**Interviewer:** [00:00:00] Okay, so this is the Community Brain’s Industrial Estate Project. Today is Wednesday, the 2nd of August 2023, and we're at Bicester Heritage, and I'm with Tony Jardine, who, um, worked at the Chessington Brabham garage. Um, Tony, do you mind just confirming your date and place of birth for the tape, please?

**Tony Jardine:** Yeah, my name's Tony Jardine. I was born on the 5th of March, 1952 in Liverpool.

**Interviewer:** Great. Um, Tony, before we get into the sort of Chessington side of things and the Brabham side of things, do you wanna just talk a little bit about your, uh, early development of your passion for motorsport and how, how, how that sort of became your, your, your vocation?

**Tony Jardine:** Yeah. I, as a, as a little boy, um, I, I understood that big passion for me was cars. My, my dad, uh, during the Second World War had flown aircraft in, um, Arctic convoy, and he'd come back with a succession of cars and that transferred to me, and then I realised that they raced them [00:01:00] and I pursued that hobby. Um, and made it into my career because I was a, a teacher originally.

Um, then I was, became a truck driver. And as a truck driver enabled me to get into the bottom rung of the sport with Formula One. And actually I drove trucks for the Brabham team out of Chessington from whence I became a race coordinator, uh, from whence I ended up in the drawing office with the superb, um, designer, Gordon Murray, who's designed everything from McLaren supercars to winning uh, Formula One cars. And I had the honour of working with him at, uh, the Chessington base, the Formula One base, uh, for Brabham. I went on to in management at McLaren. Um, and ultimately, uh, I went on to the PR side of things, um, with McLaren. Um, formed my own agency. Worked back in Formula One and then we've worked in sailing, football, rugby, you name it, sports on a [00:02:00] global basis until I sold that agency about seven years ago.

Um, I also did 10 years on ITV's F1 programme. I worked with BBC, I did a seven year stint with Sky F1, so I've also developed um, the, my media side of the career extensively, and I'm hoping this is the, uh, the last job, uh, working for someone else for the first time in, gosh, 38 years. As communications director for Hero ERA, which is the world's foremost historic classic rally car company. And that's full circle.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And if you could cast your mind back to you as a a, a young boy or a young man, um, what was it about motorsport that really appealed to you. That, that, that, that, that, that burnt your, that stoked your fires, as it were?

**Tony Jardine:** I think it was the fact that there were some heroes, real heroes and some really epic cars that, that caught my eye and fired my imagination.

And amongst those in, in the fifties [00:03:00] would've been Fangio and Sir Stirling Moss. And Sir Stirling Moss was the one Brit who stood o-, stood out, taking on, you know, a lot of the international drivers, um, the Italians, the French, and so on, and he was the epitome of the young superstar. He was probably the very first professional driver that I can think of.

Um, again, I, I was very fortunate, um, during my career to work with him on various TV programmes and actually work with him on some, some cruises down to Monte Carlo, where we would, um, entertain the people on board. Great character, but he was the one really that got me going. And I've been fixated with motorsport in general myself since then. I still race myself. I still do a lot of rallying around the world. I was in New Zealand last year doing a 3000 kilometre rally, and it's all because of that original spark and that original enthusiasm. And the bottom line to all that is I've been very lucky to [00:04:00] make my living out of motorsport.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. You mentioned Stirling Moss there, was Jack Brabham, uh, uh, racing when you were growing up as well. Did you, did you watch watch him as well?

**Tony Jardine:** A hundred percent. I watched him at Aintree. I watched him at Oulton Park. Uh, I watched him at Silverstone. Of course I knew of him very well and laterally when we worked with his sons, particularly with David Brabham. Um, Sir Jack did come to some of the functions and some of the Formula Three races. So I, I knew him fairly well latterly having as a boy who watched him race, and the same with Stirling. So you can imagine from my boyhood heroes to actually rubbing shoulders with them and working with them was quite something

**Interviewer:** I was gonna say, does that kind of reignite the boy in you when you, when you meet these people?

**Tony Jardine:** Yeah. There is that incredible sense of, of adventure and me pinching myself going, wow, you know, this is the great Stirling Moss or Sir Jack Braham and what they managed to [00:05:00] do. But I think Jack in particular, because the, the first person to have his own car, eponymous car, you know, winning, winning a world championship and with an Australian engine, you know, a Repco Australian engine.

