

YORKSHIRE CENTRE



TIMES

ISSUE NO 41



BARC

JUNE 1992

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Member

Since I last wrote to you, Harewood's extension has been completed and approved by Derek Ongaro from RAC MSA and I have to say it looks absolutely fabulous. Houseman and Falshaw have given us an excellent road and have been kind enough to donate a trophy in their name for FTD on the Sunday May meeting.

The May meeting as you know, sees our Ferrari class and John Swift, Ferrari Owners Club Competitions Director tells me we have attracted the largest Ferrari class ever to a hillclimb, this speaks volumes for the improvements being made in facilities and organisation at Harewood.

The June meeting is the grand opening of the Hill and every effort is being made to make it a good one, may I appeal to you all to help if you can with promotions, publicity, site tidying and organisation on the day. Please let us make it the start of a great new era at Harewood and really show ourselves off to the sponsors, spectators, marshals and competitors alike and make it a great day for all. If you can help call me on 0937-584554.

In conclusion let me thank all those members and non-members who have helped me so greatly to get the new course off the ground and I hope everyone enjoys it as much as we think they will.

Kind regards

Simon N Clark

*Articles for the next edition
of the Times by 1st June 1992
please to the Editor:-*

*Mrs Pat Kenyon
4 Leslie Road
Hillsborough
Sheffield
S6 4RB
Tel & Fax 0742 340478*

BARC YORKSHIRE CENTRE OFFICERS & COMMITTEE 1992

CHAIRMAN HON. SEC

Simon N Clark
John M English
32 Farfield Road
Knaresborough
HG5 8HB

VICE CHAIRMAN HON TREASURER HON COMPETITION SEC

J Richard Hardcastle
Peter Varley

HON SOCIAL SEC COMMITTEE

Tim C Bendelow
David Naylor
Antony J Hodgetts
Ivor Pashley

Chris G Seaman
0742 585695
Tim D F Thomson

Jim Johnstone
David Dalrymple
John Staveley

TIM THOMSON

I'm sure some of you will know that our former Chairman Tim Thomson has recently spent a very painful period in hospital with the sudden onset of Arthritis caused by a virus. His wrist, knee and ankle joints on both sides and his left hip joint became very swollen and extremely painful quite suddenly and Tim was on high doses of painkillers to alleviate the pain.

He is currently at home and is out of danger from the original infection but he has difficulty in walking and his hands are still very painful. He has been told that it will be many months before he is back to normal and so he has to be very patient during that time.

If the weather is warm for Harewood Tim hopes to come along and look at the new course in use for the first time.

Tim, we all wish you a speedy recovery and hope to see you racing again as soon as possible.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Richmond

Dear Pat

I used to have a recurring dream that I would arrive at a hillclimb and my timing strut wouldn't fit, whatever I tried, the rotten thing fell off and meanwhile the event would start without me.

On Easter Saturday my nightmare came true at Harewood. For seven hours including dashing home up the A1 through dawdling Bank Holiday traffic to borrow an ignition pack, I struggled to start my Westfield. Now a dead engine is as useful as a turd in your coffee, and my depression was considerable as I sat in the rain whilst being towed around the car park as my fellow competitors had fun on the hill.

Fortunately the fault was traced that evening by my friend and mentor Russ Cockburn, a broken wire within the ignition sensor cable the culprit, and all was sweetness and light on Sunday when I was fortunate enough to win my class.

Through the 'Times' I would like to thank my fellow drivers and club officials for the help and encouragement that was so freely given to me. In particular I wish to thank Paul Greaves for the tow and jump leads, Peter Read for the supply of connectors and David Hutchinson, Steve Malinon and Tony Mekwinski for their mechanical ministrations. I am also very grateful to Ivor Pashley and John Staveley for the heavy use of the bus phone and to their agreement to late practice had I been able.

Finally I was also most flattered by the offer of a drive in Jeremy Edwards' Peugeot on Easter Sunday, such kindness makes hillclimbing the wonderful sport that it is.

