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SPECIAL EDITION

hillclimbing.org

AN INTRODUCTION TO HILLCLIMBING

EXCLUSIVE TEAM LEGACY
DRIVER INTERVIEW

*FROM DREAM TO DRIVER:
WHAT WE CAN LEARN
FROM DAMIEN BRADLEY'S
HILLCLIMB JOURNEY*

CELEBRATING THE SPORT OF HILLCLIMBING

PROMOTING, SUPPORTING, CHAMPIONING
THE SPORT THAT DRIVES US.

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Introduction

WELCOME TO HILLCLIMBING.ORG MAGAZINE

Thank you for signing up to hillclimbing.org. Like you, we love hillclimbing and hope to support our community and sport as best we can. We think we can best do this by bringing all the records and essential information together in one place - hillclimbing.org. We also want to celebrate the people, the stories and the very spirit of hillclimbing which makes this sport so very special. Thank you for joining us!



Hillclimbing is one of the UK's most exhilarating and accessible forms of motorsport, a pure, almost elemental contest between driver, machine, and hill. From the historic curves of Shelsley Walsh Hillclimb to the drama of the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb, its spirit has endured for generations.

But what truly defines hillclimbing is its people. The drivers, the volunteers, the supporters, the ones who give their time, energy, and heart to keep the sport alive, from grassroots events to the heights of the British Hillclimb Championship.

Our ambition is for hillclimbing.org to be more than simply a website. It is a platform dedicated to championing the sport, celebrating its people, and helping ensure that hillclimbing continues to grow and thrive for generations to come.

Onwards - Upwards,

The Hillclimbing.org team.

MAGAZINE PHOTOGRAPHY : STUART WING
www.captureyourcarphotography.co.uk

The Story of British Hillclimbing: A Sport Built on Passion and Community



The Beginnings

Hillclimbing is one of the most exciting forms of motorsport in the UK, but to really understand why it's so special, you have to know its history.

It all started in France, but Britain quickly joined in. The first British hillclimb took place in 1899 on Petersham Hill, Richmond-on-Thames. Forty competitors tackled just 325 yards under a 12mph speed limit. The winner was a Barrière tricycle, averaging 14mph and technically breaking the law!

The fastest proper car, driven by Charles Stewart Rolls, reached 8.75mph. Even at these speeds, the descent after the finish was the most thrilling part, with cars going faster than their brakes could handle.

Early hillclimbs were full of challenges. Mucklow Hill in Halesowen was run entirely on snow, and the winner of its one-mile course only managed just over nine minutes. Public roads were used for most events, which sometimes meant dealing with passing carts, farmers and unpredictable surfaces. By 1903, there were already 26 courses in Britain.

Then came Shelsley Walsh. In 1905, when the Midland Auto Club persuaded the owner, Claude Taylor, to let them use his private drive. Ernest Instone won the first event in a 35hp Daimler in 77.6 seconds. Shelsley Walsh went on to become the oldest surviving motorsport venue in the world, hosting events that would shape the sport for generations.

What is Hillclimbing? Where Are The Tracks? How Do You Win?



What is Hillclimbing?

Hillclimbing is a thrilling motorsport that challenges drivers to race uphill against the clock, navigating a series of twists and turns on steep inclines. This exhilarating sport has its roots in the late 19th century, with some of the earliest and most iconic events being held at locations such as Shelsley Walsh in the UK, which is considered one of the oldest motorsport venues in the world, and the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb in the USA, often referred to as "The Race to the Clouds." These events have become legendary in the motorsport community, drawing competitors and spectators from around the globe.

Overall, hillclimbing is not just about speed; it is a sport that embodies precision, technical skill, and the sheer thrill of the ascent. Drivers must possess a deep understanding of their vehicles, as well as the ability to make split-second decisions while navigating challenging terrains. The excitement of competing against the clock and the breathtaking scenery of the courses contribute to the unique allure of hillclimbing, making it a captivating spectacle for both participants and spectators alike.

As the sport continues to evolve, it remains a testament to the enduring passion for motorsport and the relentless pursuit of excellence in racing.

British Hillclimbs

In the UK, the British Hillclimb Championship (BHC) is the premier series and has been running since 1947. The championship features a variety of classes, and cars are typically divided into two main categories: two-seaters and saloon cars.

