

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

Page

2 Notes from the Editor

3 John Russell Cockburn 1943 – 2020

4 Photo Galleries

5 Yorkshire Hillclimb Heroes – Peter Lawson

6 The Creation of Harewood Hillclimb

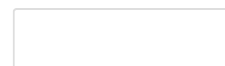
7 Contributors

8 Tailpiece

Pages: 1 [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#)

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Here we are in June and (predictably) still in partial lockdown, although things are considerably easier now than they were when we put the previous issue together.

In this issue we feature Peter Herbert's fine obituary to Russ Cockburn, sadly a victim of Covid-19, and a 'from the archives' article written by longstanding Yorkshire Centre member Tony Hodgetts on the origins of the Harewood hillclimb venue. Incidentally, the latter article reminds the reader of the significantly greater variety of venues in our area for motorsport events back then. Peter Herbert has also 'stepped into the breach' caused by the absence of event reports with the first of what we hope will be a series of articles on 'Yorkshire Hillclimb Heroes', this first featuring Peter Lawson. We also have another selection of images from the Harewood Hillclimb galleries that we hope you will find interesting.

I'd like to add that if any members feel inclined to send articles for the magazine that they feel might be of interest to their colleagues then we'd be very pleased to receive them (preferably in Word format). We're very keen to keep producing the magazine despite the current restrictions and we know that there are some great stories out there! Let us know if you've got any ideas at editorbarcy@outlook.com.

Proudly powered by WordPress

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

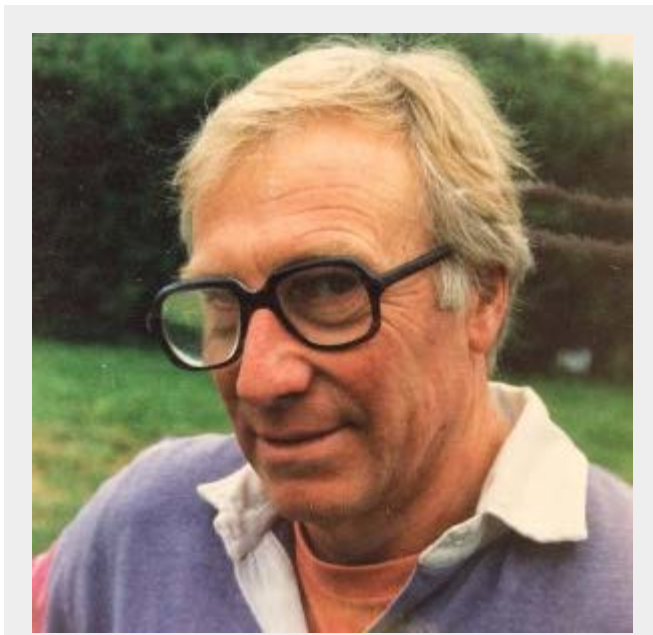
Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

JOHN RUSSELL COCKBURN 1943 – 2020

Nobody who had met him would forget Russ Cockburn. His rolling gait and one armed spectacles as distinctive as his unconventional take on life.

Born on Teesside so technically a 'smog monster', as I never tired of reminding him, Russ grew up in Darlington and was first employed as a draughtsman for Harrogate Council. A self-taught and intuitive engineer, he tuned cars in his spare time and ran a succession of interesting road cars that included a modified Austin A40 Farina complete with side exhaust, Lotus 26R Elan, prototype BDA-engined Capri and a string of Lotus Cortinas.



— Russ Cockburn

Upon establishing the Century House Garage in Newsham near Richmond, Russ specialised in preparing rally cars and servicing BMWs, supporting such drivers as Terry Cree, Pip Dale and Steve Ward on many international rallies, which led to a spell of rally co-driving and several wins.

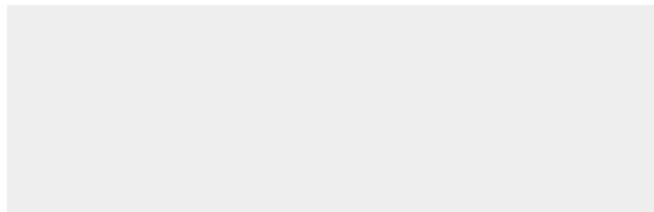
A chance meeting with a local racing driver led to the preparation of BMWs for circuit use. Titles followed, including those of BMW Car Club Champion Guy Spurr, and Northern Saloon and Sports Car Champions Mike Cutt and Kirk Armitage. But long distance endurance racing and its strategy challenges particularly interested him, and he ran such drivers as Ian Donaldson, Ian Flux, Nigel Greensall, Chris Hodgetts and Guy Povey at a number of 24 hour events that included those at the Nurburgring and Spa Francorchamps.

