

# COTSWOLD MOTOR SPORT GROUP

An MSA Recognised Group

Cotswold Motor Sport Group Competitors Club Car Trial Coordinator  
Tim Lakin



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in association with  
**B.P. MOTOR BODYBUILDERS & ENGINEERS**  
**CAR TRIALS**

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## A Guide To Car Trials (formally PCT's)

This is one of the cheapest forms of motor sport available. A full day's entertainment can be enjoyed in a standard road car for an entry fee of around £25. Events provide sections or hills where all drivers can enjoy success and watch whilst their competitors take a turn. It is a test of driver's car control and is enjoyed by motor sport novices, drivers from other disciplines and continues to inspire regular competitors as well.

### THE SPORT EXPLAINED

To set the scene for a Car Trial ("PCT") you need to imagine a grassy hillside. The object of the sport is to go from the start of a section (point "A") to the finish (point "B") without stopping and without external assistance, in your own time, for this is not a speed motor sport. Point "B" is higher up the hillside than point "A", so the effects of gravity and a slippery surface have to be overcome. The route between the 2 points will be designed to be increasingly challenging by the organisers and will force the car up a weaving course. The car and driver will have to overcome natural undulations and features of the hillside which make reaching point "B" a real challenge.

A Car Trial will typically be held on a Sunday, 1000hrs to 1600hrs, and comprise some 30 to 40 variants of the "A" to "B" concept. In practice, this is achieved by setting out 8 or 10 different variants (known as "Sections" or "Hills") and allowing one attempt per competitor, then making changes to the route and allowing another attempt; this is done for a 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> time to make up the full event.

Competitors' ability is measured by how far they get up each "section" with decreasing penalty points awarded the further you get - the absolute ideal being zero points upon reaching the top! Thus, lowest total score on the day wins, but you do retain all points awarded - none are discarded - so concentration is paramount! However, recognising the inherent difference in climbing ability of (say) front wheel drive cars vs rear-engined rear wheel drive cars, cars actually compete directly in one of four classes, in effect to provide a "level playing field" for competition. Not quite the right analogy, but well understood! Current classes on National events are: 1: road-taxed cars up to 12 years old, unmodified and unballasted; 2: fwd cars not eligible for class 1; 3: rwd cars not eligible for class 1; 4: Kit Cars and Modified production cars. Cotswold classes on Clubsport events are: A: front wheel drive; B: front engine rear wheel drive; C: rear engines cars; D: kit cars; E: Specials.

By tradition, all cars have to carry a front seat passenger and it will be their role to support the driver, pointing out the intended route and sometimes bouncing the car to nudge it over some difficult terrain. Passengers on National events need to be a member of an invited club.

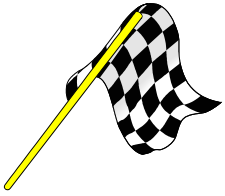
### START COMPETING FROM THE AGE OF 15....

In the relatively safe environment of Car Trials, where speeds are low, there is no better place to learn car control and gain an understanding of trialling techniques. This is permitted from the age of 15, although drivers not holding a full RTA driving licence must have an experienced passenger.

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### THE CARS

Cars (except the specials) must have been in series production and so have not been specifically designed for the sport. This all adds to the interest and introduces further difficulties that have to be overcome! Needless to say, some cars will always be more competitive than others, so you do need to give careful consideration to choice of competition car. As mentioned later, we recommend going along to a few events to see at first hand the cars in action.

### CAR PREPARATION

You will need to study the Motor Sports Association (MSA) Competitors' Yearbook for the detailed rules and regulations that govern the sport; this book comes f.o.c. with all motor sport competition licences which will be required when competing in National events. There is a link to the MSA on the CMSG website.

Car preparation can, of course, be to the extremes of the Regulations but equally can be as simplistic as checking the usual levels for oil, etc, and chucking out clutter from within the car, plus, if appropriate (front wheel drive), having a minimum amount of fuel, all to avoid unnecessary weight. Full trim and the spare wheel must be carried however.

Decent tyres are a must but have to be of normal road pattern and specifically not winter or off-road types.

Then you.....

### LET YOUR TYRES DOWN!

Tyre pressures on the driven wheels are let down to prescribed limits dependant upon class entered and, for national events, engine size. This provides a marked increase in grip by putting a larger contact area on the ground and enabling the tyre to better follow irregular surfaces. *We should state that some cars, usually lightweight sports cars, may have to increase their road pressures in order to comply with the Regulations!*

### DRIVER PREPARATION

- Have a positive attitude
- Study other competitors' attempts
- Walk each Section, noting obstacles and features that will unsettle the car; plan your attempt in minute detail
- Ask!
- Be ready to start when it's your turn

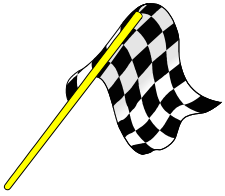
### HOW DO I START?

