

'A BETTER CHEESE KNIFE'

*Confessions of a Speed Hillclimb
Driving School Instructor*

by

PETER HERBERT

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A group of Harewood Speed Hillclimb Driving School Instructors

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Confessions of a Speed Hillclimb Driving Instructor.

Peter Herbert

At first it was a case of turning one's cap back to front, taking the wheel, and flooring it. Then donning a crash helmet became mandatory, before taking the wheel and flooring it. Eventually a chap was made to wear a race suit and crash helmet prior to taking the wheel, and then of course flooring it. But instruction has never been obligatory for the speed hillclimber.

Unlike circuit racing, with its ARDS courses and plethora of racing schools worldwide, the noble art of hillclimbing against the clock has always been seen as an essentially amateur sport, mostly for the amusement of its participants, with as much socialising as driving. Success resulted either from skill, a long apprenticeship, or both.

Prescott was the first course to recognise the benefits of driver instruction. The Bugatti Owners' Club realised that during a meeting time available to learn a track properly is severely limited, unlike at a racing circuit where there is lap after lap to perfect that inch perfect clipped apex. Furthermore, a speed hillclimb driving school is an ideal opportunity to introduce new competitors to the sport. Later, schools opened at Gurston Down then Harewood, and it is at the latter that I have the honour of instructing.

The Harewood School started in 1998, but it was not until 2001 that I agreed to join. Uneasy about advising others how to drive I am also a lousy passenger, an experience unique to the Yorkshire based course, of which more later. However, following a potent mix of persuasion and flattery I eventually agreed, so what follows is a typical day at school.

8.00am "Welcome to Harewood, the North's Premier Speed Hillclimb Venue" announces the entrance board as I swing the Mini off Harewood Avenue and in through the gates of Stockton Farm. The large field that acts as a competition day car park looks strangely empty as I pass alongside it and enter the paddock, which too is largely unoccupied apart from a couple of trailers and tow cars. With a cheery wave to Daphne, one of the BARC Yorkshire Centre's trusty marshals, busying herself with finish line preparations, I descend the track that runs down towards the start line. From here I can see senior marshal Bruce unloading plastic cones from a small trailer attached to the rear of his Vectra and carefully placing them on the approach, apex, and exit of each corner, only to be adjusted moments later under the critical eye of instructor Brian Kenyon.

Just short of the start line I turn right and park next to the Barn, nerve centre of not only the school but also hillclimb meetings. Most take this substantial stone building for granted as they race between it and the neighbouring farmhouse, but within lie a sizeable club room where school instruction is shortly to begin, a generous assembly area containing welcoming drinks and biscuits, whilst above is the office and a changing room for those who wish to slip into racing attire.



Pat Kenyon

School Administrator Pat Kenyon, wife of the aforementioned Brian, and a former Sprite driver of considerable ability, signs me on in the office, and we exchange gossip. Eagerly I check out the day's pupils and in particular those allocated to me, and with some relief I discover they are not all driving "Locaterfields". Being still comparatively agile despite the onset of middle age, and well versed in the perfection of

g raceful entries and exits to and from such machinery, quite a few of these cars come my way, particularly as some of my colleagues are a little too wide in the beam to fit into the cockpits.

Downstairs, over a cup of tea, I meet up with my fellow instructors, and we discuss recent successes and disasters on the track. We tend to concentrate on the disasters, as this is much more fun as we remind each other of our foibles. Meanwhile the sound of exhausts and squealing tyres drifts from the adjoining room where videos of past Harewood meetings are playing to whet the appetites of expectant pupils.

We instructors are an eclectic bunch. In the early days Five times British Hillclimb Champion David Grace was our Chief Instructor, a gentleman of considerable experience and wit. His student debriefs following the examination of video evidence were worth the course fee alone, for without in any way being hurtful Young Mr Grace could put his finger on exactly what a driver was doing wrong, or indeed right, in a critical yet highly amusing way. Sadly, business pressures now prevent him from being an instructor.



Simon Clark

In David's place we now have Simon Clark. This bon viveur and raconteur fits instructing in between the fishing and shooting seasons with a delightful ease which only true toffs can perfect. But he is no mug behind the wheel, as anyone who has travelled up Harewood in the passenger seat of his 911 will attest, and has hillclimbed everything from Formula Ford to Formula 5000, and circuit raced a Ferrari 328GTB.



