



HAVANA na...na...na



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Ultimate Group honour for Maurice and Bryan

TWO of the Northern Group's longest-serving members have been honoured with life membership.

Founder member Maurice Glover, who has now retired after more than 50 years of writing on all things automotive, and Bryan Longworth, who offered his resignation last summer after an equally long career working on news and sport in addition to motoring, have each accepted the honour reserved for those who have made a special contribution to our Group over many years.

Maurice was one of the original 14 daily newspaper motoring writers based in the north who met in 1972 at Halewood to create the Group which officially came into being at the Majestic Hotel in Harrogate following the launch of the Austin Allegro in May 1973. He served as Northern Group chairman from 2011 to 2013.

Maurice joined the Stoke Sentinel in 1959, became the paper's deputy news editor and began covering the world of motoring in the mid-1960s.

He then took on responsibility for motor industry coverage throughout Northcliffe Newspapers.

In 1991 he became a freelance, supplying high quality news and features to publications both in this country and all around the world, most recently to Fleet News and Diesel Car.

He and his wife Myra live in Loggerheads near Market Drayton in Shropshire.

While serving as Group chairman Maurice devoted the charity proceeds from one of our annual dinners to the First Responders of North Staffordshire who saved Myra's life after she suffered a heart condition while driving her car.

Bryan, who lives in Chesterfield, joined us in our inaugural year and took on the role of obtaining industry support for our meetings in 1985; he continued in post until 2016.

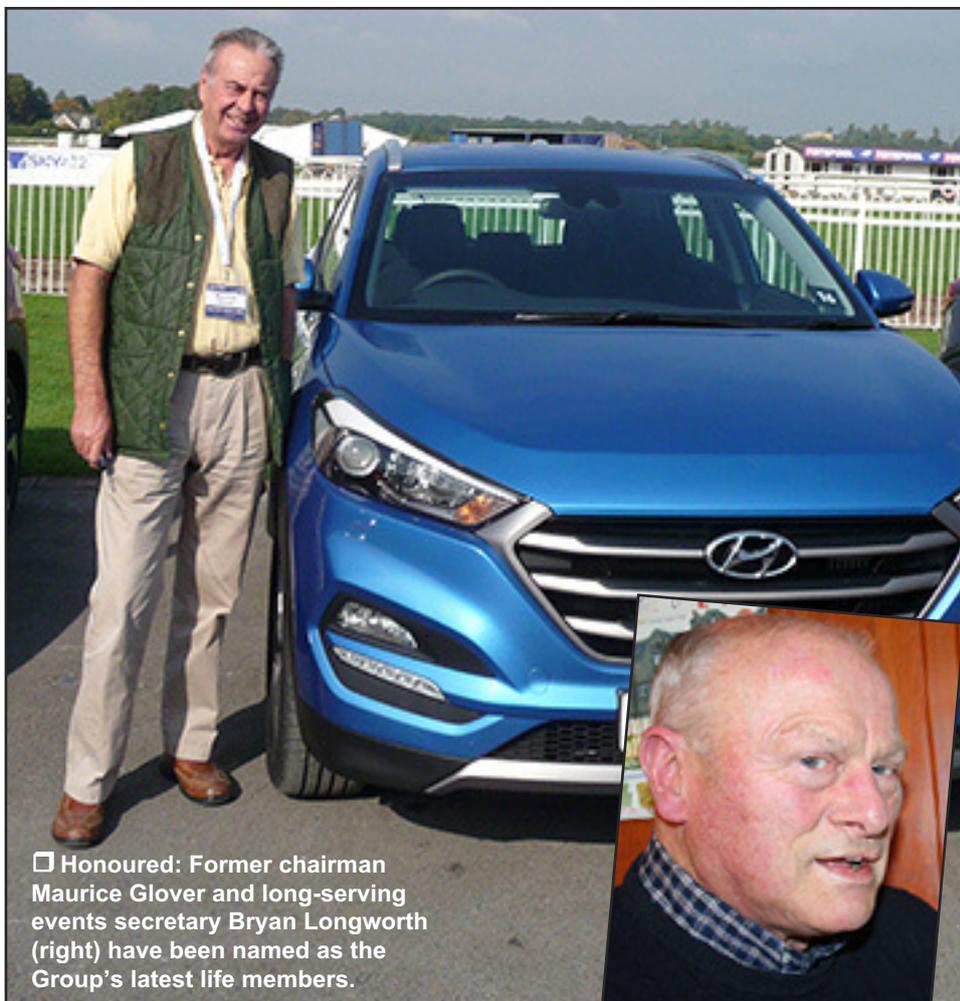
He too can look back on an illustrious career which began at the South Yorkshire Times where he first started writing on motoring and ultimately became editor of the paper's Sheffield edition.

Bryan was also responsible for motoring coverage within the Doncaster Free Press group of newspapers, the Doncaster Advertiser, Northern Farming and St Helens Star, Northern Counties Newspapers and Johnston Press and also contributed to Automotive Management.

He was a regular in the press box at soccer stadiums around the country but his enduring memory of those years was his presence at Hillsborough on the day of the disaster when 96 Liverpool supporters lost their lives.

Bryan was a member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists and was the winner of the Group's Motorcycle award sponsored by Kawasaki in 1979. He is also the winner of a Newspaper Society award.

Both Maurice and Bryan have also been members of the Guild of Motoring Writers for many years.



□ Honoured: Former chairman Maurice Glover and long-serving events secretary Bryan Longworth (right) have been named as the Group's latest life members.

ngmw News

WELCOME to this 15-page, Spring edition of NGMW News.

We have our usual mix of news and features for your post-Easter delight.

Julie Marshall speaks from the chair about the growth of social media while I relate the sorry tale of trying to register my Cyprus-bought Peugeot for use in the UK.

Learn how award-winning member Tom Sharpe hit the national headlines and how master-gamer Andrew Evans has twice won drives in a supercar.

There's all that and more plus our regular comprehensive round-up of PR department comings and goings.

I hope you enjoy the read.

- David Whinyates

- NGMW News is produced by the Northern Group of Motoring Writers, Britain's longest established regional motoring writers' group. The Group represents journalists working for print and digital media with regional, national and worldwide audiences.

- Editor & Designer: David Whinyates

- Principal Contributor: Alan Domville
- Contributors: Malcolm Bobbitt, Andrew Evans, Steve Howarth, Frederic Manby, Julie Marshall, Steve Orme & Keith Ward.

- Contributions are always welcome - send your stories and pictures to Alan Domville at e.domville@btinternet.com

Tom's scoop gets an airing

AN exclusive story for AM magazine meant an early "am" start for Tom Sharpe after his news story made the national headlines – resulting in an appearance on Radio 5 Live's Wake Up To Money.

The one-time Yorkshire Journalist of the Year, now News and Features Editor at Bauer Media's Automotive Management magazine, took to the airwaves with presenters Sean Farrington and Mickey Clark at 5.30am on March 22 after breaking the news that Vauxhall plans to cut around a third of its UK dealer network.