Kindest regards

Peter Herbert

Garforth

Dear Editor

I refer to the last BARC 'Times' and to David Dalrymple's plea for extra marshals following the track extension.

In view of the new lay-out and the possibility of near continuous running of competitors now that they will not need to use the track to get from the paddock to the start line, I feel that we need to pay attention to the needs (and comfort!) of the marshals who will now be on post for much longer periods. I feel that we are now approaching a time when we could (or should) introduce a shift system. From my own point of view the Start Area is already very busy with only a couple of minutes break between the last car up the hill and the next batch arriving and needing assistance in parking.

I know of a number of marshals who have de-

parted due to the short lunch and comfort breaks and I feel the Committee needs to allow marshals a reasonable break at lunchtime as no post has toilet facilities near at hand and a half hour break at lunchtime is far too short to ensure we keep, never mind increase, the number of marshals.

Yours faithfully

C B Woodhead

Chief Start Area Marshal

FOR SALE

Four wheel trailer
approx. 12'6" x 6'0"

Hydraulic brakes, lights, jockey wheel, spare
Strong, good condition, tows well.

£595 ono

Tel: Peter Herbert

0325 374656 (Home)

091 386 6111 Ext. 330 (Office)

FOR SALE

Centaur Clubman 1700cc

Two sets of spare wheels etc
diff, half-shaft

£1800

or may split engine and chassis

For further details ring

0642-723511

SID HANSON

On Easter Saturday there was a presentation to Sid Hanson, who retired from the post of Chief Scrutineer for the Centre after many years.

All the Harewood organisers and the Centre Committee wish Sid well in his new post as Scrutineers Scribe at the Harewood events.

Long may he continue.



'Scrutineers Scribe' Sid Hanson

Photo: David Scatchard

JOE'S EASTER EGG PETER HERBERT

And so it began, another season of speed hill-climbing at Stockton Farm. All those nights in cold garages, all those parts that arrived late then didn't fit, the skinned knuckles, the endless bills. At last the winter rebuilds were over, it was track time; and as the man said, when the flag drops, the bullshit stops.

The Easter Saturday weather forecast was good so naturally it rained. With the rain came a cool breeze, which at least benefited proceedings by drying the course between showers. To add to the fun was the infiltration of mud, the result of track extension works coating the start assembly area.

As is the tradition of Cars and Car Conversions/BARC Speed Championship rounds Standard Production cars ran first. Peter Sacree's Honda Civic saw off Alex Smith's Toyota MR2 to the tune of 0.89s in an up to 1600 Rising Sun benefit, while Mike Wood's Peugeot 309GTi inflicted a rare defeat upon Brian Machin's Golf GTi 16v in the larger division by a second and a half margin.

In the Road Going Production classes Ian Gibson's state of the art Suzuki Swift GTi held sway over Kevin Ward's venerable Simca Rallye 2 by 0.47s, and Les Beerling's Sierra Cosworth proved two and a half seconds quicker than the similar car of Steve Muir. The rapid Caterham of Ashley Buchanan-Morris dominated Road Going Kit Cars, Richard Wheat's smaller engined Westfield SEi being five seconds adrift.

A somewhat depleted Formula Ford field opened the regular Harewood classes, and it was Colin Wright's Van Diemen RF86 which led the seven strong contingent 0.68s up on Stuart Abbott's similar car. Ken Bailey's RF85 was a further 0.56s behind.

Last seasons revelation Chris Seaman Junior confirmed his practice day form by taking the small 'Marque' class from record holder Martin Brobyn, the Midgets separated by just 0.22s. A grass clipping, hard charging Steve Mallinson was a further second behind in Norman Pemberton's Sprite.

The RAC MSA Classes opened with small Modified Production Cars. In the absence of possible challenger Peter Herbert, who was fully occupied in the muddy car park trying to coax a recalcitrant Westfield into life whilst rapidly losing his own will to live, Pete Millington put his Clan's traction to good use to beat Neville Moon's Mini by just over a second. Darren Soothill's Caterham took the middle class by two seconds from Paul Reynold's Westfield. Mike Kerr's BDx powered

Westfield held off Haydn Spedding's E Type by five seconds.