Chris Seaman



Brian Kenyon

Of the other instructors, the most senior in terms of period of involvement in the sport are Chris Seaman and Brian Kenyon. Chris, a photographer by profession, was a mean helmsman of first a Midget, in which he won the Castrol/BARC Championship, and later a Brabham BT30 that was a regular Harewood FTD contender, at least when not being launched into orbit off the gravel banks that used to grace the outside of Quarry Corner. The ebullient Mr Kenyon is a difficult man to ignore but it's well worth the effort, say some. But that is unfair as Brian is possibly the most competitive person I have ever met, with a deep concern that every driver should find within him or herself their full potential. In a Sprite shared with wife Pat he was a class

pace setter, narrowly missing victory in both Castrol/BARC and Harewood Championships. Now he circuit races a Sprite, and already has an outright win to his credit.

The dapper and precise Roger Kilty has almost won more titles than the rest of us put together. These including the Harewood Hillclimb Championship, British Sprint and Supersprint Championships, and the F3000 section of the Euroboss single seater circuit series. Roger is my personal link to proper motor racing, and I never tire of listening to his modest description of committing a Reynard 93D to Spa's 175mph Blanchimont corner with nothing more than blind faith in downforce for comfort.



Roger Kilty



James Blackmore

National 1600cc single seater driver James Blackmore is a devotee of local constructor OMS and twice Harewood FTD Champion. James is a commercial airline pilot and instructor. "If you think sitting beside some loony in a Caterham is scary" he once observed, "imagine what it would be like in an Airbus at 30,000 feet". Fair point.



Richard Hargreaves



Dave Banner



John Green

OMS 1100cc single seater driver Dave Banner and saloon ace turned circuit racer Richard Hargreaves are both former Harewood Champions.



Richard Spedding

Retired fire chief John Green has immense experience of hillclimbing classic British sports cars, while young Richard Spedding, son of E Type driver Haydn, is a talented former kart racer who can get his old man's forty year old Jag to the top of Harewood quicker than most modern turbo charged Evo Mega Nutter stuff



Peter Herbert

Then finally there's me. On paper my credentials can be made to sound quite impressive. A former rally and circuit racing driver, international hillclimber, and past Harewood Champion, whose main claim to fame is to have finished equal first with Messers Groves, New, and Wight Junior on maximum points in the Leaders series, only to be placed third when the number of wins was taken into account due to my missing a couple of

events. However, in reality, I am not out of the same top drawer as these fellows, although I have tried to better myself by taking instruction at the Prescott, Croft, Donington, and Oulton Park schools, and personal tuition on both road and track from former "Fifth Gear" driving guru Paul Ripley and ex European Touring Car Champion Sir John Whitmore. So what I bring to the party is a little experience, the benefits of driver coaching, an abiding love of motor sport, and a weird sense of humour.



Don Burt

The team is completed by YKC Raider driver Don Burt who acts as video commentator and corner observer; Ian Maddison of "MAD Videos" who films the action; and Simon Clark's sister Nicola who provides lunchtime catering; while we are ably supported by a dedicated and highly experienced band of marshals lead by Bruce Woodhead. What other hillclimb school can field such Grand Prix driver names from the past as Clark, Herbert, and Seaman!



School Assembly: Head Master Mr Clark instructs pupils upon how much they are about to enjoy themselves

9.00am Gathered together in the clubroom, pupils are greeted by Mr Clark who asks for a show of hands to determine how many have hillclimbed previously, and of those how many have driven Harewood. Roughly half turn out to be complete newcomers to the sport. Basic terms such as understeer and oversteer, heel and toe downchanges, turn-in, apex, and exit points to corners are explained, and then by means of a series of board mounted diagrams the approach, execution, and exit to each corner is explained. Any subsequent questions are quickly dealt with, the assembled instructors are introduced, then each takes his group for a walk up the course.

Beneath an overcast sky I lead my quartet down to the startline then on up the track, pausing to explain the best lines and share amusing, well at least to me, anecdotes. Driving a car quickly along a narrow road against the clock is a serious business, but hillclimbing is still fun. If a competitor is not enjoying it the chances are the fun will be missing, and if the fun is missing why bother? Of course the fun is potentially heightened if some success is forthcoming, and that is what we teach. Stick to the lines, get the times, and success will follow.