Alongside the BBC, the Daily Mail, Guardian, Mirror and Independent newspapers also picked up the exclusive, which AM revealed could affect around 3,800 workers from the automotive retail sector.

Tom said: "This is not good news for the thousands of dealership workers who face an uncertain future, but it is welcoming to see the retail side of the automotive business gain some recognition.



Award-winning Group member TOM SHARPE, left, found himself the centre of attention when he exclusively revealed that PSA was planning cuts to the Vauxhall dealer network...

"Hopefully the story will alert Government to the fact that it is not just automotive manufacturing that is worthy of their consideration; around 590,000 people are employed in automotive retail across the UK, according to the National Franchised Dealers' Association."

Tom was able to break the news of Vauxhall's network changes after speaking to director-level contacts from within the brand's franchised network.

The anticipated cuts, which retailers suggest will take place within the

next 12 months, come as part of a bid by Vauxhall's new French owners, France's PSA Group, to return the Opel and Vauxhall brands to profitability. Vauxhall suffered a 22% decline in sales, to 195,137, as it slipped behind Volkswagen in the UK's best-sellers lists.

PSA is now implementing its PACE! strategy in an attempt to cut £1 billion from Opel/Vauxhall budget by 2020 and £1.5 billion by 2026.

In October last year PSA announced 400 job losses from the Astra-building Ellesmere Port plant

and followed that with a call for a further 250 voluntary redundancies in January. General Motors, sold Opel and Vauxhall to PSA in April last year as part of a £1.9 billion acquisition.

In a statement to AM, Vauxhall said: "The Opel/Vauxhall PACE! plan is improving the efficiency of the business in all areas. Within the plan, the go-to-market strategy is being carefully reviewed, including the contractual framework with dealers." Vauxhall said any reductions in its retail network would be "part of the normal business cycle".

It's a worrying sign of the times...

RECENTLY a test car from a major car company was delivered to me by their deputed "logistics company" - a firm previously unknown to me.

I was asked by the pleasant driver on the spot to scribble a signature on his mobile and off he went.

In other words, as is common in these situations, I had signed blind - I assumed to confirm merely that I had received the vehicle.

Within minutes I had an e-mail from his company setting out, among other small print which I had obviously not had the chance to challenge, the "terms and conditions" of the loan.

They stated I had agreed by my signature to insure the vehicle (ie

out of my own pocket) "fully comprehensively with a reputable insurer" and in any event indemnify them "against any costs or losses resulting from any accident or theft of the vehicle".

Shocking stuff for a poor scribbler, this.

Before turning a wheel, I questioned the car company's press office. I was insured (by them), they said.

Their guess was that the logistics company had somehow got the terms and conditions mixed up on their system. That was subsequently confirmed, together with a copy of the correct insurance terms for the Press, a day later.

But I couldn't help feeling that, had I driven the car immediately

and pranged it (or worse) some smart lawyer for the logistics firm might be pointing at my signature, rather than his own client's mix-up.

Alright, this is an oldie journalist talking, but things were surely clearer in the days when you, and the delivery driver (usually a familiar face) signed a detailed document, setting out among other things the car's condition and mileage, with similar paperwork at the end of the loan.

It afforded protection for both parties.

Incidentally, a couple of years ago, when the Northern Group of Motoring Writers last published an industry-wide insurance survey, the car company in this instance covered all journalists



driving test cars for injury or death up to £25,000 (and double that on facility trips, including model launches).

The former sum, I see, is now £5,000. That is probably a downward trend industry-wide. And that's another story....

- Keith Ward

Chance meet leads to reunion for Jon and Bill

A pre-Christmas dinner attended by Jonathan and Lynn Smith resulted in a chance reunion with retired and founder Group member Bill Duckworth and his wife Joy.

Jonathan and Lynn were seated at the dinner for investors next to the firm's chairman.

Not surprisingly, the topic of conversation turned to cars.

And the chairman confided that his father, who lived in Cumbria, was a big car fanatic and indeed had written on the subject.

Yes, company chairman Steph Duckworth was, in fact, Bill's son - a former Wall Street



money man, now residing with his family in nearby Bishops Stortford and running a local wealth management company.

Within minutes, Jonathan and Steph were exchanging stories about Bill who had been motoring correspondent and Editor of the Cumberland Evening News and Star.

Jonathan and Bill had frequently shared drives on launches all over Europe in the 70s and 80s.

Steph and his wife Vanessa invited Jonathan and Lynn to a family supper when Bill and Joy visited Bishops Stortford before

Christmas. "It was great to catch up with Bill and Joy again," said Jonathan.

"They both looked so well and the evening just flew by thanks to the kind hospitality of Steph and Vanessa. And it was lovely to meet Bill and Joy's two grandchildren."

Steph, who has inherited Bill's love of cars, currently runs a Porsche 911 Turbo and is having a Jaguar Mark Two saloon renovated.

Bill, Steph and Jon hope to get together again when the Jag is on the road in the spring.

David's back - and Arthur's made over

FOLLOWING his move back to the UK last autumn, newsletter editor David Whinyates is now settled into a new home in Middlesbrough.

In fact David and wife Pauline wonder if they might have set a new Guinness World Record after completing the purchase of the new-build property and getting the keys in only six days. "I've never known solicitors move so fast," says David.

His new address is: 48 Low Gill View, Marton-in-Cleveland, Middlesbrough, TS7 8BF.
Email: dwhinyates@gmail.com
Tel: 01642 318061
Mobile: 07590 985129

- IN a bid to achieve an even
- more accurate result in the
- Group's
- Northern Car of the Year poll,
- members are to
- be offered the opportunity to
- drive each of the six cars on the
- short list.
- As before,
- Martin Ward will
- compile the long
- list of every new
- car introduced
- during the year ending in
- May and Alan Domville will
- compile a short list of six
- contenders from members'
- votes.



Under Andrew Evans's proposal for an awards make-over, approved in February, six members will each borrow one of the cars on the list so that the remainder of the membership will be able to sample any of the cars they have not driven before making their final decision.

Our annual award, an inscribed miner's lamp - which has become known as the Northern Group

Arthur after miner's leader Arthur Scargill - will continue to be presented at the SMMT Northern Driving Day in the autumn.

Don delights in double award honours

BARNSELY lad Don Booker received two prestigious honours in one postal delivery.

First he was invited to become an honorary patron of Barnsley Hospice and next came news that the Chief Scout and adventurer Bear Grylls, had awarded him the Scout Association's 'Silver Acorn' - pictured below - for exceptional services over many years.

He's also been invited to a ceremony at St George's Chapel, Windsor, two weeks before the Royal wedding.

When he was editor of the Barnsley Chronicle, Don launched an appeal that raised more than £1m for Barnsley Hospice which served parts of South Yorkshire. He was a founder director of the hospice and has supported the facility donating all his speaking fees for over 30 years.



