

Drivers' Guidelines and Etiquette

Northern
Phoenix
Trials Car
Club Ltd



www.nptcc.org.uk

Introduction

Northern Phoenix is proud of its reputation as a friendly Club that respects the rural landscape and those who work and live in it. Although these guidelines are primarily aimed at competing trials drivers, the Club expects all its members to help enhance its reputation by:

- being courteous to others at events;
- respecting the land and not causing unnecessary damage;
- taking responsibility for their own safety and that of others and helping anyone who may be in difficulty.

Pre-Event

- New drivers should check with an experienced competitor regarding the suitability of sites for their first few trials. Marshalling at more difficult sites is a great way to gain valuable experience safely.
- A Clubman's Competition Licence is not required for 'Club' events but is a requirement for BTRDA events. Licences are obtained from the Motor Sports Association (MSA) – www.msauk.org - apply early to avoid fast-track charges! Check the Club's event calendar/year planner on the website to see which are BTRDA events.
- Once the Club has a record of your regular entry details, the event entries should be notified by email to trials@windstruments.co.uk by the Thursday prior to the event, although entry forms and supplementary regulations (SRs) for each event will also be available to download from the Club's website – www.nptcc.org.uk . Entry fees should be paid to the Secretary of the Meeting, by cash or cheque, on the day of the event.

Arrival at the Site

- Aim to arrive at the site at least 45 minutes before the start time. Directions can be found on the SRs.
- Find the secretary of the meeting, sign-on together with your passenger and collect your car number and score card. Show your competition licence for BTRDA events.
- Adjust your trials car's rear tyre pressures to at least 5 psi, take the car and its logbook to the Scrutineer with the engine and battery areas ready for inspection. Ask what the minimum tyre pressure is for the event and adjust the rear tyre pressures accordingly. (50 penalty points for running under the minimum pressure!)
- Attend the drivers' briefing in the paddock prior to moving off to your start hill (shown on you score card). (Most trials are three/four rounds with two before the lunch and moving-on 2/3 hills between rounds - briefing will confirm.)

During the Trial

- Don't be over ambitious and be sure to maintain safe control of the car. Participant safety is paramount.
- Always ask a fellow competitor for advice if needed.
- Present your score card to the marshal at the completion of each section to record your penalty points for the hill.
- At the end of each round move-on the number of hills advised at the drivers' briefing, as shown on your score card.

Lunch Break

- Hand in your score card if requested to do so at the briefing. (This only occurs occasionally.)
- Give the car the once-over to check for and rectify any defects resulting from the morning rounds.
- Check the car's fuel level and refuel safely if necessary.
- Check if the minimum pressure has been changed for the afternoon round(s) and adjust accordingly.
- Enjoy your lunch and be ready to restart the afternoon rounds at the time notified at the briefing.

At the End of the Trial

- At each hill on the last round be sure to thank each marshal for marshalling – no marshals, no event!!
- Make sure you have completed all the hills and hand-in your score card when you return to the paddock.
- If required, the first car to complete the last hill returns to the paddock to collect a rake to repair the hill.
- **All** competitors in the group are to wait at the hill to assist with pole collection, raking and making good.
- All section poles (26 in total) should be bound together with bands and returned to the equipment trailer with the hill number. Intermediate poles should be kept separate and returned to the trailer along with any mallets and rakes.
- The sub-section numbers should be banded in order (1-12) as a set and returned to the trailer.

Golden Rule - Marshals are the sole judges of fact on their section and their decisions must be respected. If you think you have a genuine reason to question a marshal's decision you may do so respectfully. However, the Club will take very seriously any complaint concerning dissent, abusive, aggressive or otherwise inappropriate conduct of a competitor towards any official or participant.

Safety Matters

Sporting Trials in common with other motor sports is dangerous and carries inherent risks for participants. Driven carelessly or recklessly, trials cars are powerful and potentially lethal weapons. Drivers have a particular responsibility to ensure they drive within the limits of their skill and capability to maintain control of their vehicles at all times. This is not only for their own safety but for that of their passenger, marshals, other competitors, officials and spectators.

Some Safety Basics

1. **ALWAYS keep one hand on the car's fiddle brake levers and the other on the steering knob of the steering wheel when driving, otherwise you cannot safely control the car.**
2. **NEVER steer with two hands on the steering wheel – see 1 above!**
3. **WALK every section before attempting to drive it. Note any features to avoid that may upset the balance of the car, eg large bumps, rocks or holes. As well as memorising the course and your intended drive line, also check out safe descents, either from the top if you go clear or part way up if you don't.**
4. **Unsure of anything – always ask and seek advice from more experienced drivers.**

Steep Downhill Descents

Always descend slowly, under control and in a **straight downward line**. Trials cars have a comparatively high centre of gravity and narrow wheelbase. This means that they can turnover sideways relatively easily on steep cross-slopes.

- **When descending in a forward direction** - use fiddle brakes and foot brake judiciously to avoid the wheels locking and the car 'tobogganing' down the hill, particularly in wet, slippery conditions.
- **Steep backward descents are also potentially hazardous** if the rear brakes are applied too sharply as the front of the car tries to overtake the rear by flipping front over back – not recommended!! So, when reversing off a steep hill, avoid any harsh use of the fiddle brakes and apply front brakes very carefully, again to avoid the wheels locking. Locked front wheels = no steering effect.

You should also read the passengers guidelines and direct your passenger to help stabilise the car by shifting their body weight appropriately. If you feel a particular descent is likely to give you a problem, ask the marshal or other competitors to help you off the hill.

'Grip-Flips'

These can occur on steep uphill sections when 'blasting' (see driving techniques below) and the car suddenly attains grip and the front of the car lifts dangerously high and if unchecked can flip over backwards. Very nasty for the occupants and anyone nearby. The problem can be accentuated by the front wheels hitting a ridge or bump and flipping the nose up. Back-off the throttle and/or apply the rear fiddle brakes to bring the front down before the point of no return.

Driving Technique

There are only two basic driving techniques in sporting trials, 'trickling' and 'blasting'.

- **Trickling** is simply driving without wheel spin, which with trials cars low gearing and slippery uphill sections, is much easier said than done. The skill is to use the minimum of throttle necessary to keep moving at whatever speed you choose and to anticipate where wheel spin is likely to occur and use the fiddle brakes to check it.
- **Blasting** is the opposite of trickling, basically driving with as much wheel spin as possible to clean the treads because they are slicked over with mud, or where you think digging down to the surface underneath is likely to be better than the one on top.

Sporting trials driving is difficult because it is often counter intuitive – just when you think you need to accelerate is probably when you need to 'back-off'. Gain experience by watching what the better drivers do and try to emulate it. Practice wherever you can do so safely. Take part in the Club's practice days and the BTRDA's training days - details on the websites. There is also a helpful article on sporting trials driving skills on the BTRDA website - www.btrda.com/Sporting_Trials/article_1135.php.

Have fun, enjoy, be safe!

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