My four guys are typical. The first is a young hot shoe with a Caterham Academy Seven looking for a jump on his rivals when the championship visits Stockton Farm later in the year. The series rules dictate that he must not have held a competition license previously, but he knows he is quick down the Kings Road in a Boxster so what's the problem? The next is a chap of more mature years with a Morgan Plus 8. He has always fancied a go at hillclimbing but just never got round to it. Then his wife, looking on apprehensively from the paddock, bought him a school place for his birthday. Our third contestant is a guy with a Mitsubishi Evo V. He has already done a couple of events and needs to know why he is being beaten by six seconds. Finally we have the know-all. He has been there, done it, got the trophies, but fancies a day out in his home built Westfield Vauxhall.



Dave Banner explaining the line out of Willow

On the start line I discuss departure techniques, then explain the approach to the incredibly long and falling away Clarks corner that follows. During our descent towards

the Esses I remark upon the three figure speeds reached by the big Goulds and Pilbeams, and how the complex that follows must be planned in such a way as to maximise speed out of Chippy's. On the uphill approach to Country we all squat on our haunches to gain a driver's eye view of this blind corner, and I tell of the time I turned in too quickly and too early, exited on the grass, and spun into the hedge which promptly caught alight from my hot exhaust, to the alarm of the marshals.

On the approach to Willow, the long and never ending right-hander, I share with my group the undesirable consequences of dropping a loaded left rear wheel onto the grass verge on turn-in. A harmless spin at best, or an expensive trip backwards into the rather solid cheap seats.

Through Orchard I explain how to maintain speed despite having to change direction, change gear, and brake at the same time. At Farmhouse the full use of the track width is demonstrated, and the importance of carrying speed through the bend is illustrated by reference to Martin Grove's epic 49.84s course record run in July 2005 when the Gould's passage round this long hairpin was simply awesome, building up to 132mph along the following straight. Finally Quarry, one of the most testing and important corners in British hillclimbing, is analysed. There is much time to be gained here.



"And that's where I went off in 1967": Mr Kenyon explains the approach to Orchard.

Readers will have realised by now that no secrets have been revealed. For these you must attend the school. If I shared them with anyone I would have to kill them, and there are too many of you for that!

At the finish line we take stock. Queries are answered, we descend once again to the barn and pick up our cars.



Typical student cars, although an old van might do.

10.00am Back in the paddock its time for a ride with our charges and, now helmeted, I struggle into the Caterham between its full cage, plastic seat, on-board camera, and plumbed-in fire extinguisher bottle. Then, with the help of David who manages the paddock, I secure the six point harness. I stress to Hot Shoe that this is to be treated as a sighting run, just a recce, and that more will be learnt at this stage by going steadily than will be learnt at high speed. He nods in agreement, then ignores everything.

We leave the line as if a class record is a stake, and I brace myself for an interesting ride. Over the years I have learned to combat my fear by adopting a competition mindset. So rather than dwelling on what we might hit, I imagine we are on a stage of a tarmac rally and that we are leading. But close behind are our pursuers, therefore it is paramount that we maintain our pace. Hot Shoe arrives at corners too quickly and turns in too early in his concern to get round, thus compromising the exit. Over the blind brow into Country late braking catches him out as the lightly loaded front wheels lock. But he comes off the brakes, regains steering, and makes the turn. Through Willow, Orchard and Farmhouse the boy is quite good, but then he spoils things by getting a rear wheel

on the grass through the final part of Quarry where the tail steps out. Yet, again he catches it, and crosses the finish line it one piece.

Back in the Paddock I suggest he calms down a little, concentrates on his lines, then builds up speed. But I have to compliment him on his reflexes, car control, and commitment, and secretly reckon we may have a star here.

Next I ride in the Morgan, an altogether more steady and relaxing experience. The owner drives neatly and on line, although backs off for Quarry miles too soon. My only problem is holding on, with just shapeless slippery leather seats, lap and diagonal belts, and a low cut door between me and rural Yorkshire.

The Mitsubishi is far more reassuring, with full cage, racing seat, and four point harness. The driver is less so. Those with a level of familiarity with Harewood, and regular competitors in particular, are often the most worrying to ride with as they think they know what they are doing, and frequently forget there is someone beside them who is going to impact on handling and braking distances. Rocketing down the hill towards the Esses I am convinced we will never be able to slow down in time to negotiate the approaching right-hander, but big six pot Brembos never fail to impress and the car slows as if a giant hand has grasped its roof from above. We survive Chippy's but, like Hot Shoe, Evo Man misjudges the blind Country. Will he ever come off the throttle, I wonder, then thankfully there is a lift and a chatter of wastegate. But before I can breath a sigh of relief he actually changes up and continues to accelerate. I shout, but its too late, and we sail straight on into the open field beyond the corner.