So, so many feats and such, such a great guy, but such a gritty driver, you know? And he went on quite long into his career as well. So, um, yeah, he is, he's up there for me.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, we were, yeah, just, just just come from speaking to David and, uh, um, I was, I asked him whether he thought Jack's successes were down to him as a constructor or him as a driver, or which were the main factor and he just said, oh, it's, it's, it's, it's everything.

I mean, would you agree with that?

**Tony Jardine:** I would. He was an all rounder. Um, Like Bruce McLaren from New Zealand, he was equally happy behind the wheel as he was either behind the drawing board helping his designer or working out how the brakes work. You know, they knew what they wanted and they knew how things could work.

So from [00:06:00] an engineering point of view, when either of those two were driving, you'd get incredible feedback and you know, and improve the product enormously.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And it's probably a, a feat that will never be repeated again. A, a driver winning his own na- with, with his own name on the, on the side of the car.

**Tony Jardine:** I can't see it. I can't see it happening. I mean, what's great is that, you know, we still have the McLaren name going and

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Tony Jardine:** You know, and, and the McLaren team doing so well. And now we have the McLaren supercars, uh, well now we've had them for quite a while, but I mean, that success lives on in that name.

So you can imagine when I was rallying, doing a big rally in New Zealand last year. I, I, on my tours around that, I went to some of, there's the Chris Amon raceway, the Bruce McLaren Raceway, and you meet and talk to Kiwis who are so proud of Bruce McLaren, as Australians are of Sir Jack.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So, um, let's, let's talk a little bit about that time you had working for, for the Brabham team. [00:07:00] Um, when, when, when do you first. Um, when does that first come about? What's, what, what's the, what's the first in there?

**Tony Jardine:** It was, it was an interesting one because it's a guy who I still get on very well with today called Herbie Blash, who was the team manager at Brabham. And I'm sure David's mentioned him.

**Interviewer:** Yes. I've, I've had a, I've had email contact with Herbie. He said he's gonna speak to me, so hopefully we'll arrange that soon.

**Tony Jardine:** That's good. 'cause I was gonna recommend that, that you do because he's, he's the font of all knowledge there. And as I said to you, I'd been, um, a teacher, and just to explain that I had done a deal with my stepfather if I got my degree and started work. Um, he would help me fund my first racing car 'cause he understood my passion and my fire because he was a big motorcycle man and he owned a lot of old motorcycles. Took me to the TT Races. I saw Mike Hailwood win when I was a young lad. Um, so incredibly then I worked every summer, every holiday, and eventually we put the, [00:08:00] the money together, um, to go racing myself, which, which ultimately met with failure.

Me understanding that I couldn't be a top line driver and too many crashes and no money left at all. Um, I was, I was teaching eventually around the world trying to get money together, whatever. When I came back I did my HGV 1 licence and I was hauling big rig rigs around Europe and I was earning three times as much money as I was as a teacher.

It was quite significant in the seventies. And then I saw a job advertised with Goodyear Racing Division, which was to drive the trucks, go to the races, deliver the tyres, and then fit the tyres, which was all day, every day, just fitting tyres at the Formula One circuit. At the end of my first year in Grand Prix racing, I met the likes of Herbie Blash and I became what they call a temporary engineer.

So I would go into the pit lane during practice or the race, look after a team and their particular tyre requirements. When I was doing a lot of work, um, with Herbie, and [00:09:00] he said, why don't you come and join us at Brabham in Chessington? And, um, I went to see him and I started off driving the truck and looking after all the spare parts and all the freight around the world.

Then he made me a race coordinator and when he was ill once I took over as team manager. But the biggest job that I most enjoyed, as an ex art teacher, uh, was working in the drawing office with Gordon Murray.

**Interviewer:** Oh, right.

**Tony Jardine:** Um, and all I was doing was the third angle drawings, because we didn't have CAD/CAM then.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Tony Jardine:** We didn't have all the electronic design aids that have now. You had a drawing board. And I would put all the components together and draw them all 3D and you know, painstakingly number all the parts so that a mechanic could then assemble all the bits and pieces. And, and that was over cars like, um, the end of the BT45 era.

BT46, BT46B. And, um, the, the [00:10:00] incredible fan car that won the Swedish Grand Prix in 1978.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** So that was kind of the crowning glory, if you like. Um, and in fact, my first day in the drawing office, Bernie Ecclestone, who you know, is quite a short gentleman, came in and peered up at my drawing board, and he's shortsighted as well.

