



# CARS

## and CAR CON

### CAPRI GRID

Four way fun at Brands with Fords for road and track.

### AUDI'S QUATTRO

Tony Pond, Jim McRae and Bill Gwynne behind the wheel

### RALLY NAVIGATION

Finding those high-speed night-time slots

### DRAG SHOWDOWN

Derek Bell meets the Challengers at Santa Pod

### HILLCLIMB DEBUT

A moment of Midas at Shelsley Walsh

### WINNING WAYS

Yes, part-timers are showing British rallying how it's done



# Being there-2



*Remember back in the March edition of CCC we gave you due warning that our peripatetic frontiersman, Russell Bulgin, was preparing to break off the shackles of reflected glory and get out there participating? Well, there've been one or two problems since (like he couldn't get into the car we'd planned for him to use!!), but at last we're able to bring you a shattering World Exclusive on his bid to wrestle hillclimb supremacy from ADO. Stand by for similar cliff-hanging instalments in different motorsport pursuits, as our man tells you what it's like, to get there and to be there*

**Y**ou've hung around in the assembly area for what seems like a lifetime. As the cars ahead of you take their runs, so you inch towards the start line. You check the temperature gauge, run through the gears, occasionally blip the throttle because - dammitall! - you may as well try to kid somebody that you're a racing driver. Starting with yourself.

A paddock marshal signals you to move onto the warm-up apron. It's here that the slick-shod runners heat their tyres. For you, it's a last chance to try a start; confirm that you've got the revs right.

Moving up to the timing beam, you choose which side of the track you want to start from. Earmuffed marshals line you up with semaphore hand movements; you shunt gently back and forth like a shopper in a supermarket car park.

Someone slips a chock under your rear wheel. You get the thumbs-up. The startlight

flicks from red to green. All you hear is the rumble of your own breathing.

Flyer or failure; as of now the choice is yours.

And the moment as you match traction with bravery, when you rocket up the hill or bog on the start, is when **Being There** really makes sense. Up until then, you've spent more than you could afford, filled in documents sufficient to overload the Civil Service, and yet done not a lot.

**Being There - 1** (CCC March 81) started with the premise that hillclimbing in your road car was feasible, fun, fairly easy on the pocket, and finished with you equipped with a basically prepared car, the necessary documentation and enough safety equipment to conserve your unblemished physique. The next step is to actually enter an event.

So how do you choose a hillclimb? To cut costs, select one that's comparatively local. To increase enjoyment, find a climb that flatters

your car. In a fit of he-man bravado, CCC's first outing was at Shelsley Walsh, simply because it's a deceptively challenging hill and generally a fine place to spend a weekend.

In a road car it's a little like making your Formula Ford debut at the Nurburgring. And it's jolly steep, too. That means that should your car be equipped with the same 42bhp at the wheels that the CCC entry was, you are in for a low-speed debut. Sensible people would have gone to Loton Park, which actually offers a quick downhill blast and a lot more corners, as well as greater run-off space to enjoy an invigorating personal accident scenario. But Shelsley Walsh it had to be.

All the relevant dates and addresses are crammed into the RAC Blue Book, and it is important to write off for regulations as early as you can. Shelsley - with the kind of efficiency that is typical of their warmly professional attitude to the sport - will supply you with a neat booklet of regulations for the

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year's events. Simply fill out the requisite page in block capitals, sign the cheque for £16 and you're safe. Probably. As Shelsley is the showcase for hillclimbing, entries are always over-subscribed. It can be supposed, however, that were you astute enough to register for a relevant championship (as described in **Being There - 1**) then you stand a better chance of getting a run than otherwise.

Once your entry is confirmed, then you need to, uh, really get your act together. Firstly, the Final Instructions you receive not only explain the dangers of competing with a full bladder and rattly dentures, but also remind you to fit a timing strut to the car. Contrary to popular opinion, this isn't used by single-seater drivers as a gunsight to keep them on the straight and narrow, but is a mandatory fitment to all competing cars in order to trigger the timing beam. Mind you, nobody can actually explain precisely why a 10in. by 2in. strip of opaque material mounted between eight and 18in. from the tarmac will click the clocks better than a far larger area, such as the front end of a car.