Fortunately Harewood is one of the safest hills in the country with lots of run-off areas. Naturally you would not want to hit the barn, but that is unlikely to happen unless something breaks on the car. Back in the Paddock I suggest to my pupil that he listens a little more carefully to the advice he is being given. He is overdriving the car and missing the lines.

Now its Know All's turn, and he reluctantly breaks off from a call on his mobile to take me up the hill. I am treated to a competent drive, despite a couple of missed gear changes and apexes, but I detect no signs of greatness. I suggest he turns in later so as to exit straighter and quicker. He looks at me doubtfully.

Out of an overall score of 100 the instructors contribute 30, and this is given following a second accompanied run mid afternoon. The other points come from corner observation. To gauge student progress I note an initial morning score on my pad. I give Hot Shoe 24 for trying, Morgan Man 24 for listening, Evo Man 20 for not listening, and Know All 22 for being irritating.



Instructors observing their charges from the safety of the paddock.

11.00am. Relaxing with fellow instructors at the edge of the paddock, from where we can observe our charges driving solo over most of the course, I grab a cold drink and we exchange horror stories. One of Simon's drivers has him worried. Entry speed into Quarry evoked thoughts of impending death, while the Westfield's subsequent spin flicked up a marker cone, which came to rest between Mr Clark's helmet and the roll cage. "That was fun", observed the jubilant pupil as he slid to a halt. "Just which bit was fun?" enquired his instructor. Then, noticing Simon was wearing a red plastic cone, his driver asked innocently "Where did that come from?". "Well I didn't f.....g put it there" retorted our unimpressed Chief Instructor. One of Simon's more colourful excursions took place at a Ferrari Owners Club day when a 355 expensively left the track at Willow and went through the hedge.

Of course instructors are not completely immune to the odd trip into the cheap seats. At one of my early schools I helpfully offered to show a young chap the best way to tackle Quarry, the corner most have trouble with. At the time I owned a BMW M3 E30, which coincidentally was later sold to Gurston Chief Instructor Simon Durling, and it was my first time in a left hooker at the hill. We never got as far as Quarry. I misjudged my entry to Farmhouse, dropped a right rear wheel onto the damp grass, and we spun like a top, much to the amusement of my spectating colleagues.

Even more amusingly, two instructors went off in the same car when the intrepid Mr Kenyon insisted on taking Chris Seaman for a ride in his MX5. While negotiating

Farmhouse at a speed Mazda had never suspected its customers demanded, Brian slid onto the grass on the exit and came to a stop half way up a grass bank with the car at a most jaunty angle to the vertical.

12.00am. The variety of drivers and cars that come on the course is a constant joy. We have had everyone from garage mechanics to university lecturers, and everything from an Astra Max diesel van to a Murcielago. Today we have a number of gentlemen, four of whom are sharing cars, and three ladies. We also have half a dozen Caterhams, Westfields, and a Sylva; half a dozen hot hatches and several cooler ones; an Elise, the Morgan, an Elan, an Imprezza, the Evo, a Skyline, a 911, a Boxster, a 308 GTB, an original Cooper S, a Griffith, and an M3.

As for celebrities, we have had quite a few well known hillclimbers, and the odd race and rally star. Jethro Bovington, David Yu, and Simon George from "Evo" magazine have been to the school, while the late Richard Whitely, who lived locally, was going to come for instruction prior to a guest appearance on "Top Gear" as the "Star in a Reasonably Priced Car" but sadly it never happened. We have also had a guy who signed up for a whole year's worth of schools as he had enjoyed an earlier one so much.

At **12.30** we return to the barn for lunch. David Grace used to say that at Prescott it was known as "luncheon", but up north we have "us dinners". Instructors, marshals and pupils, together with the odd spectating family member, chat together about the morning's happenings. We tuck into cold meat and salad with warm potatoes, followed by cheese and biscuits, and almost without exception everyone seems to be enjoying themselves, although with Know All you just can't tell. But rain is threatening, and the marker cones are to be removed for the afternoon session. Despite fears to the contrary, this can actually make the driving process easier as a more natural flow replaces "join the dots".