He has been associated with the Scout Association for over 70 years as a leader, trainer and public relations advisor. In 1974 he was awarded the Medal of Merit.

For 30 years he has helped scouts in the shanty towns of Lima, Peru, and also helped in the training of the Chief Scout of Peru, Tito Chian Wong.

He was honoured by the Queen in the 1994 New Year list becoming an MBE and later a Barnsley Community Hero in the Millennium Awards.

Don said: "At 86 I thought the days of honours had long gone, but I am proud to still be able to help organisations."

Snow rescue is Steve's Civic duty!

GROUP member Steve Howarth thought he really had picked the wrong car for a recent weekend press trip to the Scottish borders.

The Manchester Evening News motoring editor found himself – along with nervous wife Angela – battling through blizzards on the M6 in the new Honda Civic Type R GT... which looks like it would be more at home on the race track than ploughing through snowdrifts.

However, while nearing their destination hotel in northern Cumbria – having left the relative safety of the motorway – they came across a young couple who had got into a jam in the snow... in a Land Rover Freelander.

So the track car became a rescue vehicle as Steve and Angela drove the shaken pair to a nearby village to arrange to get their Freelander recovered from the ditch.

Steve said: "I really thought we were going to be in trouble once we left the motorway and drove into yet another blizzard, with snow coming down sideways and big drifts building up on the country roads. I have never seen weather like it.

"I mean – have you seen the ultra low profile tyres on the Type R, they look like rubber bands.

"However, the Honda took it all in its stride and we got there no problem.

"The young couple we rescued were locals and they said they had never seen such bad weather conditions. And they were gobsmacked when they saw our car!"

Steve added: "They really were pleased to see us as their phone had no signal and the young lady was feeling quite unwell."



□ The snow-covered Type R reaches its remote destination after the rescue mission.

● Is this the ultimate fly-drive?

● IT was the usual pilgrimage to Geneva early in March to the 88th Motor Show.

● It's a show I always enjoy: small enough to get around easily, yet big enough to have most manufacturers there, with lots to see and do.

● It is, as we all know easy to get there, just a 10 minute stroll from the airport, so no transport required. I went in and out in the day from Liverpool - cheap and convenient

● There were plenty of world premieres at the show and all got lots of attention and coverage.

● But for me the most fascinating was the PAL-V flying car, not the figment of someone's imagination, but a real thing that is actually in production and available to buy, and drive and fly.

● With our congested roads, wouldn't it be brilliant to find a bit of straight road, get up to 80kph, and up into the air you go, and look down at those poor people stuck in traffic.

● But having this freedom does come at a cost, half a million euros to be precise. Though the nice people at

PAL-V did say the price will come down to 300,000 euros eventually, so think I'll wait till then, then..

It is powered by a petrol engine, and has a range of 1,200km on the road, and 400km in the air, so very useable.

The wings are on the roof, and fold away onto a roof-rack, and the propellers fold into the side of the body at the front. Press a button, and hey-presto, the wings fold out, and the propellers go into position.

You do need 40 hours of tuition in the air, before you can go solo, and get the appropriate licence.

The PAL-V interior is fully enclosed just like a normal car, has all the technology and nice things to have, and looked to be comfortable and easy to drive and fly.

Will the NGMW soon be road and air testing these soon?

I can just see Alan Domville with his goggles and leather flying helmet taking to the skies above Warrington....

Biggles flies over Cheshire....now there's a thought!

- Martin Ward



Good words can still triumph

IN my relatively short time as a member of the Northern Group of Motoring Writers - a mere 15 years - I don't need to point out that I've witnessed swingeing changes that I could never have predicted.

Even as a lowly weekly newspaper journalist, up until a few years ago I was able to attend two or three launches a month while still keeping up with my day-to-day responsibilities as a features editor.

These days I'm lucky to get away from my desk two or three times a year.

The decimation of the workforce and the increased workload means that even then I have to take annual leave to attend all but the most local events.

But, it seems, that even were I able to get away I might not be as welcome as I once was.

Invitations for the 'old-style' motoring hack with a list of print outlets are declining and instead PR departments are favouring bloggers and lifestyle 'journalists', many of whom have no formal training nor even any interest in cars.

The only expectation is that they will send off a soundbite to their 'followers' saying what a great time they are having and how lovely the car is.

One of our most experienced members, F Manby esq, who writes for the Yorkshire Post and Scotland on Sunday, has a tale to tell which may make you smile but is by no means uncommon.

Frederic explains: "At the key handout I'd selected a particular engine. Unfortunately the car was orange and matched the trousers of a waif-like blogger, who politely asked me if he could have the car because of its photogenic match with his pants."

Frederic declined but the blogger elicited the support of the PR chief who came to his rescue and the keys were handed over. Unfortunately for



FROM THE CHAIR with Julie Marshall

the blogger the orange car broke down.

Now, although it may seem that I'm something of a dinosaur with a short-sighted approach to progress, that's not the case.

I understand that people turn to the internet and social media for much of their information but there is still a need for well-written authoritative pieces that entertain as well as inform and that is

where our members and those of other regional groups can triumph.

However, I'm as much to blame as anyone when it comes to embracing new technology.

I have a Twitter account but have only sent one tweet in two years, I look at Facebook but never post and I don't even put my weekly road test online, which is frankly quite unforgivable.

So, with the help of our vice chairman and social media wizard Andy Harris, I'm determined to rectify that in the very near future and make an effort to join the 21st century, otherwise I might find myself out of a job before too much longer.



Yorkshire Press call for baby Declan

MEMBERS of the Northern Group have attended their fair share of weddings and funerals in the past 40-plus years, and in February a Christening was added to the list of public occasions.

Two former chairmen, Don Booker and Steve Teale, were at the event at All Saints' Church, Darton, near Barnsley, where they sat in opposite pews.

It was the Christening of Declan George Murray, Steve's grandson to daughter Charlotte, who members will remember attended some group events following the death of her mother.

Don was there at the invitation of George's grandma, Julie Murray. Julie met Don at his parish church and lives in a neighbouring street.

The minister, the Rev Jean Daykin, said: "It is the first time I have had Press people at a Christening and it was good to have the Yorkshire Post on one side and the Barnsley Chronicle on the other. It was a wonderful event and George played his part well. He probably realised the Press were present."

A curvy coupe and agony on a plate

IT SEEMED like such a good idea at the time.

But had I known of the hoops I would have to jump through; the beaurocracy I would have to face; the sheer unadulterated agony of getting an imported car registered in the UK, the pretty Pirit Grey alloys of our Peugeot RCZ would have stayed firmly glued to the roads of Cyprus.

Initially we thought of selling the RCZ before we returned to the UK, but sentimentality got in the way.

Not to mention the fact that we couldn't get a sensible offer when we tried to sell it before we left.

Apparently Cypriots don't much like French cars - they prefer their motors to come with a more up-market badge and are prepared to mortgage themselves to the hilt to impress the neighbours.