The poorly supported small Sports Libre class fell to the MG Metro of Bob Walker, Jim Godwin's Alan Payne Trophy winning Sylva Striker three and a half seconds shy of the former Midget pilot. Flanagan and Allen controlled the larger Sports Libre group, Roger Allen 1.14s quicker than partner Peter Read in the shared Mallock Mk24 with Mark Lewis' Dutton doing well to stay within four seconds of Read.

The evergreen Allan Staniforth took the Quest Terrapin to the top of the hill 0.44s quicker than Damon Milnes' Sparton in the up to 1600cc Racing class, while Colin Wheeler's Delta ran alone in the larger division.

And so to Clubman Sports and the intrepid Joe Ward. On fine form all weekend, Joe popped in an unapproachable 43.68s run when the conditions allowed, to see off a challenge from Andy Hamer's Mallock Mk27 by more than two seconds, and to take FTD from Roger Allen by 0.21s. In his garage in Pickering sits a new chassis for the Ward WD8M. For the moment Joe seems in no need of it.

The season opener had proved an exacting event, getting out of the water-logged car park being particularly challenging. The organisation and marshalling had been of a high order, and everyone looked forward to the following days Spring National.

RESULTS

FTD	Joe Ward	Ward WD8M	43.68
-----	----------	-----------	-------

Class Winners:

Peter Sacree	Honda Civic	52.60
Mike Wood	Peugeot 309GTi	53.23
Iain Gibson	Suzuki Swift GTi	54.63
Les Beerling	Sierra Cosworth	50.00
Jeremy Parker	Renault 5GT Turbo	54.50
Ashley B-Morris	Caterham Super 7	49.43
Ward		
Colin Wright	Van Diemen RF86	45.96
Chris Seaman	MG Midget	48.17
Pete Millington	Clan Crusader	48.81
Darren Soothill	Caterham Super 7	47.03
Mike Kerr	Westfield 7	47.31
Bob Walker	MG Metro	49.74
Roger Allen	Mallock Mk24	43.89
Allan Staniforth	Quest Terrapin	45.45

SEAMAN ENDS AN ERA

PETER HERBERT

Day two of the Easter double had been the recipient of poor weather forecasts therefore the fine bright Sunday that developed was not totally unexpected. The day did not start well for everyone. Haydn Spedding's picture on the programme cover failed to save him from the displeasure of the noise testers and the E Type took an early bath. Seagoon's Brabham was also found wanting in the loud department, but Chris' day was to get better.

Practice was fairly uneventful and at lunchtime many took the opportunity to walk the as yet un-surfaced track extension. Most were impressed by the dauntingly fast descent from the new start, and the demanding bends that follow. Drivers will certainly know they have done a hillclimb when they exit Quarry in May. Frank and Peggy Hall were welcome returnees to the paddock, Frank in rude health and vowing to be the oldest but not the boldest photographer in speed eventing. For want of a camshaft that fits, the Kenyons were also spectators.

Touring cars opened the afternoon's proceedings and the pristine Cooper S Minis of Michael Holroyd and John Casey did battle for 1400cc honours. The green Casey car was quickest on the first run, and again on the second, but on the third Holroyd really got his head down to urge his red car to victory by just 0.03s.

The Nutter was well in control of the two litre class, Paul's Escort three seconds clear of Nick Arrowsmith's Alfa Romeo; while John Garnett's new Sapphire Cosworth showed great promise to dominate the large capacity class, its four wheel drive allowing the Settle driver to get onto the power awesomely early through Farmhouse to finish within 0.64s of Richard Hargreaves' record.

David White's Triumph TR8 headed the TR Register runners, Matthew Short's TR6 having no answer to V8 grunt.

The ultra competitive Martin Brobyn rejoined battle with Seaman Junior in the 1400cc Marque class and went quicker and quicker to finish within 0.36s of his own record in the green Midget. Seaman's similar car was 0.49s adrift with Steve Mallinson a further 0.95s behind in the Sprite. A man to watch though is David Kitching, whose handling of a less than user friendly Spitfire was most impressive.