Again, the RAC Blue Book gives all the necessary dimensions and mounting instructions for the strut. The CCC device was built by an F1 fabricator from 18 gauge aluminium, complete with aircraft bolts and Nylocks; it was an extremely smart item, more suited to Alister Douglas-Osborn than the slowest car in Class 3. But once it was attached in the Shelsley paddock, a fellow competitor wandered across.

He explained that while this 18 gauge aluminium strut was a classy number indeed, it would in fact function better if it was black rather than natural aluminium in colour. To this end he wrapped the leading edge in black insulation tape, mentioning something about time-saving. An old wives tale? Probably - but what would you do in that situation? Smart money says you humour the guy and see if he's being pursued by the men in the white coats. . . .

You will also need some numbers, which can either be fashioned out of black sticky-backed plastic - hands up all those who remember Valerie Singleton on *Blue Peter* - an incredibly tedious and brain-numbing task, or bought from a race shop such as Road and Racing (01 736-2881). On anything but a white car, you will require white number squares, easily produced by the application of a pair of scissors on a roll of white *Fablon*. Number squares may seem like a minor point, but those overworked people in the timing hut tend to issue steam from the ears if you run without.

Once you've confirmed that the vehicle is in tip-top mechanical shape, check the Final Instructions for kick-off time, and head for the hill.

It is useful on such occasions to be accompanied by A Chum (otherwise known as A Pal or A Rank Sucker) to help you sort out all the tedious bits and blow up tyres while you pose around in your new Hawk driving suit, trying to kid all and sundry that you really drive a Toleman TG280H, but you're running the road car this weekend to see how the other half lives.

Also, if he/she travels in a separate car, it gives you a chance to get home should yours expire or succumb in low-level aerobatics. Wife and/or girlfriend can usually be appointed Catering Manageress for the duration, too. (Note to readers who were offended by the last sexist statement. There is nothing to stop driver making the sarnies and lady preparing the car. Fact is, it seems to be a better deal all round. . . .)

However, CCC's appointed team manager succumbed to a dose of either 'flu or legionnaires disease - the ferocity of the ailment seemed to abate if his Bird was popping over to visit him - so this was a solo



mission.

The CCC entry was a Midas - or to be precise, Midas 78001, the factory test and development hack/foreman's road car, very kindly loaned by Midas boss, Harold Dermott, and his sidekick, Graham The Foreman, who selflessly gave up his wheels for the weekend. Since CCC's Midas test (CCC November '80), the car has been fitted with Mark 1 1/2 rear suspension, with revised springing and damping, and a set of wider 155 section Goodyear G800S tyres on Italian Minilite-copy Wopalloy rims. The 1275cc engine still eats cam-followers, but otherwise the car was typical Midas; great fun and easy on fuel.

So you arrive at Shelsley Walsh early on a cool, grey morning in late May. First job is to find your paddock slot. You are car 36; so you drive around the crowded paddock running over quicklift jacks and the occasional sleeping mechanic until you discover that space 36 is - to put it mildly - bloody horrible. You are supposed to jam the Midas at the back of the paddock, tight against a fence, with no room to get out of the car let alone pose about. Disaster - then along comes a friendly paddock marshal who not only addresses you by your first name, but finds you a better spot unprompted. Nice sport, hillclimbing.

Now you must sign on. This is done at a shed confusingly labelled the Signing-On Hut.

You show your licence, club membership card and are given various items, including a programme and a scrutineering card.

Before you play Hunt-The-Scute it's best to affix the timing strut on the front of the Midas and gum on the numbers. You then find the scute (he wears an armband - wait for it - embossed with the legend 'RAC Scrutineer') and ask him to visit car 36.

He's an old guy, way past pensionable age, and you get the impression that he's seen everything before and knows all the tricks. He doesn't say a word, just offers the occasional grunt as he prods pedals, wobbles wheels, peers under the bonnet and generally examines the machine closely. If you pass, you receive a scrutineering sticker which you slap somewhere visible to an eagle-eyed marshal as you creep up to the line. Lose the gummy wonder and you're in dead trouble; it literally is your passport to the hill.

