just that - someone else to challenge, to race against and to take the mickey out of if I come off.



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Racing Tommy at Castle Combe



Shelsley at Donnington

Tania Brown mentions, in her brilliant YouTube recording, the late Joy Rainey, who had a prolific motor racing career, and who was apparently disparaging about the Ladies Trophy, saying that she wanted to 'mix it with the boys on equal terms'. I couldn't agree more and struggle to see the relevance in 2021 of a trophy, or races, that separate the sexes. Early memories of the VSCC for me include Di Threlfall, Anne Shoosmith and Rosemary Hall, who more than held their own, and from what I can see, there are plenty of young female competitors coming up through the club who are doing just the same today.

I'm hugely proud to be Comp Sec of the FNCC, and a GMC for the VSCC, but far more important than any of that is the friendship and the fun that the club has given me and my family over the years, and I hope passionately that that will continue for many generations to come