It is recommended to passenger or spectate and/or marshal at an event. Any of these will provide an opportunity to see the sport at first hand, see what sort of cars compete and to discuss your intentions with seasoned drivers.

Apart from having a car and a passenger, you will need to be a member of a car club and have available your club membership card; for higher status (National) events you will also need an MSA Competition Licence (minimum Clubmans). The next step is to find an event, again through local car clubs or the BTRDA or MSA, obtain and complete an entry form and submit it to the organisers prior to the event. The final step is to compete, and the rest is up to you!

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SOME MORE DETAILED (advanced) HELP

## TACKLING A SECTION

### ASSESSMENT

*Walk the hill - all of it, every time - and assess:*

- ROUTE memorise; after each round look out for changes - don't blindly follow old tracks!
- SURFACE grip, moisture, fresh grass or worn track, how it changes with each passing car or round
- UNEVEN AREAS bumps, rocks, severe banks, ruts, roots, trees, grounding points & other hazards, off-section dangers
- SLOPE where steeper or more flat, cross-camber
- EXIT ROUTES at various points of hill, especially if the conditions suggest you won't be able to prevent the car from sliding down the hill once the attempt has ceased.

### OBSERVATION

*Look how others do it - both successfully and unsuccessfully:*

- START position, angle, grip, best launch technique
- APPROACH trickle, float or blast on different parts of the section
- SPEED fast or slow?...depends on surface, bumps, ability, severity of corners
- LINE observe both front and rear wheel positions through difficult bits
- PASSENGER CONTRIBUTION where and where not to bounce
- MARKERS correlate difficult points to nearest marker
- MARSHALS ask for scores being achieved, difficult points, policy on 4 wheels out.

### STRATEGY

*If what others do works, it merits serious consideration, but it need not necessarily be the only way to crack the nut. If you fail to plan what's best for you, you plan to fail.*

- PLAN A exactly how you intend to tackle each part of section in advance
- PLAN B be prepared to change if what you are doing can obviously be improved by an alternative technique/line/etc. Do it before it is too late!

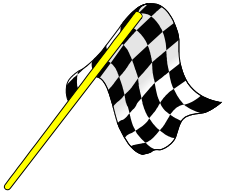
### DRIVING THE HILL

*The margin between success and failure is minute!*

- POSITION park away from start and approach in chosen gear
- PREPARATION when on line take a couple of seconds to focus fully on your plan before setting off; don't be distracted by noisy cars on other hills
- APPROACH really commit yourself to trickling, floating or blasting at your chosen points in the section
- LOOK AHEAD where possible, look several markers ahead
- EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED several factors can upset your initial plan but it is the skill and speed with which you adapt which determines whether you're successful or not
- SAFETY always remain in control
- SPORTSMANSHIP where the ground cuts up, avoid unnecessary damage and immediately cease your attempt when indicated by the marshal. Accept marshal's decisions with good grace.

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## **EXITING THE HILL**

- **RETAIN CONTROL** exit slowly; be aware of people, section markers and all hazards. Avoid getting sideways on steep slopes. Don't turn out of a section unless safe to do so.

## **MENTAL ATTITUDE**

- **FOCUS** on completing the section successfully, not on difficulties, in order to give yourself confidence
- **CONCENTRATE** fully on the task in hand
- **FORGET** silly errors made earlier and focus on next section
- **DON'T** let success on one hill or round go to your head, or you are bound to make unnecessary errors
- **NEVER** take any section for granted
- **GET IN THE "ZONE"** before the first hill and stay in it for the rest of the event!

## **GENERAL PREPARATION**

- **ARRIVE** at the event in good time
- **DON'T** be last through scrutineering and hold up the drivers' briefing
- **PARK** safely between sections, across the slope with handbrake applied, engine off and first gear selected
- **DON'T** obstruct other competitors
- **KEEP** to the allotted running order
- **BE READY** to start when it's your turn
- **PLEASE THANK** the marshals when exiting each section on the last round. Remember that without these volunteers there would be no motorsport!

**Enjoy your motor sport!**

With acknowledgements to

Neil Mackay (BTRDA Car Trials committee chairman)

and

Simon Harris (BTRDA Car Trials committee vice-chairman)

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