Through the 1910s and 1920s, hillclimbing grew steadily. Manufacturers such as Singer, Rover, Riley and Humber entered cars, and purpose-built racing machines began to appear. Times started dropping as drivers and cars improved. Spectators turned out in large numbers, with crowds sometimes reaching 4,000–5,000. By the mid-1920s, road racing on public streets came to a halt due to safety concerns, but Shelsley Walsh continued, holding regular meetings and keeping the sport alive.

The 1930s brought new venues, including Prescott near Cheltenham and Tregwainton in Cornwall, alongside a mix of Grand Prix cars and specials. Drivers like Raymond Mays dominated, lowering course records and pushing the sport forward.

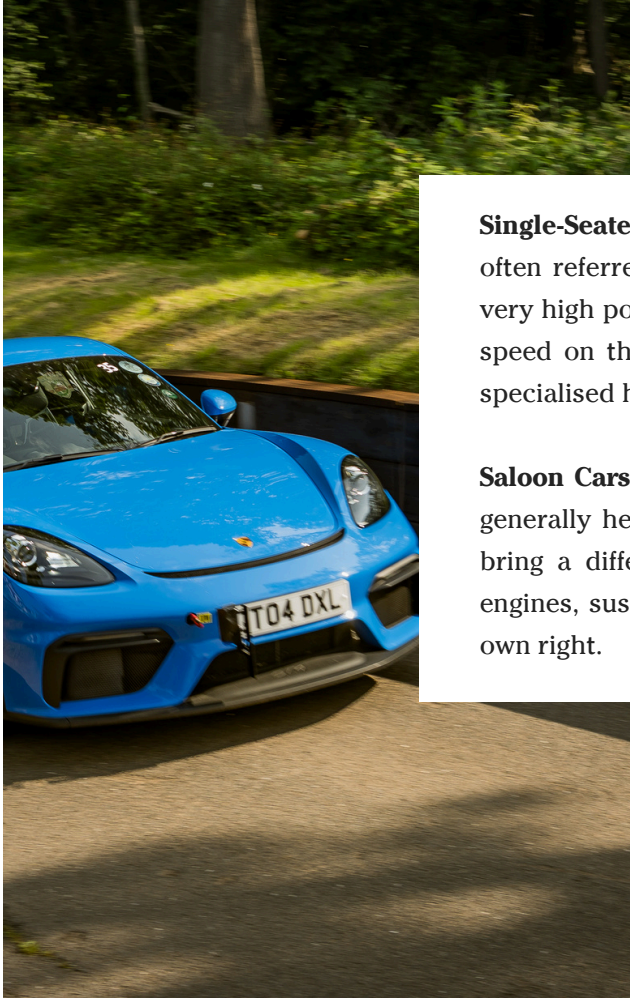
After the Second World War, hillclimbing was one of the first motorsports to restart. In 1946, 18 events were held, with entries from drivers such as Prince “Bira”, Reg Parnell and Peter Walker. The National Hillclimb Championship started in 1947, with Raymond Mays taking the first title. New courses also appeared in the Channel Islands, including Le Val de Terres in Guernsey and Bouley Bay in Jersey.



The 1950s and 60s saw more crossover between hillclimbs and other forms of motorsport. Famous drivers like Stirling Moss and Roy Salvadori competed on the hills, while the Cooper-JAP cars dominated the smaller classes. National champions during this period included Ken Wharton, Tony Marsh, David Boshier-Jones and David Good. New venues continued to appear — Wiscombe Park, Oddicombe, Gurston Down, Tregrehan — creating a strong network of hills, particularly in the south-west of England.

What makes hillclimbing really special, though, isn't just the cars or the drivers. It's the people. Volunteers — marshals, course stewards, timing crews, paddock helpers — make every event possible. They give their time, their energy, and their knowledge to keep drivers and spectators safe. Without them, no hillclimb could take place.

Hillclimbing isn't just a sport — it's a community. Drivers, teams, officials and fans come together around shared passion, and that spirit is what has kept the sport thriving for over a century.



Single-Seaters: These are typically lightweight, purpose-built racing cars, often referred to as single-seaters or open-wheel cars. They tend to have very high power-to-weight ratios and are designed for maximum agility and speed on the hill. This category includes vehicles like Formula cars and specialised hillclimb machines.