What the hell are you doing in here? And and Gordon said, I told you that Teach, my nickname, I used to be called The Teacher, they shortened it to Teach. So if you hear that from Herbie, you'll know it's me.

**Interviewer:** That's from your art teacher days. So

**Tony Jardine:** That's from my art teacher days. My, yeah. 'Cause I taught, I taught art first, I taught it up to A Level. I taught architecture, history of art and all that, and then English languages as a second subject. And, but Herbie started this thing of always calling me Teach. And even to this day, people still call me Teach, which is fine. I don't have a problem with it. But, you [00:11:00] know, so Gordon said to Bernie, Bernie, I told you that Teach was coming in, he was gonna be working with me and helping me out and doing all the third angle drawing. [Mumbly Noises] Anyway, as he, he had his little meeting with Gordon. He walked back past me and he looked up at my drawing board, looked up at me, he stared at me and he said, it's all we need, isn't it? Another bleep bleep designer, and went out and slammed the door. So that was my introduction to the design office on the first day.

**Interviewer:** Is that story indicative of what Bernie was like to, to work with?

**Tony Jardine:** Absolutely. Absolutely. He was, he was a tough guy to work for. Very, very tough. But equally, he had his moments when we would be roaring with laughter and he, he certainly, he certainly not just kind of incentivised us. 'cause you know, there were, there was good prize money. He looked after us and everything, but he motivated us all. Um, and that's, it wasn't through fear or anything like that, but he could be pretty, you know, [00:12:00] short with you and direct with you, uh. And you always had to have your answers ready. Um,

**Interviewer:** so remind me what years this were that, that you were at Brabham?

**Tony Jardine:** I I started at Braham in 77.

**Interviewer:** 77. Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** And I went through to the end of 79 because I was offered a job for 1980 at McLaren as, um, assistant team manager.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Tony Jardine:** And I, I left and went to McLaren. And Bernie tried desperately to keep me and offered me all sorts of things, but I said, I'm not staying Bernie.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. Um, I mean, did you have a sense when you joined of the, the history of the team and, and, and how it had come to become, uh, Bernie's and not, not, not no longer, you know, the, the, the Brabham family?

**Tony Jardine:** And, and, and that was to a degree through necessity. I. Um, because, you know, to stay competitive and to have the sort of funding required, you [00:13:00] know, that that was needed to, to be really, really competitive there was, was very, very difficult.

And the other shareholder was Ron Tauranac. Who was the Brabham designer, um,

**Interviewer:** And he's a former partner of Sir Jack's, right?

**Tony Jardine:** He's a partner of Sir Jack's. And it was more moving to Ron because, because Ron had got some, um, great Formula Two cars and so on. But, but in the era of Brabham producing Formula Three cars, Formula Two cars, at which they were very, very successful.

You still needed to have your cutting edge Formula One car as your flagship to be able to sell all those things. And of course, when you extend yourself like that and you're building all these different formulae, you know you've got to be successful all the time. The minute the Brabham doesn't start winning in Formula Three or Formula Two people start buying the equivalent Lotus or Tecno or whatever it happens to be.

That situation had come along with Brabham and Graham Hill was [00:14:00] driving the lobster claw car, which I believe was the BT33, and it was around this time that Bernie Ecclestone, who was Jochen Rindt's manager, um, was circling and, and had gone in to have various meetings say, look, you know, I could buy it, we could do this, we could do that.

And, and ended up, I believe, David would know better than me, but I believe doing more of the negotiations with, with Ron Tauranac by that stage. Um, and then acquiring Brabham and all the rights and, and so on. So, um, that's, that's where it was. Um, and of course then, then it, then it had funding then. Then he pulled in sponsorship, then he brought in, you know, Alfa Romeo to supply engines and you know, the world cha, the subsequent world championships to that and BMW and goodness knows what, you know, Bernie's a dynamo. He still is in his nineties.

**Interviewer:** Yes. I mean, was [00:15:00] it- could, could you see the, um, future projection of Bernie's career there? Could you see that he would be at the top of the tree of, of Formula One ultimately?

**Tony Jardine:** What I always questioned at the time was how he was managing to manage Formula One. I. Because in the early days he'd, he'd come into Formula One and we bought Brabham and he saw a bit of a mess.

I.E. there were all the teams were, were arranging their own travel. All of the teams were individually negotiating with each, with each of the race organisers. And he said, guys, you know, let's get this together. I can package this for you. Let me go and you know, at least negotiate on behalf of all of you.

