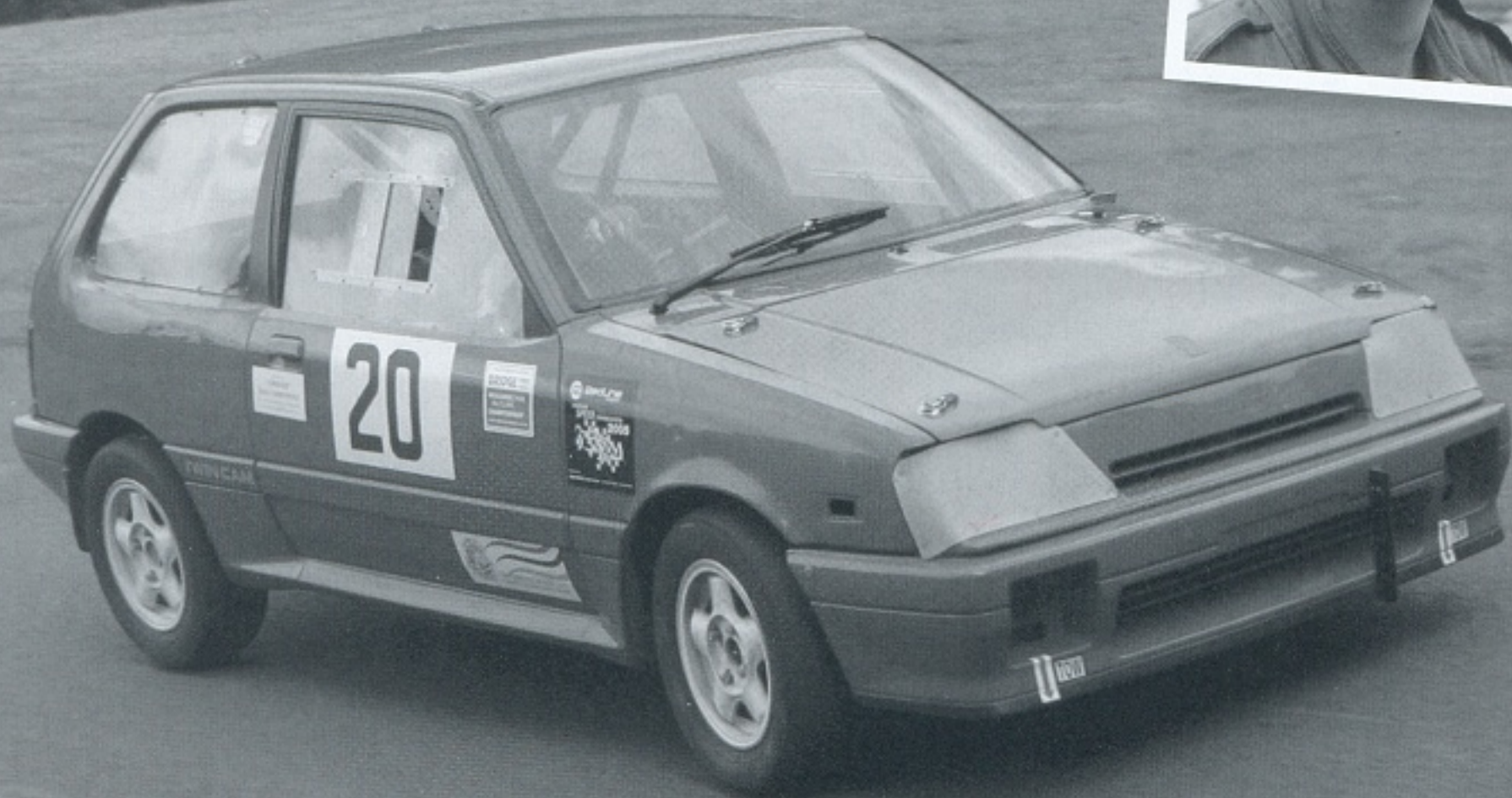


DRIVE IT!

TREGREHAN HILLCLIMB



Our South West correspondent Steve Chaloner describes his technique for tackling one of the country's lesser known hillclimb venues

You've almost certainly heard of Werrington Park and may even have heard of Castle (both previously featured in a Speedscene 'Drive-It'), but there is another hillclimb lurking in the county of Kernow which I will be describing in this Drive-It feature.