Brian Lee assumed his usual position at the head of the larger Marque division, the yellow Elan more than four seconds clear of Trevor Cooper's

TR7, with Colin Elstrop's circuit racing GT6 just a further 0.35s adrift.

Former Harewood Champion Roger Kilty had the measure of his Formula Ford adversaries, the Van Diemen RF85 1.26s quicker than Saturday's winner Colin Wright in his RF86. Stuart Abbott's similar machine was just 0.18s slower than Wright.

Dave Farrar's appropriately Easter Egg shaped lightweight Midget headed the MG runners, a time of 46.22s almost a second up on Rick Hockney's much modified MGB.

Small modified production machinery led the RAC MSA classes and Peter Herbert made up for his previous day's disappointment to take his Westfield to a comfortable six second victory over Bob Wick's Mini.

Two very different saloons duelled for middle class supremacy and it was Jeremy Edwards' Peugeot 205GTi that came out on top. Tony Mekwinski took only one run in the ex-Archie Inglis Anglia before retiring in a cloud of smoke.

The large class saw the development of Mike Kerr's BDx Westfield at last come to fruition, a 42.77s run on wets getting the white projectile within shouting distance of the Clubmans runners. Graham Carr's Morgan +8 was a game second, albeit seven seconds behind.

Joe Ward completed a great weekend by not only topping the Clubmans class but also putting up a time second only to the FTD man. Running the Ward WD8M close were Essex men Read and Allen, the Mallock drivers only a tenth of a second apart.

In the Sports Libre class Andy Czakow's Stiletto held off Jim Godwin's Sylva, Bob Prest's Mallock Mk20/27 got the better of Ian Webster's Mk16, and George Tatham's rumbling McLaren easily outran Don Burt's NG TCR.

The 500cc Racers were headed by Neil Leving's Jedi from the similar Corbyn creation of Mike Fitzsimons, while the 1100's saw a fine scrap between Ian Scott's new Megapin and Harvey Verrall's imaginatively named Yamaharvey. Initially Verrall led, but a determined final ascent gave Scott a win.

Lastly the big hitters were wheeled out and the final runs over the old Harewood course looked to be a showdown between Chris Seaman and Peter Varley. Alas the Cosworth in the back of the March Pilbeam was a mite off song and the able Seaman rattled off a 40.34s climb to clinch FTD for the old BT30.

So a thirty year era came to an end. In May, God and the contractors willing, the new long track will be used for the first time. We wait with baited breath.

RESULTS

FTD Chris Seaman Brabham BT30 40.34

Class Winners

Michael Holroyd	Cooper S	46.92
David White	Triumph TR8	49.39
Paul Nutter	Ford Escort	48.60
John Garnett	Sapphire Cosworth	43.47
Martin Brobyn	MG Midget	44.94
Brian Lee	Lotus Elan	45.66
Roger Kitty	Van Diemen RF85	43.30
Dave Farrar	MG Midget	46.22
Peter Herbert	Westfield SE	45.92
Jeremy Edwards	Peugeot 205GTi	51.61
Mike Kerr	Westfield 7	42.77
Joe Ward	Ward WD8M	41.52
Andy Czakow	Sunbeam Stiletto	48.93
Bob Prest	Mallock Mk20/27	42.67
George Tatham	McLaren M12C	43.82
Neil Levings	Jedi	47.13
Ian Scott	Megapin	42.67
Seaman		

PHOTO CAPTIONS

These are the suggestions sent in for the photograph of Chief Medical Officer Prof. Tim De Dombal and Chief Paddock Marshal Alan McKinney.

From Bruce Woodhead:

- 1)'Have you seen the gold watch BARC gave me for long service?'
- 2)'Quick, get an Horologist, Mickey Mouse has just had a Myocardial Infarction.'

