

SPEED TRIALS AT HATHEROP PARK

1936-37

The four-thousand-acre Hatherop estate, nine miles north-east of Cirencester in Gloucestershire, had been in the ownership of the Bazley family since the 1860s, and in the mid-1930s was occupied by the 3rd Baronet, Sir Thomas Stafford Bazley. The Castle and Park lie on the southern edge of Hatherop village, and on Saturday 29th August 1936 Sir Thomas opened the grounds for a garden fete in aid of the British Legion. The event was rather more ambitious than might normally be expected from a village garden fete, as in addition to the usual stalls and competitions, activities included sports such as tennis and swimming (in the Castle's pool) and bicycle polo. And, most unusually for such an event, also some "motor trials", sponsored by Sir Thomas and his younger half-brother Christopher Cadogan, said to be the first time such trials had been staged in the area.

Details of the course used, and the exact nature of these "trials", are currently unknown. They may have been a sprint-type event, or grasstrack races run on a knockout basis. The prize for fastest car time was won by R Godwin, who also won his class final.

Although details of any of the vehicles involved are unknown, the class winners were:

Cars unlimited:	1 st Miss Theodora Wills; 2 nd Aubrey Rees.
Cars up to 3 litres:	1 st Aubrey Rees; 2 nd Anthony G Bazley.
Cars under 1½ litres:	1 st R Godwin; =2 nd H Cadogan & Arnold Hamer (tied).
Motor-cycles:	1 st R Crewe; 2 nd J Holland.

The event proved so popular that plans immediately began to be made for another, but on a much bigger scale.

This followed remarkably quickly, just one month later, on Saturday 3rd October, under the overall title of a "Motor Gymkhana". The main feature though, was some speed trials over an 1800 yard course, described as including "*right-angle and hairpin bends and awkward turns on hills, etc.*" The organising committee included Thomas and his brother Anthony Bazely, with Christopher Cadogan as Clerk of the Course, and London-based garage owner Jack Driskell as Assistant Clerk and Announcer; at the time Driskell was well known in the English motor-sporting world.

About 50 competed, with Cadogan also having a run in a Morris 8, but presumably ineligible for awards. Fastest time of the day was recorded by young mechanic Ralph Silva* in Driskell's Rapier 10 Special, in 1min 34 sec (average 39 mph). Silva would later go on to work for ERA, and then wealthy amateur racer Prince Birabongse, usually known as 'B Bira'.

Very much a social as well as a sporting event, the day also included a Concours D'Elegance, with the main awards going to Driskell's Rapier Special and Bell's Pontiac. Profits from the event went to the Hatherop School Improvement Fund.

Photo: Winner Ralph Silva, with Jack Driskell standing on pillar on right



*Full name Carlo Raffaele Silva, but normally known as Ralph Silva.

Results, 3rd October 1936 :

Class 1, cars under 1100cc:

- 1st R Godwin (Morris 8) & CM Cadogan (Morris 8) [Non-competitor];
2nd D Heaven (Morris McEvoy).

Class 2, cars under 1500cc: 1st E Milwain (Anzani Nash Special).

Class 4, unlimited, supercharged and racing:

- 1st CR Silva* (Rapier 10 Special), 1 min 34s (FTD);
2nd Baron A Von Aretin (Frazer Nash BMW); 3rd E Milvain (Anzani Nash Special).

Class 5, Saloons:

- 1st Miss Bazley (Railton); 2nd G Bell (Pontiac); 3rd Fraser Evans (Riley 1½ litre).

Motor-cycles: =1st S Corbett & W Farrel (tie).

Concours D'Elegance

Closed cars: 1st G Bell (Pontiac); 2nd J Messenger (Morris 8).

Open cars: 1st FA Driskell (Rapier Special).

Having acquired a taste for motorsport, early in 1937 some of those involved in these events formed the East Cotswold Motor Club, with Cadogan becoming the first Club Secretary, and it was this body which organised the next event in Hatherop Park, on Saturday 18th September. This year the overall event was described as a "Gymkhana and Speed Trials", and in addition to the main speed trial course, there was also an inner closed circuit used for a series of grass track races.