Now to choose your practice batch. The ideal practice system would be to have all the cars run in programme order, in one long chain; a dry-run for race day, in fact. But there is no return road at Shelsley, so you have to turn around at the top and tool down to the foot of the hill amid the unbridled adulation of the spectating masses.

To get over this problem, cars are grouped in batches for practice, and you can choose the batch in which you want to run. At Shelsley the system was that you should take two runs before lunch and one afterwards. Bearing in mind that lunch was due to happen after batch 20, and you want to watch some rivals run up the course to get an idea of which way the corners go, the batches selected were numbers 16 and 19 in the morning, and 29 in the afternoon. That gives you two runs within about 15 minutes of each other prior to the break and one in the early afternoon; before the weather changes.

It is advisable to walk the hill before you drive; at some venues it is compulsory. Of course, if you are as devious as Midas' First Works Driver, then a quiet stroll up the hill the previous week is no hindrance, provided that you get the necessary permission.

And what do you look for? If you don't know the hill, try to get a basic fix on the place in your mind. Watch for surface changes, any mud or leaves that have been washed onto the track; crumbling edges, a rash of potholes. At Shelsley the surface is superb, save for a drain right on the clipping point of the top esse. In a single-seater, running over that can cause problems; the Midas just steams over it, but it's useful to know it's there.



# Being there-2

Afterwards, the problem seemed to be to summon up sufficient 'bottle' to take Kennel flat in - don't laugh - second, before grabbing third to take The Crossing foot-to-the-boards.

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If it's wet, look for any standing water, particularly in braking areas; try to judge how the track both drains and dries. At Shelsley the surface dries fairly well, save for the esses where tall trees blank out the light. You would feel pretty silly ending your primo ten-tenths effort by understeering off on the esses' damp patch simply because you were too idle to wander up the hill.

Try to find out - from other competitors, or officials - which part of the hill is the most critical for a good time and watch some cars through that section. At Shelsley, the bottom of the hill is everything. Because it's a power hill, neat lines are crucial on the opening part of the course. Kennel Bend should be flat, except that it runs between two high banks and you feel like you are running through a tunnel. And thus you back off. The second left is The Crossing. Is it deceptive? Put it like this; first time up, by the time you can see it's also flat, you've backed off. The top esse is tighter than it seems, and feels peculiarly adverse cambered.

(As this story will undoubtedly lapse into all this 'first third of the turn-in understeer' and 'the gearing's all wrong at 8000rpm in fifth' race driver banter, it is worth putting the practice efforts of the CCC Midas into perspective. At the end of his quickest run, Midas' First Works Driver felt at though he had survived basic SAS training and a Maths A-Level simultaneously.)

The commentator apparently described the run as 'sedate'.

A photographer was quoted as saying 'It was so bloody boring. You looked so slow - I mean, I took three pictures of you in one run'. Sticks and stones may...)

Own up time. Bulgin's first practice run was a stunning 53.11s, with a startling speed before the esses of 46mph, and no speed recorded over the finish; so much for black tape on the splitter. It's not entirely fair to say that the run was slow, more accurate to say that the marshal's Peugeot 504 ambulance would doubtless be quicker, patient included.

The start was clean, the lines awful and the gearchanging a joke. Afterwards, the problem seemed to be to summon up sufficient 'bottle' to take Kennel flat in - don't laugh - second, before grabbing third to take The Crossing foot-to-the-boards. Easier said than done.

Run two produced a 50.40s pass, a 48mph trap speed and 55 over the finish, and still not the slightest display of The Right Stuff through The Crossing; the ego said "flat" and the brain said "lift". Score one to the brain. But - the inevitable racing driver's but makes its first appearance - the top esse was fun, coarsely scrabbling round, prematurely reducing Sir Robert Marks' favourite rubberwear to a slick condition.

For the last attempt, the decision was taken to break the 50 second barrier, a time which would leave the Midas with just another 17½ seconds to find before tomorrow in order to snatch Charles Barter's record away from his full-race 1130cc Imp-powered Davrian.

