

Donington Track Day

On a bright, warm Sunday afternoon, Castle Donington village was infiltrated gradually by GT40s and their owners. Shiny machines were parked on the pavement alongside the main street whilst others could be found discretely tucked away behind B&Bs or in the Donington Manor Hotel car park. Like wealthy vagrants, the owners could be seen kerb crawling, hoping to meet up with fellow Club members. This strategy proved very successful, and before long, a small group retired to the Manor Hotel for tiffin. The numbers swelled until the bar was buzzing with conversation about the latest car modifications and motoring exploits. Almost without interruption, the gathering slid into the dining room to take on fuel. The hotel did us proud with good food and excellent service. Desmond welcomed everyone and wished them well on the track, and in return the gathering thanked Desmond for the considerable effort he had expended in organizing the event. However by the end of the evening, when the tally needed to be settled, Desmond had to delegate this task to a third party as he had had such a good

time during the dinner..... The scene was set for an exciting morrow.

At crack of sparrow the paddock was buzzing with trailers being manoeuvred into position and machines unloaded whilst other machines arrived on their own wheels. Friendships were hastily re-established and new introductions made as the adrenalin levels began to rise in anticipation of getting out on the black stuff. But first the safety briefing.



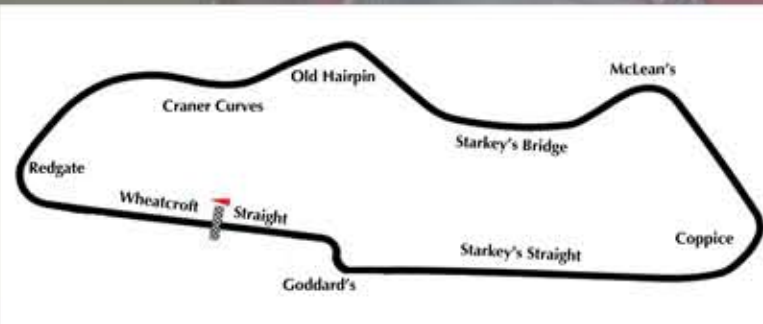
Now listen 'ere!

This was a BookaTrack speciality. Jonny addressed the serried ranks of drivers, some of whom were track veterans, some track virgins. His comments were spot on and almost no one made any comments, apart from positive ones, which ensured everyone understood that BookaTrack wanted to achieve a safe day's tracking. Dr John added his



thoughts on how the instruction would take place and everyone ended up with 2 armbands showing they had signed on AND been briefed.

And so the day's event commenced with familiarization laps (or should that be lapse?) behind the BMW, with a gaggle of cars snapping at its heels waiting for the track to be clear. Soon enough it was and drivers started to appreciate the subtleties of this circuit. The Craner Curves were as daunting as ever and were still in one piece, in spite of Jason Plato's attempt to de-



by Paul Brameld >>

stroy the track single-handedly in the preceding week's Touring Car event.

Donington saw track virgins a plenty, who were keen to get out on the black stuff and prove their manhood. Several soon realised that there was much more to track driving than diving into corners under



Yours truly being told where to go by Dr John

heavy braking, fumbling through the apex in a semi-controlled manner and then flooring it on the straights! According to the instructors there were experiences that are best not talked about in public! Thankfully for the instructors, after the initial adrenalin surge, our drivers settled down to a pace which gave them time to think about the lines through corners and how to control the weight and attitude of the car by much more subtle use of the brakes, steer-



ing and throttle than they ever thought would be required. The net result was quite a few 'smoothies', who appreciated that despite their heavy and powerful machinery, track driving was more like graceful ballet than tap dancing. From the look of enjoyment on the faces of the drivers, this realisation brought great pleasure and a driving challenge for the rest of the day.

There was some comment about cars not adhering to the right to enable faster cars to overtake, but some who were affected by this subsequently ensured they were first out of the pit lane for the start of subsequent sessions! One member commented that he did not trouble 5th gear all day, probably due to a David Milan engine that produced ample grunt and associated thirst!



Honest John Oxborough with his pride and joy

We were honoured to have John Brindley at the circuit, occasionally driving Dick Townsend's car. John, is a 3 times winner of the Oulton Park International Gold Cup, amongst many other notable wins. He is 78 and to quote Dick, no old age pensioner should be able to drive that fast. But he did, and if a number 7 Gulf coloured GT40 went past you at considerable speed, it was probably John not Dick.



Dick and John Brindley

It was not unexpected that there was the occasional spin during the course of the day and excuses abounded. I won't name names, but you know who you are! It's to everyone's credit that there was no coming together of members' cars and no cars sustained body damage due from off-track excursions, although there was the odd dented pride! However there was a Lotus that nearly succeeded in taking off a '40; Bob Charlton had to take to the grass to avoid collecting the offending car!

Almost without exception members wanted to single out 2 guys for a mention in despatches: Desmond Finnan and Chris Bailey (our club Webmaster).

The former, for his determination to see this event happen at all and to keep it on track (ugh!) to a very enjoyable conclusion, and also for having a direct line to Him up there (no not Bernie Ecclestone!) who ensured good weather. Respect also to Chris for travelling half way the way round the world to attend.

He managed to blag a few rides and from the smile on his face during the day it was worth the journey from Canada.



Web & Ed

Comments from members included:

- It was great to have one REAL '40 on track and mixing it with fellow Club members and it was amusing to think that the original Willment



A '40 makes an ideal reading chair