

A Day at Whilton Mill with Terry Fullerton (I finally meet my 'Legend of Karting') - Joe Nolan

I started karting in Juniors in 1968 – it was a very exciting time back then as the sport had become fully established worldwide and there had been an enormous amount of chassis and engine development such that the speed of those demon machines had already reached close to that of the modern day, albeit still on 'narrow tyres'. Karts were taken to race meetings on roof racks or hanging out of car boots and the paddock areas were used as full speed test 'tracks' for warming up and testing even though these were generally gravelled and pot holed. There were many top names such as Mickey Allen, Dave Ferris and Stephen South at that time to name just a very few, however the most exciting driver for me to watch was Terry Fullerton (left) who had won back to back Junior British Championships before going Senior for 1969. There was well reported bias in the British team Selection meetings which deprived Terry the opportunity to enter the prestigious world championships so he took the brave decision to take out an Irish

licence to represent them at world level, albeit depriving himself of any race practice in this country. It was 'electric' everytime he took to the track, so exciting to watch, and his experience and tenacity was without any doubt capable of contesting the world title that year. He was my, and many others, hero and already a legend in the sport.

I remember seeing him race in the world championship round at Rye House in 1969 where despite displaying his top class skill was dogged with mechanical problems which was enormously frustrating for him and all his supporters.

Well, 1969 and 1970 was the last time I had seen him racing, I had never actually met him, but had followed the sport from a distance later where I saw that he had then dominated the world winning championships, and then 'out of the blue' finally received worldwide fame and acknowledgement of his skills in the film Senna, where Ayrton identified him as the best driver he had ever raced (and Terry beat him by the way!). I knew also that nowadays that Terry was working worldwide as a sought after driver coach and even showed up at one of the annual shows that the BHKC attend (*Terry has attended a few but the one Joe writes about here is the Autosport Show 2015*). I believe he may never (knowingly) have sat in a kart since the early 1980's.

Back in the summer I met a "friend of a friend," Jim Shaw at a Fairthorpe classic car club gathering. Jim told me about his 10 year old son Roy who had won the Swiss X30 championship (their main residence now, but part-time in the UK) and was being coached by Terry ...my ears pricked up! He went on to say that they would be having a test day, with Terry coaching, in this country in the autumn and I would be most welcome to attend ...it was a 'no brainer' decision to accept the invitation but the understanding was to not intrude on Roy's coaching.

The great day came on Wednesday 17 October and to be at Whilton Mill. Roy had raced successfully at a lot of English circuits but never before driven at Whilton. Different to the 'old days' he had however spent considerable time on a 'simulator' so knew the sequence of corners well.

I had secretly popped a bit of memorabilia, programmes listing Terry and my restored 1969 Zip Californian/Komet K77 into the back of my van should there be opportunity to show these to Terry.

Jim introduced me to Terry, I shook his hand, and I told him that I hadn't seen him since 1970 which made him jokingly ask me whether he was still as handsome and admitting putting quite a few pounds weight on since then. I told him how much I had admired his racing and a pleasure to meet him after all this time. We made mention of the team selection process at that time which was very sad and certainly had left its mark. Fortunately, he did indeed go on to world domination and recognition.

Terry then took charge of Roy's track outings each of about 15 mins where they had briefings beforehand and detailed debriefing, video and computer data analysis afterwards, each session trimming a few tenths of seconds

from the last – how different to the old days. Meanwhile I showed Jim what I had brought along and he ‘bought in the idea’ and was really excited to show all this to Terry.

We stopped for a light lunch when we showed Terry the programmes and a few pictures of other historic karts which he identified without hesitation but said that he didn’t really think back to the past too much now but did then seem to become very reminiscent on the past. I joked that my mission was to ‘kidnap him to be permanent property of the BHKC’. We swapped some nostalgic memories of the old days much to the bemusement of Jim (and his wife), Roy and the support mechanics.

We put the Zip Californian at the back of the pit lane, out of Terry’s sight where it started to gather a lot of interest from others and brought young Roy in on the plot, who was fascinated by the early design, and so interested in a test drive however he wasn’t tall enough to reach the pedals – I have promised him a drive when he is a few inches taller!