The main course was about a mile in length, comprising road and grass sections, with eight corners including a difficult S-bend, and a quarter mile finishing straight. Uniquely, practising for the event was possible for the whole of the preceding week, especially in the evenings, upon application to Hatherop Park.

Event entries cost 2/6 per class, car parking for spectators 1/-, and programmes 3d, and the profit from the day, £5 19s 9d, was donated to the local branch of the Nursing Association.

Scheduled to run from 11 am to 5pm, the weather was fine, although heavy rain the previous day had made the grass sections of the course extremely treacherous, and the muddier parts called for some skilful driving. The finishing straight was fine however, with the quicker cars approaching 90 mph as they crossed the finish line.

Fastest car time of day, for the Morley Cup, was recorded by Tim Carson in his Vauxhall 30/98-based Carson Special, just a fifth of a second quicker than Ralph Silva. This year Silva was driving Driskell's sports Delahaye, and he also received the Rees Cup for best performance by an East Cotswold club member. Fastest of all though, a full six seconds quicker than Carson, was the best of the motor-cycles, the mysterious "I Caesar", who did 1m 30.0s on a Triumph.

Results 18th September 1937 :

Touring & Saloon Cars, Class A: No award

Touring & Saloon Cars, Class B: 1. John E Orgee (MG 1½ litre) 1m 48.2s ; 2. CH Bullock (Ford Ten) 1m 48.4s.

Touring and Saloon Cars, Class C: 1. John E Orgee (MG 1½ litre) 1m 48.2s

Sports Cars, Class A: 1. RJG Ellett (MG T series) 1m 46.4s ; =2. AL Taylor (Singer) &
CM Cadogan (Rapier) 1m 53s

Sports Cars, Class B: 1. P/O HF Thomson (Frazer-Nash) 1m 42s; 2. P/O Leatherheart (Frazer-Nash) 1m 46s

Sports Cars, Class C: 1. CR Silva (Delahaye 3¼ litre) 1m 36.2s; 2. DAJ Gamble (Ford V8 Special) 1m 42.4s

Sports Cars, Class D: 1. T Carson (Carson Special) 1m 36s; 2. CR Silva (Delahaye) 1m 36.2s;
3. Evan (Peter) McFarlane (Ford V8 Special) 1m 41s

Motor Cycles: 1. "I Caesar" (Triumph) 1m 30s; 2. R Cheshire (Henley) 1m 39.2s;
3. J Faulder (Brough Superior combination) 1m 40s

Hatherop Park Speed Trials 1936-37

Grass Track Racing

Cars: 1. CH Bullock (Ford Ten saloon); 2. CM Cadogan (MG Mark I); 3. AL Taylor (Singer).

Motor-cycles: 1. W Harris (Rudge); 2. C Martin (Rudge); =3. J Brown (AJS) & W Farrell (OK Supreme)

Concours d'Elegance:

Closed cars: 1. Mrs RG Cookson (Bugatti T57 saloon); 2. Capt. Cockburn (Rolls-Royce).

Open cars: 1. JA Driskell (Delahaye); 2. G Marchands (Wolseley).

No record has been found of any other events at Hatherop in the following years, nor of any East Cotswold Motor Club activity after its Annual General Meeting in January 1938.

During World War 2 Hatherop Castle was taken over as a training base (STS45) for the Special Operations Executive (SOE); Sir Thomas Bazley served in the British Intelligence Services, and Christopher Cadogan joined the SOE, but died on active service in 1941.

Following the war the Castle became a girls' public school, and is now Hatherop Castle Preparatory School, and in 1972 the estate was acquired by the Ernest Cook Trust, an outdoor learning charity.

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Hatherop Park location:	Coordinates: 51.745 N 1.780 W
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Sources

Cheltenham Chronicle, North Wiltshire Herald, Gloucestershire Echo, Motor Sport, Tatler, The Times

*Pete Stowe
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Westcountry Motorsport History

Website <https://bpmc.org.uk/petestowe/wmh.htm>

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