And that is literally the start of the Formula One Constructors' Association. And people like Colin Chapman and Ken Tyrrell went, yeah, please, please. Because he cut down all their costs. But at the same time, he then built up the TV rights, this, that he knew exactly what he was doing and built it into this [00:16:00] amazing empire.

But yet, if you were running your own team, you'd be very happy because you are getting big prize money. You are getting a share of the TV revenue and so on. Whilst he had all the heartache and the pain, but he's doing all that and running the team.

**Interviewer:** Mm.

**Tony Jardine:** Um, and in my era, um, we had great people like Charlie Whiting who joined just after me as a mechanic, worked his way up to being, you know, an engineer, team manager, and then eventually joining the FIA as Race Director.

So Charlie and I would share rooms when we were traveling around at, at Brabham, um. One of my kind of soulmates, so tragedy when he, he died in Australia about four years ago, I think it was. Um, but yeah, he was another great, um, team member. We even had people like Mike Barney, uh, working at Chessington, who was one of the great um, fabricators, one of the great car builders from Sir Jack's era.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Tony Jardine:** Worked for Sir Jack and, you know, [00:17:00] he'd build anything, do anything. These guys, you know, would work all night, every night for three weeks if they needed to build a car.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Tony Jardine:** You know, they could do anything.

**Interviewer:** And in your three years there, um, in terms of, um, successes for the team, I think you, you mentioned the Grand Prix victory there. Uh, forgive me for not having all these

**Tony Jardine:** No, no.

**Interviewer:** Dates memorised myself. Um, but yeah. Um, was that the, you mentioned, is the fan the fan car? Is this, is this the, David was just, I think, talking to me about this. This is a controversial car that only did one race and then there was an agreement that it wouldn't race again.

Do you wanna just tell that story?

**Tony Jardine:** Yeah. The BT46B was essentially a ground effect car. Which had a big fan on the back and it sucked all the air from underneath it, so it literally sucked itself to the ground. And that was Gordon Murray's very clever answer, um, to the Lotus 79, which was a, a ground effect car.

And it's strange now 'cause that's exactly what Formula One has gone back to now. Two huge inverted Venturi on [00:18:00] each side of the car which suck it down to the ground. And the Lotus was winning everything. And Gordon thought, right, I'm gonna de design something out of the box. What it meant was that we as a team had to keep replacing the skirts around the edge of all the bodywork because you had to have a seal between the track and the edge of the bodywork so that the air could all do what it wanted to do.

And, um, we won the Swedish Grand Prix at Anderstorp, and Mario Andretti, who was in the Lotus behind complained bitterly because out the back of the fan, all the bits of gravel and dirt were flicking up into his face and into his crash helmet. And he said, it's dangerous. It's this, that and the other. But behind the scenes, everyone knew the whole face of Formula One would have to change.

Everyone would have to have a fan car if you let it carry on. And know- not every team could do that or afford to do that. So it was kind of a one hit wonder. Um, but, but having said that, you know, we, we, we did have some, some [00:19:00] great successes, uh, and, and great drivers. I mean, I got to work with Niki Lauda 'cause in 78 it was him and John Watson.

And the end of the end of 1978 at the Canadian Grand Prix, uh, we were based in the little boathouse where we all that thing. And Bernie came in and said, oh, you know, the spare car, which we always kept as a spare in case there are any problem, he said, um, we're gonna run that for a new driver. We went, what, what, who?

And he said, uh, this young Formula Three driver Nelson Piquet. We'd heard of him and went, what? Oh. Anyway, it was freezing cold 'cause it was November in Montreal. Uh, it was on the, uh, the circuit out in the middle of the Montreal seaway. Um, and Piquet was quicker than Lauda and quicker than Watson. He was old tyres, old car. And then that was then started the Piquet era at Brabham.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. I just wanna get a sense of the, the work environment at the Brabham Garage. I mean, part of this [00:20:00] project we're doing is, is as much social history as it is sports history or, or anything like that. So we we're interested in, you know, the, the, the, yeah.

The different businesses that existed on that estate and, and, and the working environment within them. So, um, roughly how many would be working at, at, at the garage in the, at any one time while you were there.

**Tony Jardine:** Oh, I would say, um, 50, 55 of us.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** Because you've got the fabrication area and then you've got the race shop bay.