Saloon Cars: These are production-based or modified road cars. They are generally heavier and less specialized compared to two-seaters, but they bring a different kind of challenge. Modifications can include upgraded engines, suspension, and aerodynamics, making them competitive in their own right.

In the UK, the championship runs through various venues, with each event testing different skills. Points are awarded based on performance, and the overall champion is determined by accumulating points across multiple events. This blend of single-seaters and saloon cars adds variety and excitement to the competition.

International Hillclimbs

International hillclimbs in Europe, such as those in Brittany, France, and Croatia, are known for their longer, more challenging courses that often stretch several kilometers through picturesque, mountainous landscapes. These events frequently take place on public roads that are closed off for the competition, adding an element of unique charm and unpredictability. The courses are typically longer and feature more elevation changes compared to the shorter, more sprint-like hill climbs in the UK.

On the other hand, Pikes Peak in the USA stands out as one of the most iconic hill climbs globally. Known as the "Race to the Clouds," it features a 12.42-mile course with 156 turns and a dramatic elevation gain. Pikes Peak combines a mix of different vehicle classes, including production cars, motorcycles, and even electric vehicles, making it a unique blend of technology and endurance.



Overall, while European hillclimbs often focus on longer, more scenic routes, American events like Pikes Peak emphasise the sheer scale and the mix of different vehicle types, creating distinct yet equally thrilling experiences.

The Monster Hillclimbs

These are a thrilling subcategory of the sport, characterized by their extreme challenges and impressive vehicles. These events often feature specially designed, high-powered cars that push the boundaries of engineering and performance.



Types of Cars: Monster hillclimbs usually feature highly modified vehicles that can include powerful, custom-built machines. These can range from heavily tuned production cars and saloon cars to specialized, purpose-built hillclimb monsters that feature extreme aerodynamic enhancements, massive engines, and advanced suspension systems. Some of the most iconic vehicles include lightweight, high-horsepower prototypes that are built specifically for these demanding courses.

Courses: Monster hillclimb events are often held on particularly challenging courses that include long, steep ascents, and tight hairpin turns. The courses are designed to test not only the power of the cars but also the skill of the drivers, with a mix of high-speed sections and technical corners.

Overall, monster hillclimbs are the pinnacle of the sport, pushing the limits of both machine and driver, and offering spectators a truly exhilarating experience.

From the Hill to Formula 1: The Volunteer Spirit Powering British Hillclimbing

The Beating Heart of the Hill

Hillclimbing is one of the most exhilarating forms of motorsport in the UK — but what truly makes it extraordinary isn't just the cars or the speed. It's the people.

Unlike many forms of professional motorsport, hillclimbing is built on the dedication of volunteers. Without them, not a single car would leave the start line. Marshals, course stewards, start-line officials, paddock teams, rescue crews and timing officials all give their time freely to ensure events run safely and smoothly. No volunteers. No hillclimb. And that is one of the most powerful and inspiring things about the sport.

At every meeting, whether it's a local club event or a round of the British Hillclimb Championship, you'll find dedicated marshals lining the course.

They stand trackside in sunshine, wind and rain and are always alert, highly trained and absolutely essential.

They are the first responders if a car stops on course. They are the eyes and ears of race control. They are the guardians of safety. And they do it because they love the sport.

The atmosphere among hillclimb volunteers is unlike anything else in motorsport. It's welcoming, supportive and full of camaraderie. New marshals are guided by experienced hands. Knowledge is shared. Friendships are formed on grassy banks beside the track.

It's one of the friendliest communities you'll ever become part of. We're grateful to you all!



HOW TO BECOME A HILLCLIMB MARSHAL

One of the most beautiful things about hillclimbing is how accessible it is, not just for drivers, but for volunteers too.

Becoming a marshal is straightforward:

- Join a local motor club
- Register with Motorsport UK as an official
- Complete basic training (often provided by experienced marshals)
- Turn up, get involved, and learn

You don't need prior motorsport experience. You don't need technical knowledge. You simply need enthusiasm, reliability and a willingness to be part of a team. From your very first event, you are part of something special.

A Pathway to the World Stage

What many people don't realise is that volunteering at hillclimbs can be the first step towards officiating at the very highest level of motorsport.

Many British marshals who now work at Formula 1 meetings began their journey at grassroots events — hillclimbs, sprints and club race meetings. The training, discipline and experience you gain at local events form the foundation for progressing further.