From Jim Godwin:

- 1)'I reckon you've got about 5 minutes headstart before that batch you just sent down realise it's the lunch break'
- '2)'You say Seaman the Elder is down at the start. Right I'll just collect my bag and get across to Quarry'

UPHILL RACERS BY CHRIS MASON

It is understood that some people are having difficulty in obtaining a copy of Uphill Racers from their local bookshop. If this is so, Chris Mason still has a few copies available at the usual price of £39.95 (signed at no extra cost!). Contact Chris on 0757 248039

BOGEY TIMES FOR HAREWOOD SPEED HILLCLIMB 1992

1992 CLASSES ON THE LONGER 1584 YARD HILL

CLASS BOGEY

1	Touring Cars up to 1400	85.24
2	" " over 1400 to 2000	82.66
3	" " over 2000	80.24
4	Marque Sports Cars up to 1400	82.92
5	" " " over 1400 to 2000	82.33
6	" " " over 2000	80.74
7	Formula Ford 1600 pre 1988	80.24
A	Mod Prod Cars up to 1400	79.55
B	" " " over 1400 to 2000	77.43
C	" " " over 2000	76.68
D	Clubmans Sports Cars	73.77
E	Sports Libre up to 1300	76.12
F	" " over 1300 to 1600	75.21
G	" " over 1600	71.69
H	Racing Cars up to 500	77.23
I	" " over 500 to 1100	75.67
J	" " over 1100 to 1600	73.20
K	" " over 1600 to 2000	71.33
L	" " over 2000	70.19

All bogey times calculated by adding the percentage increase in the Hill length (45.321101%) to the Short Hill class records (including calculated ones) and then adding 18 seconds onto that, and rounding DOWN the thousandths to the hundredth below.

These bogey times may be reviewed during the season. If this is the case, they would all be revised mathematically, but not individually.

GEORGE RICHARDS

Members who were Harewood regulars about a decade ago will remember a genial, rotund character from South Yorkshire who was a regular competitor in an MGB which he drove with great gusto in spite of a severe physical handicap. The marshals of that day will also remember that this same competitor used to stay and help clear up after the meeting. George was also for many years a major assistant in the running of De Lacy M C's International Rally, in the capacity of Equipment Co-ordinator. Sadly, George died suddenly on 11th May at Silverstone, after he had been marshalling at the World Sportscar event. We send our very sincere sympathy to his family and friends.

OBITUARY DAVID HEPWORTH

The sport of speed hillclimbing and the BARC Yorkshire Centre lost one of their most colourful characters when David Hepworth died suddenly on 2nd May.

David entered motor sport in his early twenties and became hooked on hillclimbing. He first came to prominence in the early 1960's when he joined the 'big V8 brigade' and appeared with an Austin Healey, into which he had shoe-horned a Chevrolet V8 engine. This gave him a real appetite for horse power and, in the search for more speed, and outright honours, he acquired his first single seater, the original Formula 1 Brabham chassis. Another large Chevy V8 was installed in the Brabham and David began to get serious about his hillclimbing.

By the second half of the decade, more ex-Formula 1 Brabhams (BT11 and BT19 versions) came out of the Hepworth washing machine reconditioning factory in Brighouse. The Chevrolet engine had now given way to the all aluminium Oldsmobile V8 engine, in 4.5 litre form and with Traco modifications. With these cars David became one of the leading hillclimb drivers of the day, but 1967 saw the 4wd BRM on the hills, in the hands of David Good. The performances of this car were responsible for David's next move.

David, and his team in Brighouse, started work on a new project early in 1968 and the result of their labours, the Hepworth FF, was unveiled at the September meeting at Doune, where it set a resounding BTD, to the delight of all present. It used the 4.5 litre Oldsmobile engine in a Brabham-like frame, designed and built to take Ferguson 4 wheel drive.

The Hepworth FF was a big, powerful nonsense machine, characteristics which exactly matched those of its driver and this combination gave David a fantastic season in 1969, when he achieved his dream by winning the British Hillclimb Championship. He was second in the 1970 Championship but in 1971, with a 5.0 litre Chevrolet engine in the car he achieved his second Championship title.