So you, when you say garage, okay, so the old Brabham garage in Byfleet, they would say garage then. But by this time we would, we would say that the Formula One workshop, that's how we would describe it. Um, because you'd have the race base at the front where all the race cars are up on trestles. Um, then separate division, you have fabrication where they're making all the metal components. Then [00:21:00] you, then you'd have a design, a quiet design area where guys are building these, these, these bucks and, and wooden models and so on, and they'd have a small wind tunnel on the other side.

Then you'd have the administration offices. And then on the other side you have huge stores where all the components were kept. And then on the other side of that, you'd have this massive, um, uh, truck bay area where we'd have the two trucks, keep all the engines and so on. It's nothing compared to what Formula One facilities are like now, but at the time it was pretty much state of the art.

**Interviewer:** Right. Yeah. And did this, uh, New Haw facility still exist- New Haw, Byfleet facility still exist or had everything been moved to to Chessington?

**Tony Jardine:** I think everything had been moved by then.

**Interviewer:** Yeah,

**Tony Jardine:** I, I'm not sure if the building still exists up at New Haw or not, but obviously that's where history was made.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** This was just the continuation, albeit in a, uh, under new management and in, in newer buildings.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And in terms of that workforce, uh, in terms of sort of the, the [00:22:00] demographic profile of your colleagues, I'm, I'm gonna guess very male. Um, uh, was it- and I'm also gonna guess not, not that many local people to the area.

Was it, was it sort of just, just people from all over?

**Tony Jardine:** A few. Just a few. But I mean, like for example, we had, uh, when Niki Lauda joined us, he insisted on bringing his chief mechanic from Ferrari.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Tony Jardine:** So we had a guy called Ermanno Cuoghi. And he was living in the area and, and he was a fish out of water, but he was dedicated to Niki Lauda.

We had people join from other teams and they would be temporarily living in digs and whatever. 'Cause I think, unlike now, we, we as a race team did a lot of travelling. And we didn't necessarily come back. So the beginning of the season in January, we would go and test with two cars and we'd test in Brazil, then we'd go to Argentina, then back to Brazil, and then do the first two races back to back.

So we would be away for seven weeks. And we would [00:23:00] fix anything that required, if the driver had had a big crash and smacked the chassis or whatever, I would be out and about in Buenos Aires trying to find some backstreet welding place or whatever. That was how it was because we were smaller teams then and, and everyone had to be more versatile and do everything, and even though the fact that I was race coordinating, doing all this, you know, I would just muck in with the boys.

If we needed to change an engine, I'd be doing my bit. You know, they didn't let me near the gearbox because I changed the ratios once. And, um, fortunately chief mechanic went to get in it and tried all the gears and he would put it into first and it went backwards. So they didn't let me touch the gearbox again.

**Interviewer:** And was there a social element to it? Would Bernie take you all down the pub and, you know, get, get, get the drinks in? Were there Christmas parties? Was there, that sort of thing?

**Tony Jardine:** He would, he would tend to more than anything else, just give us a bit of extra cash or whatever and send, you know, get us a few bottles or whatever.

He wouldn't necessarily, um, socialise with us. [00:24:00] But I did, I did things with the team, like when it was getting into the close season, organising football matches against the other teams, you know, Brabham versus McLaren, um, et cetera. Um, and we as a crew did socialise. Um, quite a few of us, three, four of us.

And there's still some of the old Brabham boys, as we call 'em, that keep in touch and certainly I do. Um, but obviously my, my, my biggest mate from um, the Brabham days is, is Herbie Blash, as I said. And he was the one that got me into Brabham in the first place. He asked me to join him.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah. I, I asked, I just wonder if there's, if you had much interaction with the wider locality. I mean, we know there was a pub on the industrial estate called the Port of Call. I dunno if you ever popped into there.

**Tony Jardine:** Yes. No, no. We, we, we went into there. Um, I I do believe Decca Radar used to be on there as well.

**Interviewer:** Yep.

**Tony Jardine:** Decca or De-car.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Decca. Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** Deca.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** So I think we, I think we, we played cricket against them once, [00:25:00] um, which was something that I'd instigated. And then the, there was another one, classic one at the edge of the estate, and I dunno whether it still exists because it was on the, it was just off the, um, the main drag.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Tony Jardine:** You know where the dual carriageway. Yeah. So you've got the Cox Lane, you go down the end and on the other side of it you could see the dual carriageway through the underpass. But our favorite cafe for years and years was the George's Blue Moon Cafe.