With experience and additional accreditation, marshals can apply to work at major national race meetings and from there, international events including Formula 1.

Events such as the British Grand Prix rely on hundreds of highly trained volunteer marshals. Many of them started out exactly where you can start — on a grassy hill at a local British hillclimb. That journey is real. It happens. And it begins with putting on an orange suit for the first time.

It's More Than a Role, It's Community

Hillclimbing isn't just about motorsport. It's about belonging. Volunteering places you at the centre of the action. You feel the ground shake as cars launch from the line. You hear engines echo through trees. You witness courage, skill and determination from just metres away. But more than that, you become part of a community that looks after each other.

There's tea shared in the paddock. Laughter between runs. Quiet professionalism when it matters. Deep respect between competitors and officials.

It's a sport that values its volunteers not as background helpers but as the backbone of everything.

Why It Matters

In a world where so much sport is commercial and distant, hillclimbing remains proudly community-led.

It thrives because people choose to give their time. It survives because volunteers care. It grows because new people step forward.

If you've ever wanted to be involved in motorsport — not as a spectator, but as someone who truly makes it happen, then hillclimbing is one of the best places to begin. You could stand trackside at your local hill this season and then one day, find yourself standing beside the world's fastest racing cars - all because you said yes to volunteering.

Want To Be A Hillclimb Driver?

Here's how to get started....



Becoming A Hillclimb Driver

Have you ever felt that pull, that quiet, persistent voice that says I want to try that? To line up at the start of a twisting hill, trees closing in, heart beating hard, waiting for the marshal to drop their arm?

Hillclimbing looks dramatic. It looks elite. But here's the beautiful truth - it's one of the most accessible forms of motorsport in the UK.

And you don't need a purpose-built race car or a seven-figure budget to begin. You just need to start!

Join a Club — Find Your People

As you know, hillclimbing isn't just about cars. It's about community. One of the best first steps is joining the Hillclimb & Sprint Association. The HSA opens the door to events, advice, championships and perhaps most importantly, people who genuinely want to help you succeed.

You'll also need an RS Interclub licence from Motorsport UK. The process is straightforward, and you can apply from just 14 years old. Hillclimbing doesn't put up barriers, it invites you in

Your Car Is Probably Good Enough

This is the part that surprises people. You don't need a wild, carbon-winged monster to get started. Many competitors begin in their everyday road cars. That's one of the things that makes hillclimbing so special — it's real, it's relatable, and it grows with you.

Start with the basics: helmet, racewear, and making sure your car is safe and compliant for its class. From there, you evolve. You learn. You develop both yourself and the machine. Hillclimbing is a journey, not a one-off event.



Go and Watch — Feel It First

Before you compete, go and stand at the side of a hillclimb. Listen to the engines echo through the trees. Watch how drivers position their cars. Notice the calm before the launch.

There's something magical about that start line moment. It's intense, focused, almost sacred.

And when you watch, you begin to understand the rhythm of the sport, the paddock camaraderie, the course walks, the quiet concentration before a timed run.

Take the Leap

Eventually, there comes a moment when watching isn't enough. Enter your first event. Walk the course. Ask questions. Breathe.

No one expects you to be a champion on day one. Every top driver once stood nervously at the start, wondering if they were ready.

Hillclimbing rewards courage, not recklessness, but commitment. Precision. Feel. Flow.