Roy then got Terry to come around as he had something to show him, and upon seeing it approached very slowly, and quietly said’that’s a Zip Californian, and a Komet K77’ (much like his 1968-1970 karts), looked all over it with admiration (and I am sure with reflective thoughts of those old days) and then jumped onto it albeit a bit of a squeeze into the narrow seat. We spoke about how cramped we were then but we somehow managed to fit. He remarked how minimalistic the designs were, with hardly a single component that could be removed as redundant. He ‘warned’ Roy as to how fast these were and that they could give a modern day machine a good run for the money!



We talked with those around about how many drivers back then would push start these often on their own, jumping aboard when the engine fired (something I never gained the skill or confidence doing!). Without any hesitation, and cautious that the plug was disconnected, Terry made a number of attempted (demonstration) push starts to show how it was done but got a bit puffed after about five goes having now lost the knack! He was happy for pictures to be taken – was this his first time sitting on a kart in nearly four decades? Would he even like a go? Well, let’s see – I have offered to make it available should he want too anytime!

Then back to business with Roy, with Jim becoming more and more involved in the data analysis as he had been an IT Consultant where they test ran into the early evening.

Upon leaving Terry said he was having a short holiday break before more coaching for others and also Roy, who may be contesting a winter series in this country. He now lives in Melton Mowbray with his wife and daughter and I believe coaches a lot at PFI.

For me it was a very special day, meeting a hero of mine from nearly 50 years ago, and I am still in awe of him. He was very humble in respect of his achievements, something I have found with quite a few other World Champions in other sports when they look back at their careers. Funny really, would we have even thought a half century ago, where we/karting/the world would be now! And now, let’s wonder what young Roy may achieve in the next 50 years ...particularly as being coached by the best driver of all time in my and many others opinion. - *Joe Nolan*



Photos: Terry Fullerton and Roy Shaw try out Joe’s Zip Californian. (Photos: Joe Nolan)



Joe Nolan adds:

I'm hoping to come back to the historic scene in 2019, been dogged with back and feet problems ...and lack of events closer to home!

Before Joe took time out, he was very active with the BHKC not only with his Zip Californian but also with a Fastakart/JLO (left) that he found and restored.

*Shenington Revival Meeting circa 2012.
(Photo: Pixelero).*

A provisional calendar for 2019 is on the back page.

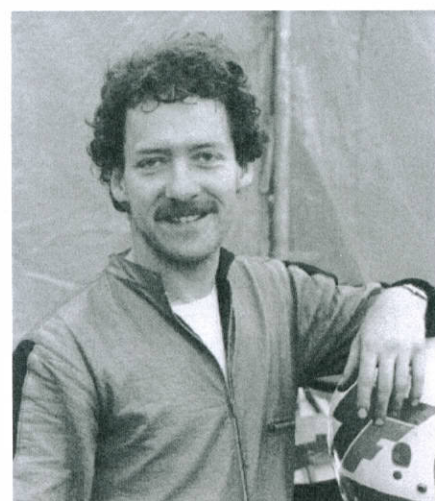
Terry Fullerton – A Profile

The article by Joe Nolan is amazing but for the newer and younger members of the club a few words of why Terry Fullerton is considered one of the greats of karting, and it is just a few words, typing Terry's name into the internet soon shows that this article only scratches the surface of his career and fame. Terry also has his own website page for is coaching career.

Terry Fullerton won the British Junior Karting Championship in 1966, 1967 and 1968, with a total of 8 British Championship wins in a career spanning twenty years and devoted solely to karting. He also won the European Championship four times during his career.

Terry competed in the world championship in 1968, 1969 (unplaced) and 1971 (4th) but topped them all when he became the first Briton to win the Kart World Championship in 1973 driving a Birel T2 fitted with a Komet K88TT.

Fullerton raced for the Italian DAP factory team from 1978 until 1980, where his teammate was Ayrton Senna. He was leading in the 1980 World Championship until an engine failure in the final resulted in a third place finish, just behind Senna who finished second overall. Both drivers were regarded by team manager Angelo Parilla as the best two drivers in the world. He now coaches young karters, a job he has been doing for 25 years.