**Interviewer:** Wow, okay.

**Tony Jardine:** And that, I dunno whether it exists, but oh my goodness me. So he was just Cockney rhyme, the guy who owned the place. He was unbelievable and n- the four or five of us would come and said, w- we go, we go off to George's, he'd come and go, right, right. Billy Brabham's. Right. Billy Brabham's in here. Oh, what you gonna have today, boys? You, you and... I just always remember him, a big chalkboard. We'd always say, right, George, can I have the uh, two eggs where we go- oh, sorry mate, that's off.

And [00:26:00] you go to the second one, you go, oh, that's off as well. Oi, Dad! And Dad would come out the back, but he'd always feed us somehow. And, and it was a pilgrimage to, uh, George's Blue Moon Cafe. So there you go.

**Interviewer:** Amazing. Yeah, that's, that's, that's one I'll have to look into. I don't, I don't believe it still exists.

**Tony Jardine:** I'll bet you'll find the site though.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I'll, I'll, I'll, yeah, I'll definitely, uh, yeah, I'll definitely look into that further. Um, so, um, yeah. And, um, in terms of the, the structure of the team. Um, so we know Bernie's at the top and Herbie's essentially his right hand man, is that correct? Yeah. Yeah. Um, and then, yeah, so. Um, so you then divided into, um, as you say, fab, um, fabrication and, uh yeah, sort of different

**Tony Jardine:** That- 'cause that that's how it was because you've got the, you've got the guys and fabrication are, are building all the aluminum metal components, whatever it happens to be. And they, they literally have a, a woodworking place where they would [00:27:00] make all, all, all the bucks for these different components.

So, so when there's a new aero design. They would, they would craft them out of wood, so they were in a separate place. Um, so fabrication were there. Then you'd have assembly area where they'd put some of the components together. But the race shop was where the chassis all stood, um, on their trestles. And the guys would build the cars.

And those were actually, the race mechanics responsible for that car. So the guys who were on Nikki's car were there building that, guy who's were on John Watson's car were there building that, the guys building the spare car, and so it was a big race shop. Then the stores. With all the parts and components, 'cause you'd have to go to the window and get, you know, the parts that you required. And then the other side of that was where you had all your transport. We, we even had our, um, our motorhome. We used to have a, um, one of these American motorhomes that Bernie used to use. So we had [00:28:00] one of those over there as well.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And just sort of finally on that Chessington part of your career, I mean, do you, when you look back on it, do you look back at it with, with particular fondness, was it a place that, that, that, you know, when you compare it to other places you worked, was, was, was a, was a, was a positive place for you to work? Or, or, or, or not so much?

**Tony Jardine:** It was, it was definitely positive energy. It was definitely, you know, the, the fire inside me of Formula One and it, and it was a ladder. You know, in my career, there's no question or doubt about that. In terms, in terms of, of the building itself. It was actually quite dark inside.

You concentrate on what you did, and I'm one of those people that likes a window.

**Interviewer:** Sure.

**Tony Jardine:** Or an office with a window, at least I can just see it. I mean, that's, that's just me. But having said that, you know, you had really nice admin offices. Uh, we had good conditions in there and, and the, the Chessington estate was really easy, easy to get [00:29:00] to. You know, we had, we had good parking outside and everything and, and it was pretty vibrant on the estate then, I dunno about now, 'cause lots of different businesses in the area.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** You know, and it, and it always produced this kind of sense of industry going on, uh, a bit of a buzz about the place. And certainly in our place. You imagine there was a hell of a buzz.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And were you sad to then learn of the demise of the, of the Brabham team later on in the, in the 90s?

**Tony Jardine:** It was awful. I mean, just, just watching it slide away and be sold and, um, they, they literally, you know, ending up towards the back of the grid and these, these different owners like Lüthi and

**Interviewer:** Who I hear Yes, he was, he he was a bit of a questionable character.

**Tony Jardine:** Dodgy, dodgy.

**Interviewer:** And ended up going, getting sent to prison in Switzerland.

**Tony Jardine:** Yeah. So, um, yeah, that was sad. Um, I'd rather have seen it, you know, bought by some incredible enthusiast and, and, and enshrined and protected and, and [00:30:00] and so on. But it's, it's in the same way, in a similar way to Lotus, that Lotus is not on the Grand Prix grid because I also then subsequently worked for Lotus as well.

