

HAREWOOD SPEED HILLCLIMB DRIVERS SCHOOL

SPRING TERM 2012

Peter Herbert

Eh up white rose sensation seekers, welcome to the first school of the Harewood academic year, and a reet good time we all 'ad in unexpectedly good weather.

Sorry to come over all Yorkshire just then, but it is the fiftieth anniversary of Stockton Farm's debut as a hillclimb venue, so it seems fitting that we remember where we come from.

The forecast for Thursday 5 April did not sound promising, and the wintry conditions during the days that preceded it had the school's normally plucky instructors seriously considering throwing "sickies" rather than braving the passenger seat of some psychopath in an open Caterham through icy rain.

But clear skies greeted twenty seven pupils, six instructors, head master Don Burt, secretariat Jackie Wilson and Lesley Geen, paddock boss Chris Seaman and last but by no means least our dedicated band of marshals. Whilst as usual Ian Madison was on the video and Nicola Austin on the cooker.

To provide more track time Chief Instructor Simon Clark kept classroom formalities to a minimum, and following his cheery words "you're here to learn not to kill" course walking began, to be followed by a "sighting run" accompanied by instructors. Then the assembled throng was let loose on the hill, and the fun began.

Amongst the usual hot hatch and Locaterfield suspects were David Hargrave's awesome Ferrari 430 F1 and Ronald Powell's superb Aston Martin DB3. But a regrettable non starter was Stephen Dobie of EVO magazine as a result of those beastly Mini people pulling insurance cover at the eleventh hour for his loaned Cooper S JCW Coupe. Another time perhaps?

Setting the early pace was school fixture and former hill champion Karl Jackson in his latest weapon, a very tidy Honda Integra Type R, which is to be shared this season with another former hill title holder and instructor Mike Geen. Unfortunately, the quicker Karl went the more wayward the front end became, the result perhaps of an over tight limited slip diff, and it all turned ugly when the Honda made contact with the Armco on exiting Quarry.

Meanwhile the Askham Bryan agricultural college Astra project rally car was causing some concern as transmission oil was finding its way onto the track. So the three (!) staff members sharing the Vauxhall switched to Dave Tuchy's oversteering BMW 528 Touring. Meanwhile, the fourth member of "Equipe Agricole", Steve Shersby, drove serenely on in his Toyota powered Banks Europa.

After a fine lunch, and video evidence of just how far from troubling apices some participants actually were, afternoon proceedings were relatively incident free until an ever quickening Mark Richardson did a wall of death act around the bank on the exit to Farmhouse, and Hill regular Sarah Bosworth's Elise showed serious interest in catching fire in the paddock.

Over tea and biscuits more video footage was reviewed. Give yourself a treat and sign up for the next school, for whether you are an old hand or a complete new comer you won't regret it.