The Tregrehan hillclimb takes place on the front drive to Tregrehan House, located just outside St.Austell and not far from the Eden Project – which I'm sure everyone's heard of. At around 600 yards the hill is one of the shortest in the UK with the hill record being somewhere in the 17sec bracket, I believe.

The hillclimb is organised by the enthusiastic Truro and District Motor Club who run three events here each year; the first on Easter Sunday, the second in July and the final one at the end of August. The paddock is on a flat field and while not huge is more than adequate to accommodate the usually smallish entry. As is usual at temporary venues like this, portaloos are provided and a catering van

is in attendance to supply the all-important bacon sarnies.

I will describe the hill as I drive it in my Suzuki Swift GTi. The paddock exit is quite close to the startline, so it's best to roll back a few yards before commencing the tyre warming procedure. The first part of the hill is a longish straight, so I normally line up in the middle of the track as this is where most of the rubber is laid down. Grip is pretty good and after the start I usually grab second gear halfway along the straight and hold it until the first corner, a fast left-hander.

This is where the hill gets a bit tricky, as the track surface after this bend gets quite bumpy which can be a bit disconcerting if you're not prepared for it. In fact every time I compete here, mid-way through my first run I usually back off thinking something's broken on the suspension, purely because the car gets thrown around so much. However once you realise it's not the car but the track surface, then it can be quite

a challenge. I'd even go as far as to say an enjoyable challenge, but maybe that's my rallying roots showing through... It's probably best to run the suspension quite soft and I usually run my tyres a couple of psi lower than at other venues.

On the entry to this first left-hander there's also a little bump that unsettles the car, so it's best to treat the bend with respect as quite a few drivers have been sent on a very long slide across the open meadow to the left of the track after coming unstuck here. Once through the bend there is a short bumpy straight which leads into a very long, tight right-hand bend. This bend can be taken surprisingly quickly as there's plenty of grip.

Now follows a very short straight into a tight left-hand hairpin. Many drivers make the mistake of coming out of the right hander and then not getting back on the throttle, but to set a good time it's necessary to accelerate hard out of the right-hander and

brake as late as possible for the hairpin. The track opens up on the right at the entry to the hairpin and a surprising number of drivers choose to turn right into this, effectively widening the hairpin before turning left into it. However, I've found the quickest route to be to merely stay on the right-hand side of the road and simply turn into the hairpin without the jink right. In the Swift I change down to first for the hairpin, having been in second gear since the initial straight.

After the hairpin there is, almost immediately, a slight right-hand bend with the finish line on the bend itself. You will then cross a cattle grid before parking in a gravel car park.

Although the hill is short, it is still challenging and the organising team usually fit in three timed runs. Combined with a fairly low entry fee compared to many other events, Tregrehan offers good value for money.



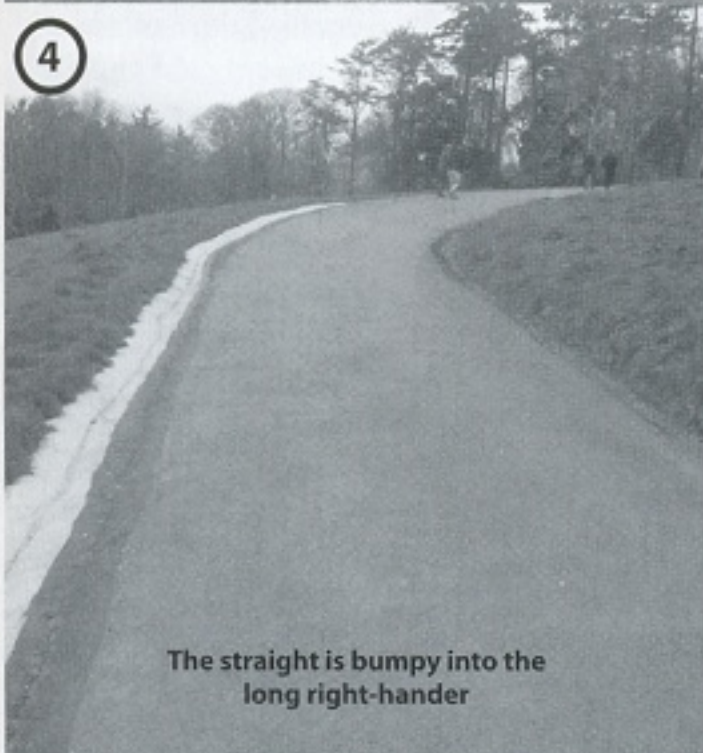
1
Line up in the middle of the track for the first straight