1.15pm Assembled in the club room we together watch on video the lines taken through corners that form the first half of the course. They come as a shock to many. Some are good, very good, but others are way off, the most common faults being turning into corners too early and not using the full width of the road. Spontaneous cheers accompany the odd spin or grassy incident, as everybody enters into the spirit of the day. Simon's amusing but constructive commentary holds everyone's attention, we discuss the finer points of what we have just seen, then everyone is itching to get back on the track.

I give Brian a lift back up the course to the paddock, and am roundly criticised for not letting the car run out enough on the exit to Farmhouse. On Planet Kenyon every run is for real.

2.00pm Instructors watch students up their pace as they come to terms with corners not marked by cones. Some come to us and discuss particular problems. Others request we drive them up the hill either in our own cars or in theirs.

Driving other peoples' treasured bolides is always something of a dilemma. On the one hand much is expected of an instructor in this situation and none of us wants to

disappoint, also the opportunity to drive something tasty is usually too good to refuse. But to jump into a strange car and drive it briskly but safely up a narrow hillclimb, whilst sat next to the owner, is not easy or to be approached lightly. However, those were the exact circumstances that led to my first, and only, drive of a Ferrari, several TVRs and Lotus, an historic rally TR4, and a wonderful old Healey 100/6. Older cars in particular must be handled carefully as braking and steering are of a different age.

One of the TVRs was a rather fine Grantura, and the enthusiastic owner was most insistent I took the wheel. What he had not told me was, in order to allow him to rest his left foot clear of the pedals during long continental trips, they had all been moved to the right. So when I went for the brake I found in its place the clutch, which failed to slow us in the manner I had expected. Fortunately I always make a point of trying out these things on the way to the start line rather than after leaving it!

When I instructed in the Murcielago I agonised over whether, if it were offered, I would accept a drive, given that its owner had just paid £180,000 for the orange brute. But I wasn't asked, so problem solved. Sadly in the days of litigation culture the insurance market has deemed it unacceptable for us to drive our pupils' treasured vehicles.

I have also ridden in some interesting and unusual cars, including a full race 2CV, the ex Rauno Aaltonen 1965 RAC Rally winning Cooper S, a Citroen SM Maserati, and a small block Chevy engined Ultima.



"Now not too fast please": Mr Hargreaves about to take a ride

Some of the most interesting cars show up at corporate days. Of course there is the usual array of high roller BMWs, Jags, and Mercs, but the odd "fun" car arrives too, and we have had some trick Porsches, Ferraris, and Lamborghinis, a Jaguar D Type, and the odd Cobra. At such days it is important to recognise that pupils are there on freebies as the guests of the promoters, and are not necessarily black belt petrol heads. The previous week they could have been shooting at someone else's expense, and the following week they might be golfing. So the aim is to give them a good day out, and if they learn something about driving better still.

Of course there are some, if they can be kept off their mobiles for long enough, who are quite good, and I remember enjoying a very spirited ride up the hill in a Golf VR6 with a guy who, it later transpired, had driven a BMW in the Nurburgring 24 Hour race.

3 00pm. It happens. Morgan Man asks if I will drive him up the course. We take the Mini. My Cooper is pretty standard save for the Chilli Pack which includes sixteen inch wheels, whilst I took the Sports Plus suspension option. This brings the chassis up to standard Cooper S spec, and to my mind it is the optimum set-up for handling and ride, just in case you are remotely interested.

I drive at about seven tenths, demonstrating how a quarter to three hands position on the wheel allows maximum control, even when arms are crossed for the tighter turns. I show how a heel and toe down change, something of a dying art with the arrival of sequential boxes, can match engine and road speed and thus avoid locked driving wheels. Whilst I can't resist entering Quarry with barely a lift to show just how quick the corner entry can be. This is a favourite of mine when I chauffeur smooth property developers at corporate days. I suppose I must be their worst nightmare, a town planner who is also ideally placed to scare the shit out of them. But seriously folks, is that not why we are here.

Suitably impressed, Morgan Man returns to his pride and joy as it is assessment time and the really scary part of the day, for now we must get back in with these lunatics to see what they have learned.

We go in reverse order to that of the morning, and first I ride with Know All. He is smooth and safe, and under normal circumstances I would have judged him most approvingly, but there is no hint of that special spark one would expect of someone claiming to have achieved so much. I give him a 25 and remark upon how smoother he now is. He seems unconvinced but thanks me anyway.

