

A CHAMPION'S DRIVE

Peter Herbert

There is a sense of serenity to Scott Moran's driving this year, an inevitable result, one suspects, of winning a third British Hillclimb Championship. He doesn't look particularly quick, yet you know he is, doesn't make mistakes, and is inch perfect. In short, a champion at the top of his game.

Sunday May 13 was the scene of rounds 5 and 6 of the 2012 Avon Tyres British Hillclimb, and round 3 of the TTC Group Hillclimb Leaders series, held over the 1448 metre Harewood course, and in both run-offs Moran junior at the wheel of the Moran Motor Homes Gould GR61X set the pace.

In the first it was the hard charging Wallace Menzies who was fastest qualifier with the DJ Firestorm. From the safety of the spectator enclosures, there always appears to be lots going on inside Wallace's cockpit when he is on a charge, and in a staccato blast of traction controlled Cosworth thunder, the red Tillicoultry Quarries car rocketed off the startline and down Clark's Straight on a mission. However the Scot's exuberance caught him out at Quarry when he crossed the forbidden track boundary line, and a failed run was the result.

Another Scot then took up the challenge. Lee Adams in the diminutive GWR Raptor Extreme, despite giving away almost 2 litres to the Moran NME V8, stopped the clock just 0.68s later than the orange Gould with only 1.6 litres of Suzuki power to play with.

The ever present Trevor Willis in his OMS V8 was but 0.12s behind in third place after a super smooth run, followed by Moran senior, Adam's co driver Jonathan Goodyear, and Tom New in the Gould Judd, who pipped local hero Richard Spedding (Force Suzuki) by a mere 0.23s.

In the second run-off Scott was required to dig a little deeper, with an on form Willis giving the OMS 25 some big licks. However, a 49.38s ascent, just 0.25s shy of Martin Groves' course record, was enough to better Trev by 0.13s. Close stuff.

Roger Moran backed up his son magnificently to take third, thus denying those pesky Raptor boys too many points. And this time it was Goodyear who was the quicker of the two, 0.05s ahead of Adams. The steady New was sixth, once again narrowly ahead of Spedding.

Blue morning skies greeted the Championship circus following their previous evening cross Pennine trek from Barbon.

Practice began promptly, and all was going well until Peter Herbert decided to mark Harewood's sixtieth year as a hillclimb venue by anointing the track in very expensive fully synthetic engine oil when a con rod punched a hole through the BDH block deep within his once faithful Westfield.

Mess cleared up, and practice completed, competition got underway with Road Going series Production Cars up to 2 litre, and the big news was the return of Heinz Ofner, he of the very alternative Jaguar XJS of a couple of seasons ago. Now his weapon of choice is a MG TF Ferrari tribute car, which was brought home third in class. However, at the pointy end, it was the Lotus Elise of Sarah Boswell that scooped the silverware, 5 seconds clear of former hill champion Karl Jackson's latest acquisition, a Honda S2000.

Andy Birkett ran alone in the unlimited class in his bored out Mexico.

Tim Pennington's Westfield the lone Roadgoing Specialist Production Cars runner; as was Robin Johnson in the 1400cc Modified Series Production Cars class, the enterprisingly conducted yellow "frog eye" Sprite doing well to climb in under 70 seconds.

The 2 litre division was closely fought between Scotsman David Paterson (Peugeot 106) and Leaders regular and Gurston Champion Paul Webster (Mazda MX5), and it was the smaller engined Pug that held sway, a fine driver for someone on their hill debut in an excellent time of 64.52s.

Cornishman Geoff Twemlow was in a class of his own, literally, in his Modified Series Production Saloon Subaru Impreza.

Of the Modified Specialist Production Cars runners, the 2 litre division was reduced to zero, first with the demise of the Herbert Westfield, and then wheel hub problems forcing the withdrawal of Stuart Dow's Caterham Honda.

However, the unlimited class was alive and well, with another Scots rout when the shared Dax Rush Rover V6 of Les Mutch and Mike Jolly dominated proceedings, with the "Munchkin" claiming Tim Coventry's 15 year old record.

In the first of the Sports Libre classes, it was Leaders Championship sponsor Graham Wynn who took the honours in his Force LM001 from initial pace setter Mark Dempster's Imagination PH1, 0.89s being the winning margin. Hardy annual Les Proctor was a plucky third in the immaculate OMS SC4CF.

Mike Manning was made to work hard in the turbocharged Ford Puma for the unlimited class win, pushed all the way by former TT rider Allan McDonald aboard his latest creation, a Mini with Mitsubishi Evo running gear. The Pikes Peak replica short wheel base Audi Quattro of Cumbrian garagiste Keith Edwards

ran third, some distance clear of the 5.7 litre Ford GT40 replica of Jonathan Gough.

The opening single seater class, for 1100cc machinery, was the province of Simon Fidoe, the former Leaders title holder driving his Empire Suzuki to a 0.59s victory over former Midland Speed Champion Gary Thomas' Force PT. Scott Sheridan, quickly coming to terms with the ex Tim Elmer Reynard shared with wife Lesley, was a good third a further couple of seconds adrift.

The highly competitive, and frequently giant killing, 1600 cc class was dominated by the Raptor of Lee Adams. However, co driver Jos Goodyear kept the Peterhead ace honest, the pair split by just 0.12s. Trying desperately hard to keep the dart-like GWR in sight, Richard Spedding wrung the last drop out of his JC Racing prepared Force, but half a second was as close as he got.

The ex Will Hall Force, now shared by Dave Uren and Nicola Menzies, was fourth in the former's hands, with OMS pilotes Steve Owen and Lee Griffiths completing the top six.

Alex Summers was untouchable in the two litre division, the ultra rapid blown DJ Firehawk more than two seconds faster than the latest offering from the Gould stable, the Moyse family's GR59 in the hands of Simon. Scarborough based hill regular George Bleasdale was a fine third ahead of another veteran, Laurie Ritchie, in the pensionable Argo.

FTD setter Scott Moran headed the big banger class, shadowed by Willis, Menzies, Moran senior, New and the Pilbeam of Oliver Tomlin. A welcome returnee following his April Harewood shunt was Alastair Crawford with ex Basil Pitt Gould, but he just missed the cut for both run-offs.

As ever, Andrew Henson was quickest formula Ford runner in the Van Diemen shared with Nicola Dearden, although Ben Tranter made a fight of it, pushing his Swift to within a second of the Rochdale driver

A twenty strong Ferraristi class saw Richard Prior (no not that one) leading throughout in his 355 GTB, although only tenths ahead of Keith Anderson's 360 Modena. A scant 0.14 seconds astern was the Chris Butler 355 GTB, followed at a respectful distance by Ferrari Championship stalwart Richard Allen with another 355, the Chris Hitchman 355 GTS, and yet another 355 in the hands of Philip Whitehead.

Finally it was the Lotus Elise of Chris Brookes that set the Yorkshire Centre Members class pace. But preventing a Lotus one – two was the sensationally well driven "Frog Eye" Sprite of Adrian Ball, holding off the Graham Laslett Elise by just 0.44 s.

Special mention should also be given to young Joe Jackson, son of Karl, who in his debut season steered the Team Geen Peugeot 205 into seventh place following a sensible drive. His time will come.

And so an intriguing Harewood MSA Championship meeting drew to a close. The track has never looked better thanks to the hard work of those who toil to make Stockton Farm a better place; and that the event rang like clockwork is due entirely to the hard working marshals and officials of the Yorkshire Centre.

On this evidence it's going to be a vintage sixtieth season.