And so it was done. 49.77s, 50mph out of The Crossing and 54mph across the finish. It may not sound terrific to you, but it made Midas' First Works Driver feel pretty chuffed.

The trap speed showed that most of the improvement came at the bottom of the hill, and confirmed that to make any gains through the esses, a big rethink would be necessary.

Sunday's intensive Research and Development programme consisted - after a test run in the Worcestershire lanes on Saturday night - of losing a couple of psi in the rear tyres and washing the car. Strenuous stuff indeed.

Saturday produced one funny moment. An official earnestly remarked on the strangeness of the Midas still carrying its Wopalloy spare wheel on the competitive runs. So the driver carefully explained that under competition



... the ego said "flat" and the brain said "lift".

conditions, it had been conclusively proven that the additional rearward weight bias dramatically enhanced rear end grip.

He seemed impressed, nodded wisely, and, sure enough, the information was broadcast over the PA by the ever-diligent commentators. People like a pseudo-scientific approach to hillclimbing; they wouldn't be at all impressed if they discovered that Midas' First Works Driver didn't possess a spanner of sufficient size to remove the wheel from its mounting...)

Sunday dawned miserable and rainy - wet enough to turn the top paddock into a rallycross course and make any attempts at washing the car worthless.

The track was sodden for the first run. A shot of visor anti-mist cured the fogging of the interior glass, but from that moment on, the finest cock-up of the weekend took over. There are two conflicting versions of the events that took place.

The first, official, story is that due to the wet conditions, and the fact that everybody was experiencing traction difficulties, the Midas clutch was eased out at around 2500rpm, instead of being popped at a dry weather 3700rpm. The driver even claimed that he had tried this on a practice start and it worked a treat. So he lets out the clutch gently, taps the

throttle, and then - displaying race driver reflexes - notices the car is motionless with 4000rpm on the clock. Lightning-fast he finds second and the Midas crawls soggily off the line, so he bangs it into first and chugs away, cursing the lack of start line grip.

The second, less charitable, (scurrilous, even) story insists that the clutch was actually dropped at 2500rpm in third gear...

Whatever, 58.17s at 44mph and 53mph didn't really make getting out of bed on a Sunday morning to get your curve-enhancing new Hawk suit coated in Worcestershire clay as you stood around in the rain seem like a terribly good idea. The final run was in the damp. On its lower reaches the hill was virtually dry, but the esses were a trifle slippery.

This time Kennel was taken flat, no question. And once you had finally got around it with your foot welded to the bulkhead, you wondered why you ever slowed before. Next time, it will be flat with one hand on the wheel. There was just a tiny, almost imperceptible, incremental, not-noticeable-at-all-really, confidence(!) lift at The Crossing, but no braking for the esses. Just a wide entry and a quick downchange. A lot of understeer - it was wet, you understand - on the exit of the esses and a 50.40s at 49mph and 53mph. Satisfied? Smug? Glib? Of course.

In order to stop you rushing for a 'phone demanding a single-seater drive for the next Shelsley meeting ("no, I'm sorry, a two litre car's no good to me. I won't settle for anything less than a 3.6DFV; I know about this hillclimbing game, mate...") it pays to compare your times for the weekend with those of Reg Phillips who drives a road-going Dunlop D3-shod Escort XR3i. Reg is a good driver and has sufficient hillclimb experience to make any newcomer look like a rank upstart.

Over the five run wet-and-dry weekend, Bulgin's times were covered by a yawning 8.4 second spread, there was a gross 4mph difference between best and worst crossing speeds, and a 2mph variation at the top of the hill.

In contrast, Phillips' times ranged over 3.64s (a 1.22s difference in the dry and a commendable 0.17s in the wet; this in his first hillclimb with the car) and his speeds never altered by more than 1mph at either trap.

But do these cruel statistics faze Midas' First Works Driver? Will the Man of Steel tackle the Hill of Horrors in the Car of Glassfibre again?

Of course he will. After all, you've got to have something to aim for.

That was excuse number 347B. ...