But that aside, the curvy coupe was Pauline's ride and, while the 156bhp turbo version mightn't be the world's most exciting sports car, she loved driving it.

Our pearlescent white version was one of the first to be imported into Cyprus and the first on the roads of Paphos when we bought it at the end of 2010. It came with grey leather chairs and trim, a full lighting pack, auto transmission and those optional alloys.

The RCZ stood out from the crowd on the roads around Paphos where battered old pick-ups, four-by-fours and the aforementioned Mercs and BMWs (common as muck) are the norm.

To part with it would have tugged at Pauline's driving heartstrings.

I was also reliably informed by so-called experts



□ Back on the road: Pauline with the UK-plated RCZ.



□ Stuck in the garage: David Whinyates with his Cyprus-registered Peugeot RCZ.

By David Whinyates

that, since it had gone out of production, the RCZ could, in the fullness of time, become a 'classic'. Perhaps Martin Ward could advise!

So the decision was eventually made. Shove it on a ship - cost £800-ish - and send it back to the UK where we would register it and cherish it for the foreseeable future.

So just before we returned last October, the RCZ disappeared into a container and on to a ship destined for Tilbury.

And that's when the fun - or should I say lack of it - began.

I'd been told by my Cypriot insurers that we would be able to use it here with third party cover until the insurance ran out at the end of the year.

That was mistake number one. You can only drive an EU-insured car on UK roads if you're here as a visitor - not if you're a permanent resident - and then for a maximum six months.

So when the RCZ duly arrived on a car transporter in mid-November it had to go straight into the garage of our new home.

First job was to fill in a form to tell the good people at HMRC that the car was here and prove to them that no outstanding VAT or duty was due.

No problem there but you have to do it before you can apply for registration - and within 14 days of the vehicle arriving, or face a fine of £5 a day for every day you're late.

Next step was to apply for a Vehicle Import Pack from the DVLA which duly arrived with one of the most complicated forms I've ever had to complete. Filling out a tax return is easier!

I would need to send the original Cypriot registration document (it's in Greek) a European Certificate of Conformity which was obtained through Peugeot (cost £140) - in French - and a valid MoT certificate.

Call me naive but I reckoned that an MoT

certificate issued by another EU country would be valid, so off it went with the rest of the required documents with my application and a check for £176 to cover road tax and first registration fee.

By this time the car had been sitting in the garage for a month, so I was delighted when a letter arrived from the DVLA just before Christmas.

Yes, you've guessed it - my application was turned down.

The documentation didn't prove that the car was fit for use on UK roads because it didn't show that it was RHD, had left dipping mainbeams, an MPH speedo or a rear fog light.

Does no one at the DVLA know that EU-built cars sold in Cyprus are right hand drive?

But they insisted that I needed to provide proof of this to another department of the DVLA - the Vehicle Certification Agency (VCA) - in the form of a letter from an authorised dealer or MoT testing station. Once they were happy they would issue something called a Certificate of Mutual Recognition. It would cost £100.

And I needed to get it MoT tested in the UK to prove that it was roadworthy. Cost: £35.

All of this was arranged through the local Peugeot dealer and the paperwork sent off to the VCA in mid-January...only to be returned because the letter from the dealer was not dated!

This was becoming a nightmare. Another trip to the dealer produced a dated version of the same letter which was duly despatched and the Certificate finally arrived in early February.

Now, at long last, I could resubmit my registration application to the DVLA and, on February 15th, the DVLA finally approved it.

Problem was, we were out of the country on holiday so it was early March before Peugeot RCZ registration number NY60 FLR (£37 for the plates fitted by Halfords) finally turned a legal wheel on the roads of Britain.

Happy? Yes, of course Pauline is.

It's only cost around £1,200 to keep that smile on her face - not including the cost of insurance.

And that's another story...

Just please don't get me started on the problems of insuring an unregistered car or of getting a UK insurance company to accept proof of a No Claims Bonus earned in another EU country!

A virtual victory is the name of the game

AS many Group members will know, McLaren has recently been making its small press fleet more accessible by holding regional driving days.

Going by the name of "The Tour", McLaren takes a selection of its road cars to a handful of dates around the country, inviting nearby journalists to spend some time behind the wheel.

The events started in 2016, and I had the good fortune to receive an invite. As I happened to be working in Gosport at the time I opted for the date held at the Goodwood Circuit.

I'm sure I don't need to tell those of you who've had a McLaren experience that it's one of those things to savour. I only got to drive the 650S that day, but I did have a wonderful driving partner in Sue Baker.

We chased a camouflaged Rolls-Royce around the local roads, tried our hardest not to worry horses down a narrow lane (imagine trying to explain hoof prints in his car to Wayne Bruce), and had a lot of fun that was over far too soon.

Along with the cars, McLaren brought a driving simulator rig. Driving games are my thing – after all, I write for a website founded on racing games – and I can never resist giving them a quick go, at any events.

Appropriately enough, the chosen time trial used a McLaren P1, with the Silverstone International Circuit as a venue – a track I've had the fortune to drive in reality too.

On my first pass, I set a reasonable time. I hadn't noticed that there was a leaderboard, featuring times set by all of the attendees who'd chosen to

ANDREW EVANS tells how simulated track drives in a McLaren have earned him a weekend with the real thing...twice!



have a go before me, but I placed comfortably in the top ten.

As I had a little time to kill and there wasn't a queue, I thought I'd try to get a little higher. Lap by lap the times fell until I was in the top three.

With a few minutes left of my evening I tied the top time to the exact thousandth of a second. On the next pass I went top dropping Sean Ward of the Southern Group into second by a tiny margin.

Pride satisfied, I went to gather my gear. McLaren's Hayley remarked "I didn't know if you wanted to beat the time for pride, or because you really wanted to win the prize."

Prize ... what prize?

Unbeknown to me, McLaren was offering a prize for the fastest simulator times. The top driver from each of the five dates would receive a scale model of a McLaren P1. The top time overall would win a McLaren 570S for the weekend...

As the Goodwood date was the last of The Tour's events and I'd set my time at the eleventh hour, both the model car and the real thing were mine.

The model arrived a few weeks later, but I went down to Woking in the summer to collect my main prize so I could bring it North.

I think I can say without hesitation that my trip up the M1 to Teesside was the most photographed I've ever been – dangerously so at times, as other drivers were so focussed on getting lined up for a shot and not the road ahead...

The baby-Mac got to



Andrew Evans	1:06:488
Sean Ward	1:06:524
Phil Toman	1:06:566
Chris Pickering	1:06:898
Phil Huff	1:06:923
Jon Dean	1:07:130
David Pealy	1:07:230
Adam Bennie	1:07:317
Paul Williams	1:07:344

experience the best roads North Yorkshire has to offer, from our best-kept secret of Blakey Ridge down to the picturesque Cleveland coast and Saltburn's famous Bank. Handily the the two-pedal setup meant my wife could drive it too.

Sadly, just like the initial drive, the fun was over far too soon, and McLaren collected the car from my door early on Monday morning.