Having achieved his ambitions in hillclimbing, David turned to the circuits. Formula 5000 was in its heyday and David entered the Hepworth in several meetings, with Bev Bond doing the driving. However, the car had been specifically designed for the ultra short hillclimb events and did not possess the right

qualities for circuit racing. It was put into storage and David acquired a number of ex-Can Am sports racing cars from BRM. More big, powerful cars which David enjoyed driving immensely.

During the nineteen seventies, David's business activities, which now included an on-site metal cleaning company, seemed to keep him away from the sport but, when I visited him about ten years ago he showed me a very professionally organised kart racing team. The drivers were his two sons, Andrew and Stephen.

David helped them into the sport and they graduated from the karts into saloons, sports racing cars and Formula 3 in a team run by David from a Brighouse base. So he has been very much involved in motor sport and, only recently he told me that a complete refurbishment of the Hepworth FF was nearing completion and that he hoped to give it a run at Harewood this year.

He always took a very close interest in Harewood and was last there on the occasion of the party given in memory of his old friend, and sponsor of his 1969-71 hillclimb campaign, Jim Thomson of Guyson International.

Someone like David cannot go through life without leaving a fund of stories behind them. Some of those concerning David are hilarious. It was my good fortune to be present on some of these occasions and those which particularly spring to mind are the cricket match which took place into the early hours, in the Lounge Bar of the Lord Hill in Shrewsbury on the occasion of a Loton Park weekend and an 'incident' at the hotel in which we were all staying for a Wiscombe Park weekend. On this occasion, I had declared from the festivities at a reasonable hour and retired to bed. I was awakened at about 2 o'clock in the morning by tapping on my bedroom window. When I drew back the curtains I discovered the figure of David, with one foot on the window sill and one hand holding onto the drainpipe up which he had just climbed. In the other hand was a plate on which sat a large cream laden gateau, poised to meet me full in the face!

The assembly of the Hepworth in the back of the transporter as it was driven overnight on the 350 miles or so journey to Wiscombe, where it was rolled out to set another BTD is

another story typical of the light hearted and yet dedicated way that David led his team to the pinnacle of his favourite sport.

However, my abiding memory of this generous and good natured Yorkshireman with the mischievous sense of humour must, I am sure, be shared by many who watched him drive his Brabham and the Hepworth up the hillclimb courses of Britain.

I will never forget the way he took a big, powerful car by the scruff of the neck and bullied it to the top of the hill. He was always spectacular and, at Shelsley Walsh in particular, his progress was awesome.

David is succeeded by his two sons, Andrew and Stephen, in whom I am sure he will have instilled some Hepworth qualities which will enable them to come to terms with the loss of their father at the tragically early age of 52.

Jim Johnstone

David Hepworth rounding the hairpin at Castle Howard

Photo: Haydn Spedding



MARSHALLING NEWS TIM BENDELOW

News about the marshals at Harewood has been absent from the 'Times' recently, so after some encouragement from the Editor, I've put fingers to the keyboard to write something.

Since the hillclimb season ended last September, our regular marshals have been to events far and wide, from club races, rallies and speed events right up to full internationals. Highlight of most people's season was the Lombard RAC Rally. We had members on the first stage at the Yorkshire Showground, who then dashed over the Pennines to Oulton Park in time for the Rally Britannia, prior to the RAC. After a drive into North Wales to grab some sleep and a bite to eat, it was an early start on the Monday for the Bala stage.

Tuesday they drove up to the Lakes and a push into Kielder where large crowds of spectators caused problems for the sector marshals. So to the final day, with the longest stage, Dalby,

where I caught up with the 'adventurers' and their tales.

Early January was busy for those who wanted a different way to spend New Year; The Autosports International Show at the NEC in Birmingham, where time was spent helping to set up the exhibits, manning the stand and rally stage and most importantly, collecting goodies from the stands for the marshals draws.