Following a brief retirement lasting but a few days, Russ joined son John in a fresh venture at JC Racing in Thirsk where competition BMW preparation continued, and engines, gearboxes (Drenth and Hollinger a speciality) and differentials arrived from all over the world for rebuilds. He also began restoring older Lotuses, and was rebuilding the ex Brian Kenyon Elite.

I first met Russ some 45 years ago when, on a friend's recommendation, I took my 2002 to him for attention. He was living at the time with his mother, and I found him in the back lane removing an engine with block and tackle suspended from a length of timber spanning the lane between two walls. Such working practices were to become familiar. Engines built in bedrooms, components stored in kitchens and wheels stacked in conservatories were for Russ the norm. The Newsham workshop would have been recognised by Dickens, with fully floating porous roof, ancient stove and wildlife-infested inspection pit.

For 23 years he tended to and developed my Westfield, eventually building the Cosworth BDH screamer that took me to the 1997 Harewood Championship. He also allowed me to drive his Schnitzer-built Group N BMW M3 in the European Hillclimb Championship, and introduced me to circuit racing with a series of BMW saloons. Together we towed competition cars for thousands of miles throughout Europe. This could have been tedious, but never with Russ. He could be outrageous and stubborn but also loyal and funny, with a keen eye for the bizarre wherever he looked. We had so many adventures.

A victim of the Covid-19 virus, it is hard to believe Russ is no longer here. Without him none of my modest motorsport successes would have been possible, and the world is now a poorer place.





— Russ in the paddock

Peter Herbert

Pages: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#)

Proudly powered by WordPress

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

PHOTO GALLERIES (FROM THE HAREWOOD HILLCLIMB WEBSITE)

1960s (all photos by Geoff Clark)

wonderplugin.com



J M C 8



053---harewood-1960s 053---harewood-1960s

1970s (all photos by S Jeffrey Binns)



199---harewood-hillcl-I 199---harewood-hillcl-I

Random (Various photographers)



00---6896-photograph: 00---6896-photograph:

Pages: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Proudly powered by WordPress

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

YORKSHIRE HILLCLIMB HEROES – PETER LAWSON

Introspection is not a characteristic readily associated with a successful racing driver, but in the case of 1968 British Hillclimb Champion Peter Lawson it served him well.

As a nineteen-year-old from Scotton Old Hall near Knaresborough, Peter made his competition debut in 1964 at Leighton Hall Hillclimb in a Lotus Cortina. He immediately displayed a level of flair that marked him out, moving to an MGB the following season.



Things became more serious in 1966 when a new 1.6 Brabham BT18 Twin Cam arrived, but a bad attack of mumps curtailed Lawson's season. However, his abilities were to become obvious on the national stage in 1967.

At the opening round of the British Championship at Loton Park the Brabham was well into the points with a fifth place finish behind winner Bryan

— Brabham BT18 Prescott 1967 (Mike Hayward)

Eccles' Brabham Oldsmobile, and as the year progressed its driver caught everyone's eye. By the time the series arrived at Harewood in September he was up with the front runners, and before a partisan crowd Peter was one of three drivers to lower the course record. Tony Marsh ultimately triumphed, clinching his sixth British title with the Marsh Buick Special.

That four-wheel drive was the thing to have did not escape Lawson's notice, so for 1968 he bought the unique BRM P67 that had shown promise when driven by David Good. Originally designed by a young Mike Pilbeam, but unsuccessful as a Grand Prix car, it had been developed by Peter Westbury for the hills. Lawson modified it further, fitting a 2.1 V8 Tasman engine and revising the torque split to a 30/70 rear bias to improve traction and reduce understeer.



— BRM P67 Shelsley Walsh 1968 (Motor Racing Photographers)

Although still not an easy car to drive, Lawson enjoyed a meteoric season, winning all but two of the British Championship's thirteen rounds and setting six course records. At just twenty three years old he became the youngest British Hillclimb Champion to date, and first Yorkshireman to hold the title.

Before he had finished with the BRM Peter took it to the wide open spaces of Elvington airfield that October for the annual Records Weekend, where the P67 could really be given its head. A new standing start quarter mile record of 10.936 seconds with an average speed of 146.14 mph was set, together with four other records over varying distances. The car was then sold to John Cussins, whose Ford GT40 was taken in part exchange. This in turn was swapped for a Chevron B8 BMW in which to go circuit racing in 1969.