Fastforward to late 2017, and McLaren was again holding The Tour. As champion of the driving games, McLaren asked me to return to defend my title.

But this time, McLaren threw a curveball. The rig was the same, but the game, console, track and car had changed. This time the challenge was Donington Park in a virtual McLaren 720S – and this time I knew that there was a prize, of the same 720S for a weekend.

With Hayley on hand to monitor again, I tried a few test runs between my real-world drives to get my eye in before setting off after the top time – once again, held by Sean Ward.

This time it didn't take long, getting 0.05s ahead after just my second run.

But McLaren's social media manager, Hunter Skipworth, had set a quicker time and with the knowledge that others would be trying to beat me on day two, I went for more.

On my fifth run, Hunter's time fell as well, giving me an 0.8s margin over Sean. But would it be enough?

A month later I took the call from Adam Gron: I'd done it again.

I'm yet to book my 720S weekend!



□ Spectacular: Andrew drives the McLaren down Saltburn Bank

Farewell and thanks to PR's Peter Pan

HE is the Peter Pan of PR.

A man who brought fresh ideas and his own brand of infectious enthusiasm to the business.

Now Denis Chick has decided it's time to call it a day. Whisper it quietly but he is into his 70s and he has decided family must now come first.

He will be retiring from his role as communications director at Vauxhall in May and one of his "farewell" events was a memorable Insignia launch at Bruntingthorpe, a former RAF base in the Midlands which is now a proving ground.

The launch of the Insignia GSi, with hot laps provided by legendary Formula One tutor Rob Wilson, was typical Denis: an innovative event which showed the car in its best light and gave the assembled journalists – including Northern Group members - plenty to write about.

He is known industry-wide for being ever-present in the automotive world since he began his career as an apprentice back in 1965.

He was honoured with a Newspress Lifetime Achievement Award which came as he celebrated 15 years as part of General Motors' communications team, and more than 50 years in the automotive industry overall.

Having started at The Rover Company, he moved through several engineering roles into Product



Planning and Marketing before joining the PR team in 1985. He later went on to become Director of Product Communications, Rover Group in 1994 before leaving the business in 2000.

After a two-year spell at Trafficmaster, Denis joined General Motors in 2002, initially in the role of PR and Marketing Manager for, the then embryonic, GM Daewoo UK.

That role transitioned into a multi-brand remit covering all GM brands sold in the UK. Denis was appointed Director, Communications for Vauxhall Motors in 2009, and has since overseen launch programmes for several of the company's most successful models.

Denis may be 'old school' but his ideas are bang up to date.

Happy retirement, Denis. Your friends up North will miss you.

- Steve Teale

Malcolm gets bigger on nostalgia

EDITING the quarterly journal, SAHB Times, published by The Society of Automotive Historians in Britain, is just one of Northern Group member Malcolm Bobbitt's tasks in addition to his day job of reviewing new cars and writing on all motoring matters.

From no more than a single black and white folded A4 sheet newsletter in 1980 when the society was established, the SAHB Times has grown into its present milestone full-colour 40-page publication.

When Malcolm took over the editorial position in 2012 following the sudden death of well-known motoring journalist Tony Beadle, the journal had already grown to 28 pages.

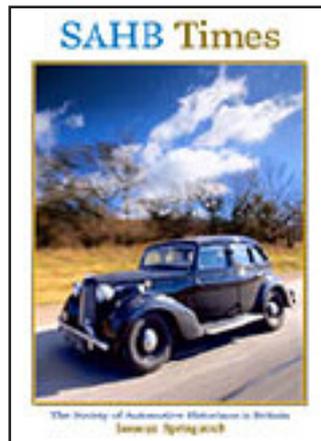
Under Malcolm's guidance the publication grew to 32 pages, then a couple of years ago went to 36 pages when a change from monochrome to full colour was made.

Now another leap has seen the current issue featuring 40 pages,

the cover depicting Northern Groupie Guy Loveridge at the wheel of his Austin Sixteen.

In an age when many editors have difficulty in sourcing copy, Malcolm is in the fortunate position of being kept fully supplied with contributions regarding all aspects of motoring history. The magazine is also an important means of the society's members being able to share their automotive history researches.

The society presently has some 230 members, a number being



eminent motoring journalists and authors whose interests range from the formative years of the motor vehicle through to the vintage and classic eras to the present day.

Malcolm isn't complacent about having a full postbag of features to publish.

Knowing members' interests and how and when specific articles and news items might add to a theme is all part of the editorial role.

It's also about encouraging people who might be publication-shy to write about their interests and researches, and helping them to construct material that adds to chronicling motoring history.

The society, which additionally arranges two seminars annually as well as publishing a highly acclaimed yearbook, Aspects of Motoring History, also hosts the Michael Sedgwick Award – named after the distinguished motoring writer - for the best in new motoring books. It also has a website, wwwthesahb.com, and visiting it might just summon some nostalgia.

Doesn't that just CAP it all?

NO apologies if this piece comes over a bit about: me,me,me, but that in fact is exactly what it is about... me.

A few weeks ago I celebrated 30 years at CAP. Although I'm not sure celebrate is the right word... 30 years - that's nearly half my life.

It all started back in February 1988 in Skipton, when a handful of ex-car salesmen decided to take on the world, or at least a certain long standing used car guide down in Surrey.

We were regarded by them as not so much a threat, but more a mild form of amusement, as we probably were by the motor industry in general.

The mainly ex-military of them down south, could tell their friends in the clubhouse on a Friday afternoon about these Northern country bumpkins who were trying to create and sell a used car guide - ridiculous- it will never work

But our true grit, determination, maverick attitude and stupidity saw us through many a dark day, when the future really was not that bright, and it was an uphill battle

Many of us stuck at it, including Martin Keighley and Alan Senior. Unfortunately we lost two founding members along the way, John Coates and Wally Hill

Over the years we hung on in there, came up with new ideas, more innovative ways of doing things, and bit by bit, little by little, we gradually began to make our mark and a name in the great British Motor Industry. But it was a long hard slog and at times very frustrating and depressing.

After take-overs and buy-outs, investment was there and over the past few years, we have never really looked back, as the company grew and grew.

From those humble beginnings, back in the Old Vicarage in Skipton, to now being owned by a large US Company, Solara Inc.

You really could not make up this rags to riches story, but it's all true. Unfortunately for me, I'm still in rags, as it was the big boys along the way that had the riches!

Here's to the next 30 years, though I guess I won't be on this planet in 2048, let alone still working at CAP HPI.

- Martin Ward

When it comes to test car insurance - be sure of what's covered...

Don't assume - check

ANYONE who follows their local traffic police on social media will have realised how none of our constabularies plays games when it comes to clamping down on insurance dodgers.

This is keep-ball. Or rather keep your car.

Now, I don't doubt we all ensure our personal cover is bang on the biscuit. However, one question: When was the last time you asked if your spouse was okay to drive a test car?