Next I get in beside Evo Man, and stress before we start that he is not being timed. I am looking for good lines, smoothness, and maintained momentum, and staying on the road is a really good idea. He begins well, then goes to pieces, missing gears and clipping points in equal measure. However, we stay on the track, and that alone is an improvement, but his is only a 23 point drive. Later, in the barn, he confesses to how nervous competing makes him. He wants so badly to be successful in a sport that means everything, but is psyched out by the mere presence on an entry list of those he is convinced will beat him. I confide how nervous I used to get, and how nerves can paralyse a driver. I also tell him to forget about whom he is up against, it is largely

irrelevant, and to just drive against the clock. Stick to the lines, get the times, and the results follow, even championships.

Morgan Man is next and, while still steady, is markedly quicker than before and bang on the lines. As we approached Quarry I can sense him steeling himself to carry speed into the corner, and my God he does it, comparatively at least. The improvement compared to his morning run is sensational, and earns him a 26.

Finally it's the turn of Hot Shoe. The ride I have dreaded. Driving a Caterham is one thing, all wrist actions, delicate controls, and seat of the pants feedback. Riding in one is different, all feet braced against the bulkhead, elbows tucked in away from the Armco, and the sensation of always being on a knife edge.

As we ease gently down to the start line and take our place in the queue I engage my charge in conversation. Turns out he has been a successful skier and squash player, which goes some way towards explaining his aggression and sense of balance behind the wheel, and he makes a more than adequate living as a bond trader in The City.

When our turn comes our jovial start line marshal Big Phil flashes me a sadistic grin as I tighten my belts, and although not a Catholic I respond by crossing myself in acknowledgement of what may be to come. We leave the line like a rocket, and there is hardly a dab on the brakes before my driver is back on the gas for a deep dive into Clarks. Down the straight that follows we are flying, yet everything is under control as we negotiate the Esses and Chippy's bang on line. Conversation is out of the question through our full face helmets and above the bark of the side exhaust, but I extend an arm and a raised thumb.

The rest of the climb is equally impressive, and we exit Quarry and cross the line in a nicely controlled tail slide. This is a 29 point run. In the paddock I tell him if he drives like that he will have a class win on his hands in a month's time, and he thanks me for all my help, which is always nice. Then, as I tumble out of the Caterham, the long threatened rain arrives. The instructors shelter in the hut at the edge of the hill, while some of the pupils call it a day. Others keep going, unaccompanied, and I am pleased to see that all my guys do so. After all, sooner or later they will have to drive in the rain, possibly at competitive speeds, so now is a low pressure opportunity to practice that skill.

4.00pm Teatime, and with the rain continuing to fall we return to the barn. I change out of my damp race suit and join the others for tea and biscuits. Sometimes, if we have been especially good, Jean Green, John's wife, brings homemade cakes. Everyone is in good spirits, and some of our guests would have liked to have kept driving for even longer. There have been no shunts, no one has broken anything, and no one has been expelled for bad behaviour. The instructors have enjoyed the day too.

Now a video showing performances on the upper half of the course is run, and there are marked improvements all round. Simon comments perceptively but with customary dry wit on what he sees, then it's time for Pat to hand out course completion certificates and marks, with the best pupil winning a free event entry. This goes to a young guy who has laboured under Mr Seaman's tutorage, and drives an absolutely standard VW Polo, which just goes to show that today the driving is more important than the car.

5.00pm With long journeys home ahead for many, school breaks up. All my guys, even Know All, come over to shake hands before they leave, as do most of the pupils with their instructors. Bonds have been formed and enthusiasms nurtured.

Hot Shoe, as predicted, wins a seventeen strong Caterham class on his return to Harewood several weeks later. Evo Man finds three seconds and is rewarded by a pot. Morgan Man comes to watch and is seriously considering having a go, while Know All has disappeared without trace. He is probably practicing for Indianapolis.

Before we tidy up, the instruction team sits down for a debrief. Some things can always be done better, and we discuss the day, but it has generally gone well. Everyone has had at least eight runs, the weather could have been worse, and some new hillclimb recruits have been secured. We may even have found the odd star.

Then Pat opens the completed customer satisfaction questionnaires and feedback is encouraging. "Excellent Day", says one, "Could not have been more enjoyable", writes another, "Thanks for holding the rain off for so long", remarks a third. But then, out of the blue, when nobody is expecting it, arrives a slice of wounding criticism. For, in answer to the question "How can the school be improved?" comes the chilling answer: "Get a better cheese knife!"



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