And, but Lo- classic Lotus exists now and all those cars race competitively in historic events. And Colin Chapman's son, runs [?]. And you go back up there now and it's thriving, you go, oh my God, as they're keeping the name alive and, and, and, and everything. Whereas, I mean, Bernie does still have some of the old Brabhams I believe in his collection.

I'm not sure which, um, perhaps Herbie Blash will be able to tell you which cars, um, he has. You know, but some of them have, have certainly been protected. And if you look at the Brabham marks over the year from Sir Jack's cars through to Tuaranac's cars, and then Gordon Murray's Brabhams, like the BT44, when you look at the BT44 in its Martini colours, it's just one of the [00:31:00] best cars out and, and it won in the hands of Carlos Reutemann in the early days.

So one of my things, so you can imagine you, oh, I'm asked by Herbie to come and join Brabham, I go, wow. You know? Wow. Yeah. I'll think about it, Herbie. When do I start?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. And, uh, the name lives on today, um, uh, with, with, with David's work. And, and, and yeah, the, the, the, the, yeah. The Brabham family name still, still very much out there.

**Tony Jardine:** Which I, which I love and which is great. And, um, I, I think, I think they're doing okay in terms of, you know, the supercars and in practical terms of where they are, racing the cars. Um, I, I think is great. But you know, his wife, Lisa, she actually worked for me at my PR company in, in latter years when my first big client was Richard Branson.

So we were doing all sorts of stuff. But Lisa joined then, she's, she. See, her brother is Mike Thackwell.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Tony Jardine:** Who, who was the youngest ever when he started a Grand Prix in Canada for [00:32:00] Tyrell. Um, Formula Two champion, things like that. So racing family meets racing family, and the Thackwells and the Brabhams together and y- I can't disguise the fact that, uh, I've known David and Lisa for a long time. You know, they're good friends and, uh, obviously we wish them all the very, very best and keep that Brabham name out there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So no surprise that David's son also got into racing as well.

**Tony Jardine:** Exactly, exactly.

**Interviewer:** And what was, what was really interesting about speaking to David there, was he was saying when in, in his, um, upbringing, Uh, so Jack actually wanted to keep him away from motorsports, and he was being guided towards farming and, uh, he sort of had to discover motorsports independently of his dad, remarkably.

**Tony Jardine:** He's, he's a great sportsman as well. He still is. He's, he's very fit and so on. And each year at Goodwood, when we race in the revival, we have a cricket match and, um, you know, we, we affectionately just call him Brabs.

**Interviewer:** Yeah.

**Tony Jardine:** Um, and I watched this Aussie [00:33:00] because, it was, it was quite a close match, you know, and, and it varied. There were al- there were some quite good cricketers. There were equally, people who are rubbish. I only play once a year, whatever. And three times David from outfield, he picked up a ball and they were running and he just hurled them. I dunno how many yards away. And knocked their stumps out.

**Interviewer:** Really? Wow.

**Tony Jardine:** I mean, he threw it like a rocket and I went, 'bloody hell Brabs! That's ama-'. 'Oh yeah, mate. I always played a lot of cricket when I was younger and uh, yeah, no, no problem at all'. Um, and then he batted not out like 60 or something, I went, cor dear. Real superstar.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I wonder if he, I mean, as he was talking about his dad, it struck me that his dad seems to be a kind of like polymath and anything he took his hand to, he, he did succeed at, and I wonder if he sort of inherited

**Tony Jardine:** Yeah, I think so.

**Interviewer:** Inherited a bit.

**Tony Jardine:** I, I do think so. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Yeah,

**Tony Jardine:** I really do.

**Interviewer:** Um, so I'd just like to wrap up quickly by, um, maybe. [00:34:00] So we've spoken about Brabham and your own personal experiences there. Um, just to tap into your wider motorsport brain. Um, the other thing that we're looking at is, is the Mini Cooper and I I, this may be something that you haven't looked into in any great detail.

Um, so if you don't have a great deal to say about it, that's absolutely fine, but, um, we are sort of looking at the Cooper Garage in, in Surbiton and, and, and the innovations that came out of there. I mean, do you, are you able to talk about why the Mini Cooper was so innovative and, and revolutionary and what, what enabled it to, to to win those, uh, Monte Carlo rallies in the sixties?