Yes, I know we have PRs who take it as a given, but increasingly the back office has taken over another part of the press service we once took for granted.

“ Insurance has become a long and winding road with an increasing number of manufacturers adding twists and turns to their methodology...”

Like wanting guaranteed publication even if it is just a one day event showing off the range with a low-level lunch.

I have just said no to an event which would have called for me saying exactly where four short-drive reviews of the cars would appear. Sorry, not realistic.

Insurance has become a long and winding road with an increasing number of manufacturers adding twists and turns to their methodology.

Mitsubishi we have discussed at Group because the acceptance agreement seems to leave the journalist responsible for any damage which cannot be claimed against a third party.

Ever been swiped parked up in the multi-story? That could be what we are talking about.

I have no problems with credentials; just be aware.

If you don't ask Subaru if your wife can drive you won't know that they need both a licence check code and a driver form precisely like the one we fill in on launches.

Vauxhall and Nissan-Infiniti use the Fleet Claims company while others simply want a PDF from the government website or licence check code. A few simple keystrokes.

I think at least one press office settles for a scan of both licence parts.

The point is if you don't ask you won't know and that could mean a family member driving uninsured.



If you don't want your partner to run into problems with the boys in blue when driving your test car, best make sure they're covered by the insurance, says STEVE ORME

That won't show up on ANPR but it will if you have a bump and could become a points matter. Six of them, in fact.

Even Everton hadn't managed six when Rooney went to court.

There are even those determined to milk a situation, something which could reveal a lack of cover.

The best I had was a guy calmly accepting accidents happen until he saw the company policy documents and the words press pack.

He then started grasping his neck an leaping about like Basil Fawlty shouting whiplash, whiplash.

Reminded me of the Blue Brothers' Rawhide scene.

It would be a less complicated world if press offices could practice some conformity but, just like sat-nav, it seems everyone wants a different system.

In the meantime keep in mind how the motoring game has moved on and be certain any extra drivers are covered.

Oh, and a licence check is valid for three years so it's worth getting on top of your admin.

Above all remember, assumption is the mother of all disasters.

It's Hyundai versus Subaru in mower wars

Hot on the heels of news that Jonathan Smith has a go-anywhere Subaru lawnmower I

have countered with a slightly warm Hyundai hatch version.

It comes in at just under 100cc and the man in the shop said it was overpowered for the domestic job but, like Smith, we have an extensive area to cut and I sacked the outdoor staff after re-reading Lady Chatterly's Lover.

Regrettably, unlike Hyundai press cars the lawnmower does not come with a full tank of fuel and cannot be switched for another model when due for cleaning.



Forget all the fun... the race is run

ANY young journalist who fancies being a motoring correspondent had better be quick ...the job has had its best days and faces a limited future.

That, at least, is the view of Peter Dron in *The Good The Mad & The Ugly* (Veloce £14.99).

Gloomily, he predicts that eventually we will have to use self-driving cars after an interim period of semi-autonomous cars. In this scenario, he muses, companies like Aston Martin and Porsche and Ferrari have no long-term future.

“What would be the point of a supercar if you cannot actually drive it and the speeds of all road vehicles are under electronic control?”

“Obviously, it would be the end of the motorcycle industry, because you could not have bikers mixing in with unmanned vehicles.”

Ergo, there will be no need for motoring hacks because the job will not exist.

“How can you test drive something you are not driving?”

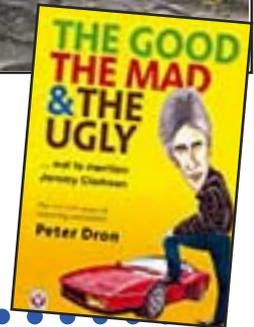
Hmmm ... NGMW members know one insurgent who has road-tested cars he has never driven.

All this comes at the end of 250 pages in which Dron examines his career as a car journalist during which time he was founding editor of *Fast Lane* and an eminent road tester for magazines and national press.

He seems to approve of what he has done while clearly having little time for those who have done the job badly or misbehaved or abused hospitality or people.



As the age of self-driving cars dawns, well-respected writer Peter Dron reckons that time will soon be up for us motoring hacks... FREDERIC MANBY leafs through the pages of Peter’s latest book (right).



There are dishonourable mentions for George Bishop and Roy Harry, two aboozers well known to members of the NGMW.

George’s excessive excess was tolerated because he wrote a whimsical, almost non-car page for *CAR* magazine, which was then the peerless glossy.

Roy Asleep at the Wheel Harry had one of the best jobs, as motoring corr for the *Guardian*, which made him almost bomb-proof. He went almost everywhere, established standards in vodka consumption - “iced Russian water” he called it - could be amusing or a boorish bully, and finally hit the buffers when he was found zonked out at some traffic lights in London.

Bishop was seemingly impregnable, even recovering from a court prosecution for selling a friend’s car - without permission.

The exotic LJK Setright is mentioned in a better light, as is Yorkshire’s lovely Brian Laban. All are now dead. Lots of “them” are dead.

Dron made a decent living from his journalism, which he carried out professionally and with success. For several years he has lived and worked in France, where he drives a Morgan - what else could a dashing old Englishman drive!

He also had plenty of fun. Those fun days are gone, too, as the structure and fortunes of the media changes. That’s one reason he says the job is done, the race run.

Dron tried being a racing driver but should not be confused with Tony Dron, his brother, a professional racing driver with dozens of victories including class wins at Le Mans, the Nurburgring and the Goodwood Revival meetings.

Oddly, the book’s few references mention him only as “my brother”. Conversely, he plays games with some people’s surnames - such as Adcock (think about it) - but someone called Dron runs a risk of acquiring a final e.

The book takes us through the last quarter of the 20th century and into the first decade of the 21st.

It’s an exciting ride. Tales of testing fast cars, admitting to absurdly high speeds on public roads, getting the knife into those blighters of the game, some enigmatic cat-and-mouse prose about Jeremy Clarkson and a few blokish sexist quips, also better left out.

The gist is that he had something to say about the great Yorkshireman but wanted to be sure he wouldn’t get sued.

He never got a reply to emails so whatever it was never made the book. Nor do any members of the NGMW.

I once almost kept up with him on a car launch but backed off on a long curve. He explained, modestly I think, that his experience on the bankings at MIRA (or somewhere) gave him an edge.

C’est la vie sur les virages.

OBITUARIES:

Tony Willard & John Slavin

TONY Willard, motoring correspondent for the Birmingham Evening Mail before his retirement in 2016 and a founder member of the Midlands Group in 1989 died in November at the age of 76.

Tony had also served as editor of

Automotive Management and Dealer Update and was a correspondent for the Press Association’s news features division.