Peter made his race debut at the Easter Rufforth meeting. After taking an early lead he spun to the back of the field only to drive back through the pack to win. Further victories followed, and by the end of the season he was mixing it with such established Chevron front runners as Willie Green.

This led to a drive for Red Rose Motors in 1970, sharing a Chevron B16 FVC with John Bridges. They finished third in class in the famously wet BOAC 1000 kms at Brands Hatch where Pedro



- Reunited with Chevron and school friend Russ Cockburn at a Shelsley demonstration (Peter Herbert)

Rodriguez drove the Gulf Porsche 917 to an epic victory. At the Nurburgring 1000 kms they were leading their class until the FVC went pop. However, the event was overshadowed by the fiery death of Hans Laine when his Porsche 908 crashed in practice.

This was a dangerous time to race, and following the deaths of Jim Clark, Mike

Spence and club drivers Martin Brain, Phil Scragg and Robin Smith, Peter reflected upon whether the risks were worthwhile. By now he had a young family and a plant hire business to run, and when his mother's doctor told him the worry of his chosen sport would be the death of her it was time to stop.

A modest and reflective man, yet with an underlying mischievous sense of fun, Peter Lawson demonstrated an outstanding talent during the few years he competed. That he knew when to stop, and live to tell the tale, says much of his self-awareness.

Penned by Peter Herbert

Pages: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#)

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

THE CREATION OF HAREWOOD HILLCLIMB

Back in the late 1950's the Yorkshire Centre of the British Automobile Racing Club ran a busy programme of social and competitive events; road rallies, sporting and production car trials, driving tests and sprints, including a sprint held on the access drive of the Hudson Road factory of Montague Burton Ltd, courtesy of Arnold Burton. Active members had access to race meetings at Full Sutton, Rufforth and Linton and hillclimbs at Catterick and Baitings Dam, but the Yorkshire Centre committee were actively seeking a suitable venue where they could organise their own hillclimb. I remember seeing a track winding up the side of the Wharfe valley when stuck in traffic on Harewood Bank and commenting "that would make a lovely hillclimb". I was not the only one to have spotted it!

The Centre had an eye on that track and when the farm came on the market, the tempting prospect of our own venue suddenly became a possibility when Arnold Burton revealed that he was seeking to buy a farm, and that he was prepared to give the club the right to improve the farm road and use it for Hill Climbs. Arnold, a motor sport enthusiast with an Alpine Cup to his credit, has supported the Stockton Farm venue for fifty years and is a Vice President of the BARC. The committee was fortunate also to include among its members some having specialist knowledge that was relevant to the tremendous task of designing and creating a new section of agricultural access road to the bottom of the valley, and improving the existing farm access road, all within a very tight budget and the need

to keep within the current planning limitations.

Mike Wilson, as Centre Chairman, was the head of the project, and Arnold Burton, Harry Mason, Derek Clark, Mike Kellett, John and Brian Holroyd, Dick Haley, Maurice Whaley, Ken Oldham, “Chippy” Stross, Derek Scott (the Centre’s Legal Advisor) and Malcolm Snowden all figured largely in the organisation of the work. Probably the most significant piece of good fortune was the inclusion in the organising team of Bill Varley, a Civil Engineer who specialised in highway building, and was part of the team creating the M62 motorway, which was slowly advancing from Hull to Liverpool over some very challenging terrain across the Pennines. From the start, the team were impressed with the potential of the road, encouraged by the availability of large flat fields near Harewood Avenue for car parking, but daunted by potential cost, possible legal problems and the need to control random springs on the hillside.

After discussion, a suitable farm access road was sketched out which would be acceptable for planning purposes by providing access to the bottom of the property and would raise the length of the course to approximately 1000 yards. Bill Varley was asked to draw up plans and an estimate of costs for submission to BARC Headquarters. Bill had a tight set of parameters for his design; the road was, and must demonstrably be, an access road for a working farm, it must be acceptable to the planning authorities, and the cost must be realistic. The plan was submitted to HQ in September 1961 and was accepted, so preparations were made to start work in April 1962. The Centre could not afford a full-time Clerk of Works, so Bill Varley assumed that post, assisted by Mike Kellett and John Holroyd who acted as Inspectors; the initial work was completed in June at a total cost of £6820. There was a proposal for a meeting to be held in July, but this was deferred to ensure that all was completely in order before opening to the public in September. There was one odd little hiccup that still remains. The designed line of Orchard Corner was pegged out by Bill Varley as a “parabolic” left-hander followed by a 135° right-hander. The bulldozer that was excavating the line of the corner broke into one of the underground springs, which made the surface very slippery. The ‘dozer skidded and tore out the pegs: the driver put them back where he thought they had been, and carried on digging, with the result that the line of the corner was two to four feet away from what was intended. By the time the error was discovered it was too late to do anything about it, so the road to this day is not quite as Bill planned it.