This is what Ayton, Angello and some of his other contemporaries said about Terry Fullerton:

Ayrton Senna on Terry Fullerton: (Adelaide 1993)

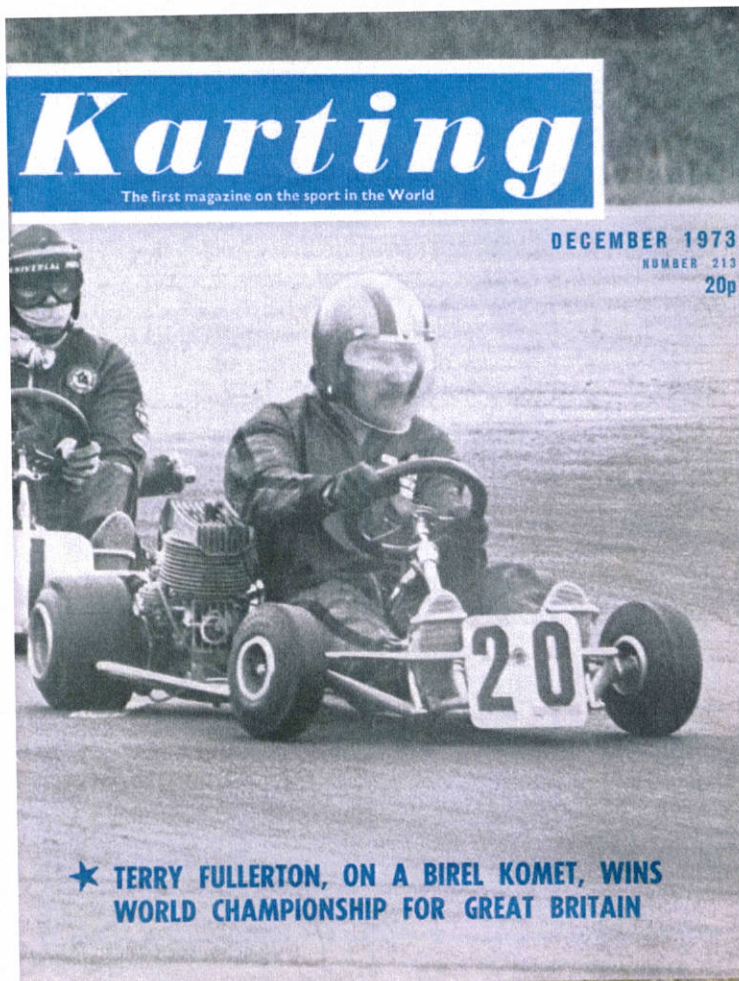
"I came to Europe for the first time, to compete outside of Brazil... as a team mate to Fullerton, Terry Fullerton. He was very experienced and I enjoyed very much driving with him because he was fast, he was consistent. He was for me a very complete driver – and it was pure driving, pure racing..... I have that as a very good memory.

Angelo Parilla, DAP team boss (this quote to journalists after the 1980 Champions Cup, Jesolo, Italy)

"Fullerton and Senna are the two best drivers in the world. All the others are capable of good races, good third places but nothing more. Ayrton took things too easily – with Fullerton behind you, there is always danger."
(Angelo Parilla is one of the organisers of the annual historic kart event at Jesolo that is on the BHKC calendar.)

Mike Wilson, Six times Karting World Champion (to Karting Magazine 2006)

"There's no doubt in my mind that Terry Fullerton was the best driver I ever encountered. Senna was obviously pretty exceptional too, but Terry always managed to squeeze the maximum from every kart he ever drove."



John Pizzaro (Fifteen times Australian Kart Champion) on Fullerton (2006)

John has seen many drivers in action over the years but there is no doubt in his mind that Terry Fullerton was the best ever.

"I've seen a lot of drivers in my time, but Terry simply stood above the rest. Fullerton in my mind is the best ever."

Photographs:

Top: Terry Fullerton on the front of Karting Magazine, September 1973

Middle: Terry Fullerton (20) on the line at Nivelles 1973 for the world championship final. His brother Mike gives the kart a final check.

Left: Victory salute.