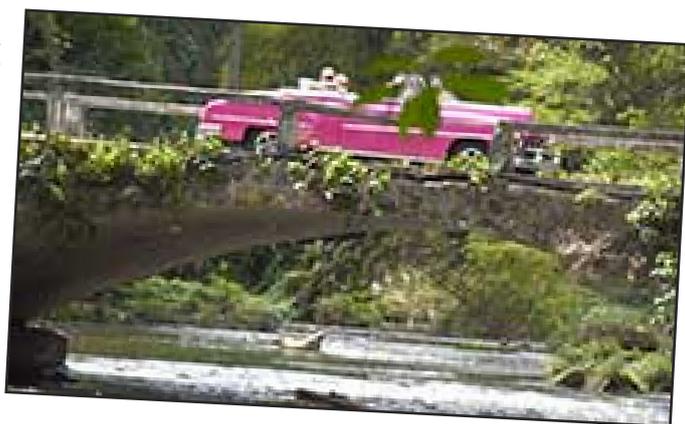
John Slavin, who worked with the Honest John team, died in January. His funeral took place at St Andrew’s, Grinton in Swaledale.



Cuban classics



A recent cruise stop-off in Cuba provided NGMW News editor David Whinyates with a chance to gaze in awe at the hundreds of classic American and European models cruising the streets of Havana. David and wife Pauline toured the sights of the Cuban capital in a 1961 Chevrolet convertible and these are just some of the photos he took on the way.



Gale sweeps in at Volvo

MIKE Gale has succeeded **Nikki Rooke** as head of public relations at Volvo, Nikki having been appointed the company's vice president for external communications in Gothenburg.

Mike had previously been with SEAT since 2015 and before that he was with the Renault and Dacia press office.

Nikki had been head of public affairs, events and sponsorship since August 2012 and was previously head of communications at the SMMT, senior communications manager with A1GP World Cup of Motorsport and communications planning manager with the Premier Automotive Group.

Matthew Bendall is now head of press and PR at Groupe Renault UK. Formerly the company's press relations manager, Matthew has been with the company for nine years though he initially became associated with the brand back in 2005 on the graduate management scheme.

Jeremy Townsend left the Renault group, where he was communications director, in February in order to follow a new opportunity within the industry.

Jeremy had been with the company for more than 20 years and moved into the press office in 2007 initially as press relations manager.

Jade Wells, formerly of the Suzuki and International Motors press offices, is now senior event brand manager with Team Silverstone.

Kia's press office is back up to full strength with the appointment of **Lauren Martin** as press officer responsible for the press fleet.

Moyo Fujamade has now switched to the role of press officer responsible for events.

Lauren has joined Kia from Bournemouth University where she graduated in public relations.

She gained a year's experience within the motor industry's PR firmament, spending her year out with Honda.

Several members were able to meet Lauren when Kia introduced the Stonic in Newbury in October.

Coincidentally, the new head of public relations in Honda UK's communications department is **Louisa Rowntree** who had



□ Moving on: Former SEAT man Mike Gale has joined Volvo as head of public relations.

Motor Industry News with Alan Domville

previously held a PR role with Kia. Most recently she was working with Pepsico whose major brands include Walkers, Doritos, Quaker, Tropicana and Pepsi Max. She has also been with Philips Electronics.

Simon Branney now has more responsibilities for the management of the automotive PR team with corporate affairs assistant **Joe Boniface** and press fleet technicians **John White** and **Jason Ryder** reporting to him.

Press officer **Tom Lynch** who manages the press fleet is now also our contact for the company's

involvement in the British Touring Car Championship.

Ellie Ostinelli has returned from maternity leave and is now PR manager for power products while **David Rogers** continues as PR manager for motor-cycles.

Dev Mistry has left Honda and taken over as acting group PR manager for Subaru and Isuzu at International Motors following the departure of **Jade Wells** in November.

Sam Pollock continues as press and PR and responsibility for press car loans.

Previously she had worked alongside **Alun Parry** in the Suzuki press office and while at IM had made the re-launch of the Subaru brand in Great Britain a top priority.

Subaru have a new managing director. **Paul Tunnicliffe** has been appointed automotive development director for the IM Group and **Chris Graham** has succeeded him.

Chris has considerable experience working for the brand in commercial roles during the past 20 years.

Audi made changes to their events arm when **Kate Dixon**, media relations manager, went on maternity leave in December.

Two appointments were made to cope with their hugely busy 2018 product launch programme.

Camilla Scanes received permanent promotion to the role of media relations manager, being able to draw upon her considerable PR experience with Volkswagen, Skoda and, for three years, Audi.

Camilla had anyway been taking the lead role in the coordination of specific events. **Jessica Bowden-Eyre** shares the post on a secondment basis having moved from Audi's UK national communications team with whom she gained experience of large-scale launch events and media relations.



□ Coping with Audi's busy launch programme - Jessica Bowden-Eyre (left) and Camilla Scanes.

Continued on Page 14

From alpaca dung to cocoa: such a chuckle!

OUR fun-loving friends in motor industry PR were on top form with a chuckle-filled array of April Fool's Day stories.

Honda UK got off to a false start on March 29th – or were they just trying to be ahead of the game?

They trumpeted the arrival on April 1st of a concept roadster version of the CR-V. It would be half the price of the regular CR-V ... because customers would only be getting half the car!

SEAT's big April 1st launch news was the Arona Copper Edition featuring a coin slot in the dashboard which activates the engine. It's a direct response to the Treasury's push to scrap copper coins from circulation, said the company.

Statistics show that the average person has £12.70 in loose change, and according to SEAT's Rhea Sonible-Price: "Research shows

that some of our customers are brassed off that copper coins could disappear forever."

VW Group sister company Skoda got in on the act with Quarrel-Kancel technology - an in-built rear headrest speaker system that can be deployed by the driver within seconds of a rear seat fracas breaking out. Apparently the system was conceived by ŠKODA's Chief of Family Relations, Professor Si Lence and Special Projects leader, Dr April Fürst.



☐ Synchronised tea drinking at McLaren



☐ Chop top: Honda's CR-V roadster

Meanwhile MG Motor UK announced a new engine development programme designed to power its cars by alpaca waste.

The company's Daniel Gregorious revealed: "We have launched a pilot programme in the UK with the Faerie Tale alpaca farm in Kenilworth and the initial results are very impressive"

"We look forward to the day when people resign horsepower to the history books and refer to alpaca power. It really packs a punch."

Over at Hyundai Motor UK, the importers revealed the development secrets behind the i30N hot hatch's dynamic handling - a bespoke road surface

at its test track which enables engineers to capture tyre prints for dynamic analysis.

It's a mix of cocoa, butter and milk and, according to Hyundai's Chief Materials Engineer, Cara Mell: "The team of people that develops the mixture is among the most dedicated in the business, but they do tend to go a bit quiet over the Easter period..."

And last but not least, supercar maker McLaren revealed a series of extraordinary measures to increase factory efficiency ... including synchronised tea drinking!

- David Whinyates

Laura takes Holly's SEAT

Continued from Page 13

Laura Margott, who was formerly a member of Vauxhall's events team, has joined SEAT as cover for media relations manager Holly Williams who went on maternity leave in November.