The opening meeting was a great success, attracting enthusiastic comment from competitors and spectators, and Tony Lanfranchi set the first hill record. The RAC Steward of the day commented that the course had the potential to be the best on the British Hillclimb Championship circuit and requests from competitors to be included on the mailing list for future entry forms flooded in. The running of that first meeting had revealed that the road surface needed to be improved as a matter of urgency, but this was held up by the savage winter of early 1963. There was one positive outcome of that awful winter. The work on the track had ensured that the milk tanker got through to the farm every day without damaging the farm’s vital access road!

The original surface was tar and chippings, with no kerbs to contain it. This broke up badly from the beginning and at the June meeting in 1963, held on the hottest day of the year, it deteriorated into ruts, making it essential for the committee to undertake re-surfacing. In the absence of money to do the job, Mike and John proposed that the work could be done with direct labour. They bought the tarmac from Skipton Rock, borrowed a road laying machine from Totty's complete with a two-man crew, recruited a team of Irish navvies in the Whip pub in Lower Briggate and did the job for £1500. They provided a surface that lasted for almost twenty years, in time for our first National meeting in September, when Peter Boshier-Jones (Lotus 22) knocked three seconds off the course record; the event was included in the British Hillclimb Championship. Harewood Hillclimb was up and running.

The next time that self-service labour was used was when a team of members under the direction of Martin Frost, and including most of the current crop of senior officials, created an unmade road down the western boundary of the site with the assistance of digger and dumper courtesy of Chippindale Engineers. This project was the construction of the return road that enabled cars to get from the paddock down to the start rather than having to wait in batches to be sent down to the holding area by the old start pad. It ran parallel to Quarry Straight, then went behind the pig-sties and followed the western edge of the field before turning right and running along the bottom fence (behind the current marshals' post at the Esses) to join the existing course at the start assembly area. To this was added a concrete road down from the western hillside car park to allow competing rally cars down into the track behind the piggeries and the loose-surfaced section, in time for use as a stage on the 1974 RAC Rally of Great Britain. The two functions were related; the possibility of using Harewood as a stage in the RAC Rally of Great Britain was mooted before the work took place, and the opportunity of a fund-raising spectator event in the winter season made the financing of the work viable. The rally stage started near the western gate, followed the track along the hedge into the western hilltop car park, hairpinned left onto the concrete track to join the return road behind the piggeries and followed the return road down to the start pad to join the hill and finish about 100 yards beyond the cattle-grid. Parts of this road later formed the downhill section of the extension of the course to its current length.

The rally course paid its way, in 1974, 75 and 76 it hosted large crowds of spectators on the "RAC", and as a bonus De Lacy MC's Mintex Rally also used the stage in 1975 and '76, and were due there in 1977 but heavy snow forced the cancellation of the stage. At that time the Centre had a small band of Rally Stage Commanders and senior officials who came out to play in winter when the race and speed event season was over, whose peak of achievement was running the Rally Start area at Harrogate when the Rally first moved away from its traditional London start, the occasion being commemorated in the famous Barry Hinchcliffe film "From Harrogate It Started". That also happened to be the first time that hand-held radios were used in the organisation of a Rally, courtesy of our tame radio expert Richard Hardcastle. We were also leaders in the use of radios in our hillclimbs and race meetings.

In 1981 Derek Clark became Chairman, and when Arnold Burton put the farm on the market he was

responsible for setting up Harewood Hill Ltd, greatly assisted by Stephen Smith, Jim Thompson, Richard Jackson and Michael Kempley who together with a group of members, assisted by BARC Headquarters, worked tirelessly to fund the purchase of the farm, with many contributions coming from marshals and competitors.

Following Derek's untimely death in 1982, his son Simon took over the reins and the development of the hill was pushed ahead by its new owners. A permanent toilet block was built, a club house was created in the barns and a major development was the installation of Armco barriers, with valued assistance from Ivor Pashley, and less significant alterations were made to satisfy the Motor Sports Association's safety inspector as required.