As 1992 got into full swing, events have been hard to find that have actually run, with the De Lacy MC International and York National rallies being cancelled and now the Welsh going the same way. Harewood has benefited - the Training Day saw a larger than anticipated number of marshals turn up, and the Easter hillclimbs have also had a better turnout than expected. We need this trend to continue as there is an urgent need for more marshals to staff the new course, operational from the May meetings. With the

track extension we will create four more observer posts and will need a minimum of eight more staff on the course, and more likely nearer fifteen or more to adequately man the course for each meeting.

Help is needed right from the word 'go'. May 16th is the first event to use the long course and it is good to note that two drivers have already volunteered their services for that day. So come on competitors / helpers / friends etc have a look at the diary, do the decorating the week before and come up to Harewood. Chief Marshal David Dalrymple or myself will be happy to take your names for any day on the other side of the fence. We held our AGM at the Easter Sunday meeting. Sixteen members gathered to review the year, we had a membership of 53 including 25 Life members one of whom was an Honorary member and three were Associate members. The number of ordinary members was low as we have only seen a few so far this year - membership being open throughout the year. Other members will rejoin later in the year and numbers will be back up in the 70's. The Committee were re-elected:

Chairman - John Staveley; Secretary - Tim Bendelow; Treasurer - David Dalrymple; plus Bob Wright, Amanda Trasler, Peter Broxup - Training Officer. Mike Shorley and Don Burt were co-opted during the year (I am assured that it was painless and the scars will soon heal). My name was put forward as Vice-Chairman and I was elected to that position. New regalia has been purchased in the form of interior and exterior stickers. We look forward to an enjoyable year's motor sport at Harewood in this time of development and change.

THINGS TO COME AND HOW THEY GO

ALAN MCKINNEY

For three days, Friday to Sunday inclusive at the end of March Harewood House grounds together with Harewood Hill were used by Ford. The three days were to provide up to 2000 guests to sample Ford's hospitality by driving a full range of models on a 10 mile circuit from the House to being driven up the hill in either the new RS2000, Sapphire Cosworth or in one of the two pre-production Escort 4x4 Cosworths pushing out some 220 bhp.

I had been asked to assist in being responsible for the safety aspects at the Hill. It meant over-seeing all the movements of test cars together

with the constant flow of Transit Mini-buses coming to disgorge and retrieve the victims of a somewhat hair-raising experience.

The Friday, bitterly cold with a strong north wind, but dry, was for invited Fleet Managers to appraise or experience something totally alien to them, a full blooded chauffeured drive by Ford's test drivers from Boreham Airfield. The latter had not seen the course before and were soon into the swing of things, no slower than 50 seconds from start line to finish line with at least 2 and usually 3 passengers.

By the end of the second day in which I was involved the usual batches of 5 cars was averaging 12 climbs per hour with 7 hours each day - so eat your heart out hillclimbers, that's about 32 meetings worth. I am reliably informed that the fleet managers said very little but were somewhat ashen when getting out of the cars.

Saturday was a much more pleasant day and it, like the Sunday, was to be for readers and families of Ford's Talkback magazine. There were many youngsters, some fortunate enough not to be able to see over the fascia, who would be more at home on a Disneyland roller coaster than a very fast driven car. Because of the numbers, up to 800 expected, each car had its full passenger load and the drivers were now at one with the course and were really enjoying it - 47 seconds was the order of the day.

The Escort Cosworth was the favourite and the fervour with which one driver in particular drove meant that after each morning and afternoon session the support vehicles supplied a new set of tyres - it seemed prudent as the cords on the outer edge were showing.

The Talkback readers and guests found it all quite exciting, screams and shouts yes, white knuckles yes, absolutely roller coaster stuff.

I was fortunate, as was my son Christopher who was helping me, to be driven up on more than one occasion in the Sapphire and Escort Cosworths. I'm not so sure about being a rear passenger though. Never having been up the course at more than pedestrian pace the experience was quite something. The cars stuck to the line like limpets - the traction, road holding and handling was tremendous and one wondered how we survived each bend before the thought process started again. I now have some idea what hillclimbers go through whilst I go serenely about my business in the paddock requesting, cajoling and generally being pleasant to everyone so that they can go out to play.

It is rumoured that the Escort may get active suspension for rally use next year.