Holly gave birth to a daughter, Martha, in December and, a month later, long-time friend of the Group Kate Dixon, media relations manager with Audi, became the latest member of the VW group's press teams to give birth, welcoming son Benjamin into the world

Lance Bradley is to step down as managing director of Mitsubishi UK in the spring. Lance has



☐ Kate Dixon and her husband with newly-born daughter Amelie and her little brother Benjamin.

More Motor Industry News

been with the company for 17 years and will serve as vice chair for a further year to help ensure a smooth changeover at the top.

Sarah Pelling is now the global product PR at Rolls-Royce. Previously she had spent a year as senior manager at Influence Associates after leaving Jaguar Land Rover where she was the UK events officer.

New managing director of SsangYong is Nick Laird. He has considerable experience in delivering successful business outcomes in various fields including the automotive industry and promises to implement ambitious plans for the brand in the coming years.

The marque's new PR and relationships manager is Vanessa Cox who has spent 20 years in the industry, most recently with Mitsubishi in both PR and fleet sales roles. Lawson Clarke are continuing to play a part in promoting the brand.

Vauxhall also have a new MD in Stephen Norman, who has succeeded Rory Harvey, Stephen joined Groupe PSA in 2014 as chief marketing officer and became senior vice president for sales and marketing two years ago.

Mike Biscoe is now general manager at Maserati GB having returned from Modena where he served the company in various senior roles.



☐ Laura Margott - stepping in at SEAT

Mike had previously held communications roles at Alfa Romeo and Fiat.

Back as chairman of MIPAA in their 50th anniversary year is Mark Harrison, communications director at Imprimator.

It is Mark's second term in office having led the association from 2006 to 2008. His deputy is Gavin Ward, media relations manager at BMW.

Sara Robinson, senior press officer with Kia is finance director and Craig Cheetham, director of Newspress Creative, is the membership director.

General secretary Heather Yaxley is an ex-officio director.

How I swapped a gear stick for a joystick...

THE line between fiction and reality in the automotive world is an increasingly blurry one.

Sony's Gran Turismo series of video games is a particularly strong example. Not only does driving the cars and tracks look close to reality, it feels it too.

Car manufacturers from Audi to Zagato are designing cars just for the game and presenting them at motor shows. Gamers are learning skills on the games and then becoming racing drivers in real life.

Companies like Logitech, Thrustmaster and Fanatec make full steering wheel and pedal setups for use in the home. You can even buy ready-built simulator rigs, if you have a few thousand pounds to spare. All the serious racers use at least a steering wheel, because no-one would drive a real car with a joypad... or would they?

Robotics expert JLB Design thought otherwise. Thanks to a collaboration between JLB, Sony and Nissan, it set about creating a real car that anyone could drive with a regular Playstation controller – and I got to drive it.

The car is a 2011 model Nissan GT-R. For the most part, JLB leaves it untouched – it's a full-fat, 542hp model. The engineers fit four individual robotic systems, one each to operate the steering wheel, accelerator and brake pedals, and one to control the gearbox through drive, neutral and reverse.

These systems communicate with six computers that monitor the vehicle's state 100 times a second. There's also a boot-mounted compressor that will apply instant maximum braking pressure and a remote kill switch to deactivate the fuel pump should things go awry.

The car's receiver is tuned to a transmitter unit which can be located anywhere within about a kilometre of the car. In the case of this GT-R, that transmitter plugs into an ordinary Playstation 4 controller, known as a DualShock 4.

In the relative safety of Silverstone's Stowe Circuit, Nissan handed that controller to me.

Pressing the controller's central button sets the car into a live state. Given how far away you are from this car when you drive it, it's a rather disconcerting experience, a lot more like loading a gun than starting up a regular vehicle. Holding the car on the brakes with the controller triggers, one button press shifts the car into drive, and now you have a 542hp, two-ton remote control car.

Just in case that wasn't all exciting enough, driving the GT-R/C from a static viewpoint is



□ Andrew Evans drives the Nissan GT-R from the passenger seat of the chase car and (right) setting up the GT-R for remote control operation.

ANDREW EVANS sampled the ultimate remote control car ... and the car lived to tell the tale!

rather tricky, so Nissan employed a chase car.

For us, that's a Nissan Qashqai driven by one of Silverstone's instructors. Now we're driving one car from the passenger seat of a different one – one which can neither accelerate nor brake as hard as the GT-R. Oh dear.

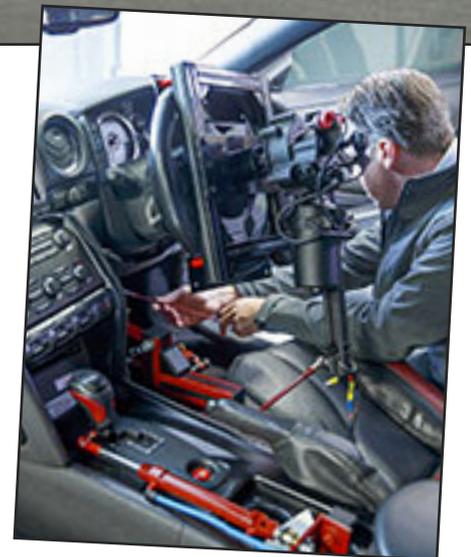
Easing off the brakes, the GT-R rolls into motion. The accelerator button may as well be labelled "nuclear option"; this might be an older model, but even with the extra electronics it'll hit 60mph in three seconds flat.

If you panic and hit the brakes, it'll come to rest in what seems like an instant. Caution is the keyword, learning what little increments will do – after all the difference between everything and nothing is about a centimetre of travel on a button, rather than several inches on a pedal.

Once up to speed with the speed, the steering is the next thing to contend with. The steering robot JLB fitted is accurate to one part in 65,000, and we're controlling it with a rubber stick the size of a tiddlywink.

The chase car is one thing when travelling in a straight line, but in the bends it's a whole different issue.

As the GT-R changes direction, we're still going straight, and when my inner ear is telling me I'm changing direction, the GT-R is moving across our path in a different direction. Entering the corner results in too little steering, exiting it results in too much, and lots of correction once everyone is pointing the same way.



Still, it didn't take long to adapt – I am a gamer at heart after all – and soon the GT-R/C was running a steady rhythm. It was only a simple oval track, but we reached the point where the Qashqai wouldn't have been able to keep up any more.

But we're mere amateurs; Jann Mardenborough is not. Mardenborough is one of those gamers who became a racing driver – he won the Nissan/Sony GT Academy in 2011 and has since gone on to a solid career racing GT3, F3 and Super GT cars. He's even driven an LMP1 car at the Le Mans 24 Hours, and that's some pretty heady company.

Like us, Mardenborough got too fast for the setup, but he still wanted to go faster. With the entire Silverstone National Circuit at his disposal, he strapped into the passenger seat of a Robinson R44 Raven II helicopter and drove the GT-R/C from above.

Amazingly, he hit 131mph down the Wellington Straight, on his way to a 1:17.4 lap of the circuit.



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