Towards the end of the eighties there was much discussion in committee about the possibility of making major alterations to the course. Jimmy Johnstone had taken over the Chair and a team comprising John Staveley, Bob Wright and Simon Clark designed a course extension. At one stage a plan to move the paddock down the hill was considered, but after consulting the competitors this was abandoned as the hilltop paddock, with its spectacular view of almost the whole of the course, was regarded as one of Harewood's major attractions. In the end a new start below the farm was created and a new track was formed using part of the rally course. After the flat start came Clarks, a sharp right-hander leading into a downhill section, where the fastest cars reached speeds in excess of 100 mph, followed by a testing right, left, right sequence to join the original course just above the old start pad. Houseman and Falshaw did the track construction work and the tyre walls were installed by voluntary labour.

The first meeting was held on the new course on 16 May 1992, when Paul Rendle's Chevron B49 set the course record; this was promptly broken the following day by Chris Seaman's Brabham BT30. One immediate effect was that regular competitors were arriving at Country much faster than before, which gave the marshals plenty of work to recover cars from the infield until the drivers got used to arriving over the brow with all wheels off the ground. The extension made the course the longest in England and, coupled with the new access road for getting the cars to the start, enhanced the popularity of the hill. Such has been the development of cars that the current record for the long course is just over half a second less than the 1963 record for the short course.

Anyone walking in the paddock today might wonder at the stout concrete pad behind the Paddock Marshals' hut, accompanied by a twelve-inch square oak post surmounted by a metal box and some serious cables. This was the home of the Bus, which for many years provided the transport for all the "tackle" needed to set up the hill for action in its cavernous luggage compartment, and the shelter for all the administrative staff when the meeting was running. The box on the post provided connections for all power, telephone and timing links and when the Bus was backed onto its pad and connected up the Secretary could sign on competitors, the Clerk of the Course and Chief Observer could talk to each post, and the Timekeeper could time the cars and issue the results to be typed on "skins" and

Gestetner processed. The Bus started life as an RAF Commer Crew Bus, retired to BOAC as a passenger and luggage bus, from that to BARC use, and finally in total retirement went to the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington. There it has been completely and beautifully restored to its RAF specification and is on display for all to admire. It was replaced at Harewood by a Portakabin – practical, but not quite as much soul – which was in time replaced by an ex-Ribble Transport double-decker 'bus and eventually by a showground hospitality unit towed up to the top of the paddock for every meeting.

BARC Yorkshire Centre continues to run all the hillclimb meetings at Harewood, including 2 rounds of the MSA British Hillclimb Championship and a Classic & Vintage meeting. The Centre, now chaired by Tim Wilson, continues to develop the venue, including a comprehensive timing and results system now housed within an impressive permanent control building, formally opened in 2011 by the man responsible for the birth of the North's premier hillclimb, Arnold Burton.

Article by Tony Hodgetts (first published in 2012)

Pages: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#)

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

CONTRIBUTORS

Writers

Peter Herbert

Tony Hodgetts

Photographers

Geoff Clark

S Jeffrey Binns

Mike Hayward

Motor Racing Photographers

Peter Herbert

BARC Yorkshire Centre Times Online

BARC Yorkshire Centre Online Magazine



[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Archive](#)

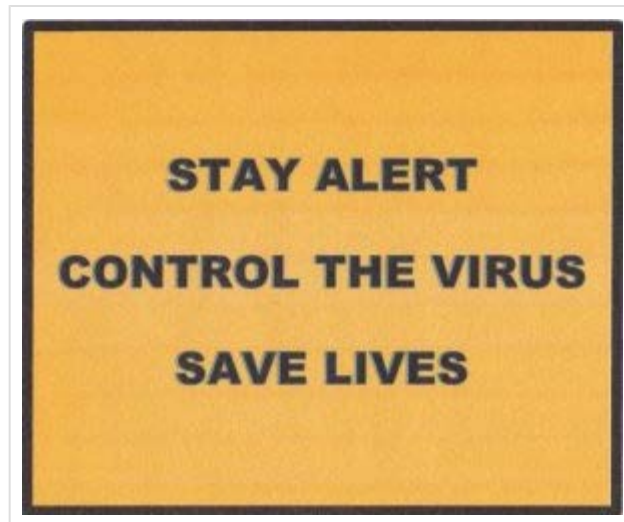
[Photo Galleries](#)

[2022 Event and Driving Academy Dates](#)

Issue 35 February 2022

Issue 26 June 2020

TAILPIECE



Pages: [1](#) [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#) [7](#) [8](#)

