

The Peter Blankstone Trial – Sunday 24th April 2022

Report by Robin Jager

The Peter Blankstone Trial was originally created by some keen members of the Midland Automobile Club (MAC) in the late seventies, namely trialling stalwarts including Bob Dayson, Roy Lane (who was also a multiple Hillclimb champion who enjoyed his trialling in the winter), and Peter Blankstone. Originally sited a couple of miles away (anyone remember the concrete track?) from the famous speed hillclimb track, the bracken covered slopes above the car parking area at Shelsley became the tempting alternative and run annually has proved to be one of the most popular events in the trialling calendar.

Shelsley Walsh is the world's oldest motor sport venue originating in 1905, and appropriately welcomes some of the world's oldest competition motorists for today's event!

The setting out of the trial was masterminded by Peter Fensom, and a big snag became apparent two weeks earlier when Peter and yours truly met with MAC Competition Secretary Annie Goodyear, to discuss the logistics of the trial, and discovered that the club's poles were nowhere to be seen, possibly having disappeared into someone's log burner over the past winter! However, on blended knees, we pleaded with Josh Veale, the Supremo of the Midland Trials Car Club, to loan his immaculate sets of poles and numbers, so all was well.

A group of us met up on Saturday morning to set the sections out, and Julian Fack was there with his Trialling Academy, holding a training day, with 17 eager rookies keen to learn the sport from the maestro himself. His staff also included experienced drivers such as Richard Sharp, Darren Underwood, John Cole, Mike Readings, Nick Speed and Mike Baker, who had brought their cars along and bravely let the learners loose to test out their skills. Andy Wilks and Mark Smith also kindly collected the poles from Josh, and set to on making up eight sections, along with Peter Fensom.

Sunday turned out to be dry all day, although we would have loved a good shower of rain to make things more interesting, and the very dry ground meant tyre pressures were set at 6 psi. Kiel Wright was the official Clerk of the Course and was kept busy all day tweaking the sections between rounds. The top seeds in the shape of Josh Veale, Thomas Bricknell and John Fack looked intent on providing serious competition and the current champ Josh set the standard, only dropping 1 on the first round but being bettered by John Fack on zero.

Round 2 saw John only dropping 1, as did Josh, and other strokes of genius came from John Cole, Stuart Beare and Simon Kingsley, also on 1. With such close scoring, the decider for the trial win came from Josh, who was the only clean on Hill 1, no one else doing better than a 4, thus Josh emerged as the well-deserved victor, with John Fack and Thomas Bricknell making up the rest of the podium.

Unfortunately, there was a shortage of marshals which meant self - marshalling carried out on hills 7 and 8 - not ideal if you were having a private battle with your running mate! Due to a clash of MAC events, there was a classic car run on the same day which employed most of the MAC's orange overall clad marshals, but the ones who did help us out were gratefully appreciated.

A great day's trialling despite the dry conditions, and with an entry of 32, the future of our sport seems encouragingly secure.