**Tony Jardine:** I am, because I own a 1965 Mini Cooper S with the 1970 short stroke Monte Carlo engine, and I am a Mini fan. But I think the important thing here is that the original design by Sir Alec Issigonis was revolutionary to, to have a little transverse mounted engine, a wheel at every corner, and it took him a long, long [00:35:00] time to convince the board at BMC that this would be a goer, that this would work and that would- people would buy into the concept and so on. So he got across all of those hurdles and it started, and it started slowly, but once it gained a bit of momentum, that momentum was helped by the fact that John Cooper had gone in, looked at this little car and said, that'll make a great racing car.

That would really make a great racing car. And with- Sir Alec Issigonis was, was the one that needed the most persuasion to allow Cooper to make the modifications and take them racing and rallying and so on. So it became a success on the track. Which of course later it became Mini, and then the Mini Cooper as it was, and the Mini Cooper and the Mini Cooper S as it as it developed.

For example, the early 850cc Mini went into, uh, its first RAC rally, and I [00:36:00] believe it was in 1960, and it was the first time they'd gone from regularity rallying into special stage rallying, and there was a special stage called Monument Hill. Now an 850cc Mini doesn't punch out more than about 60 brake horsepower, if you're lucky.

And it was up against all the mighty works cars, but it was, there was a lot of mud around, needed a lot of traction. And this nimble light front wheel drive with incredible traction, won that stage, it beat every car. Everyone went, oh my God. Oh my God. So they started using them more and more in rallying, and then you get to. Well, even 63, they, you know they're winning. Then you get to the triumph in 64 with Paddy Hopkirk in Minis.

Minis still go club rallying today. You know, here at Hero ERA, you'll find a Mini in the back, which we hire out to people. Oh, I want to use the Mini. I want to use the Mini, [00:37:00] because it wasn't just a fashion icon, you know? It actually was a genuine, competitive car. But it was equally happy going shopping, going on holiday, cramming everything on the roof rack and in the back, three kids in the back and so on. Just the most amazing mode of transport. Just the most amazing little package for racing and rallying. Uh, it's one of my all time, it is my favourite saloon car.

**Interviewer:** It's, uh, it, yeah, occupies a unique place in history and culture, I guess, in that you, you've got that sporting side of it and you've got that pop culture, fashion side of it. Like I, I, there's not, not a lot of things that sort of marry those two worlds in such a way. I, I wouldn't have thought.

**Tony Jardine:** And in it's day in, in, you know, in the sixties, the super sixties, you can see McCartney, [Bellon?], you can see Peter Sellers having his special version made and, and so on.

Um, and then I think clearly, uh, we missed the boat over here because [00:38:00] BMW bought Mini and everything else, and they could see that they could continue the line and make the modern Minis, which we still see now, and they capitalised on that. So here you go.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And just finally, um, so yeah, we're looking at this one locality, Kingston, Southwest London, um, suburbia. Which isn't, you know, uh, we find that suburbia isn't necessarily associated with, uh, innovation and, uh, that's, you know, uh, exciting, uh, design. It's perhaps more just seen as sleepy and commuter belt and, and that sort of thing. I mean, what do you think it says about an area if it's able to have the Braham story and the Cooper stories are within the, within the same place.

**Tony Jardine:** Well, I've always thought that whole area from Kingston, the bridge, the water, the old buildings, the marriage of the new area, it just says everything about its versatility, to be honest. But I think what is nice is that you have those estates, those technology estates [00:39:00] which are not interfering with, you know, the big town, the, the big city where you've got the lovely buildings and the, and the walkways and and so on and so forth.

And I think that marriage works extremely well and always, always loved that area. I still love going to kingston and surrounds. I mean, in and around Chessington, you can go in some of the street centres, these beautiful old, um, some terraced houses, but some of the, you know, with their balconies and all that, you know, twenties and turn of the century houses and so on.

So it's got character and charm. And at the same time they're- in the other side of it, you know, it's, it, it's certainly was cutting edge. You would know more now about who's there and who's not.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Yep. Yep. Absolutely. Well, Tony, um, I kept you longer than I said I would, so, uh, I think we can, we can wrap it up there unless there's anything that you've, you know, I'm sure we could cover a lot more things, but if there's anything stand out in, in your mind that we haven't covered for that relevant to this?

**Tony Jardine:** Well, I, I, I think, you know, the summary from me is in my short [00:40:00] time there, you know, at Brabham, and at Chessington, you know, I, I had a great time and it helped me on the next bit of my career path. So I always remember it fondly and as I've just said, you know, I love that whole Kingston area.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. Thank you so much.

**Tony Jardine:** You're welcome.