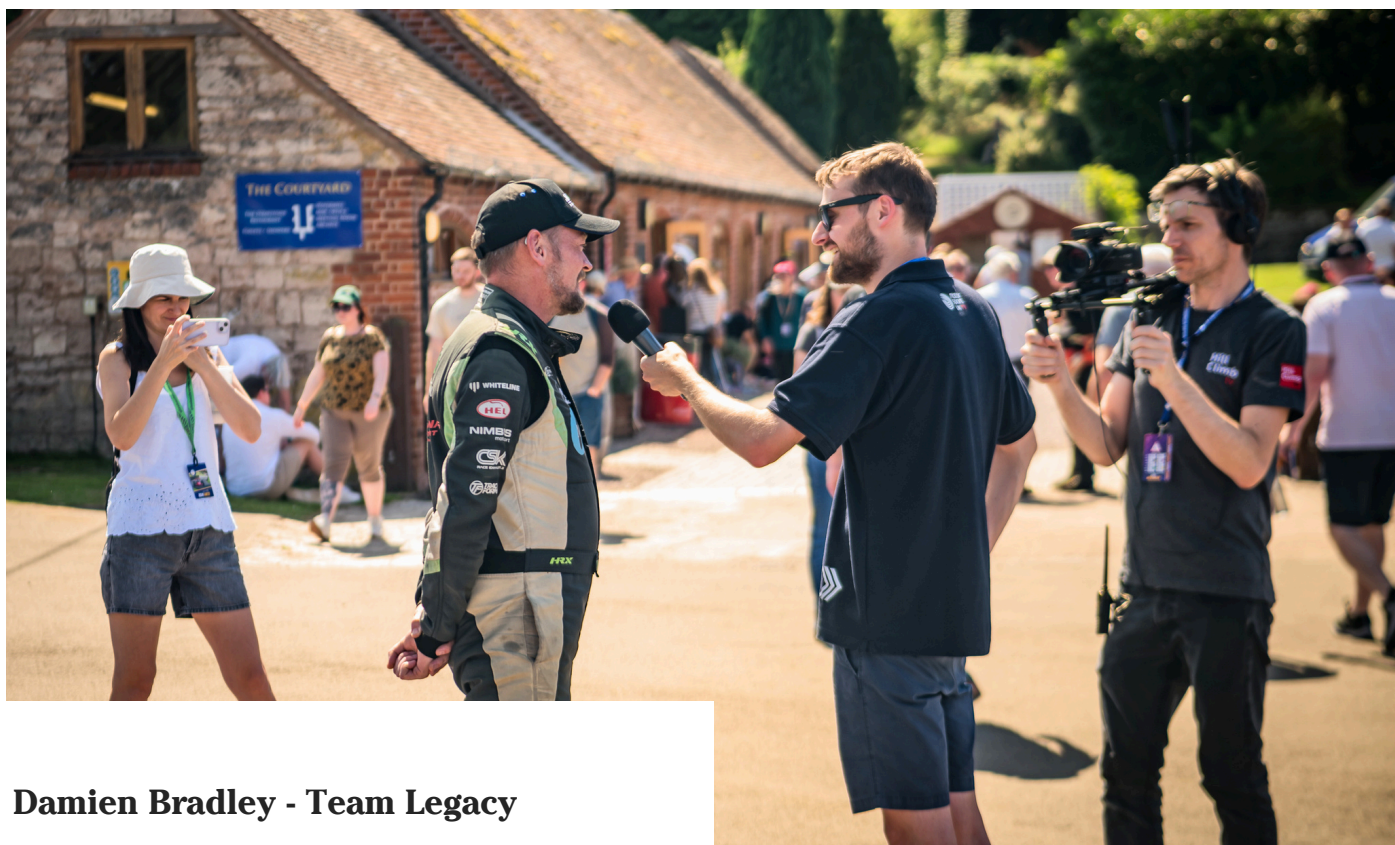
And once you've done that first run, once you've crossed the finish line and heard the timing announced, something shifts.

You're no longer someone who wants to do hillclimbing.

You're a hillclimb driver.



From Dream to Driver: What We Can Learn from Damien Bradley's Hillclimb Journey



Damien Bradley - Team Legacy

There are drivers who compete... and then there are drivers who redefine what is possible. Damien Bradley of Team Legacy is not just a hillclimb driver, he is force of nature. In a sport where bravery, precision and sheer commitment separate the good from the great.

Is it any wonder that Damien is now considered a true ambassador for the sport. He has carved his name into the hills, with relentless determination and a car that has become legendary in its own right.

In our driver interview series, spread across four engaging and insightful conversations, Damien shared honest reflections on his journey, his mindset and the realities of competing at the sharp end of the sport.

You can view the interview in full [here](#) on our website and on our new YouTube channel.

Going forward we will be catching up with Damien on a regular basis and inviting other drivers to share their views with us.

And it's not just drivers - we'd love to hear from anyone in our community who has something to say. Race officials, volunteers, tea makers, track maintenance teams, and event organisers. Hillclimbing.org is here for you to have your say - we'd love to include you!

Follow us now on [Facebook](#), [Youtube](#) and [Instagram](#) or email us directly at hillclimbing.org@gmail.com.