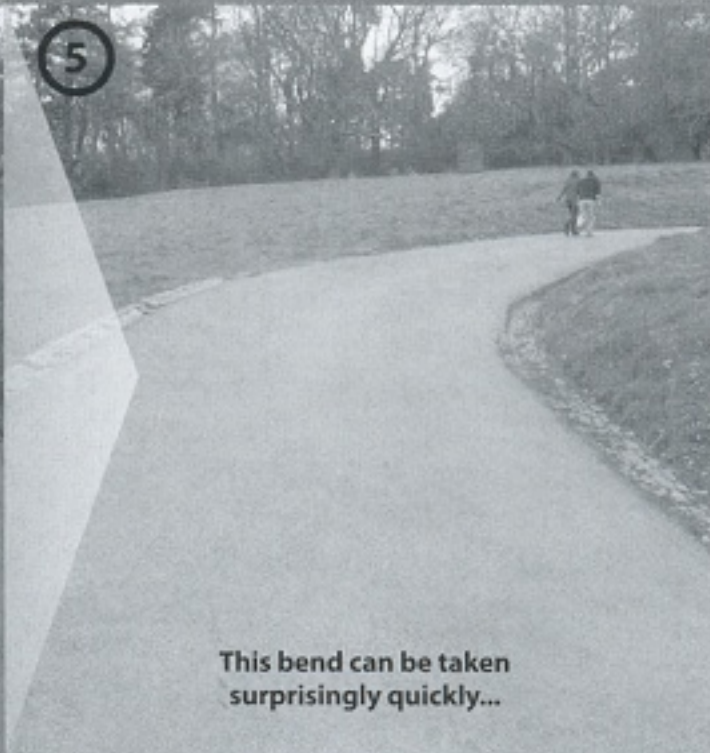
2
Watch the bump on entry to the first left-hander



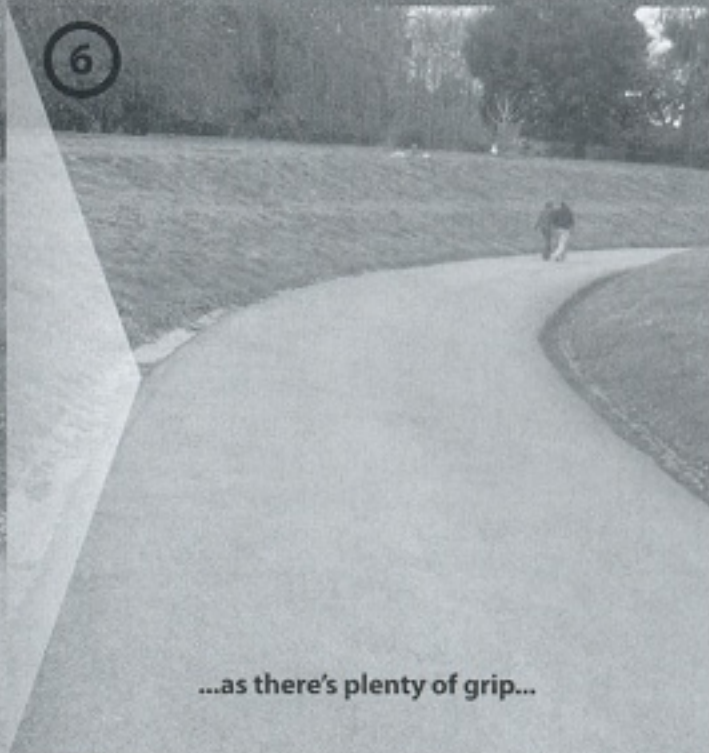
3
The track surface gets bumpy from here on



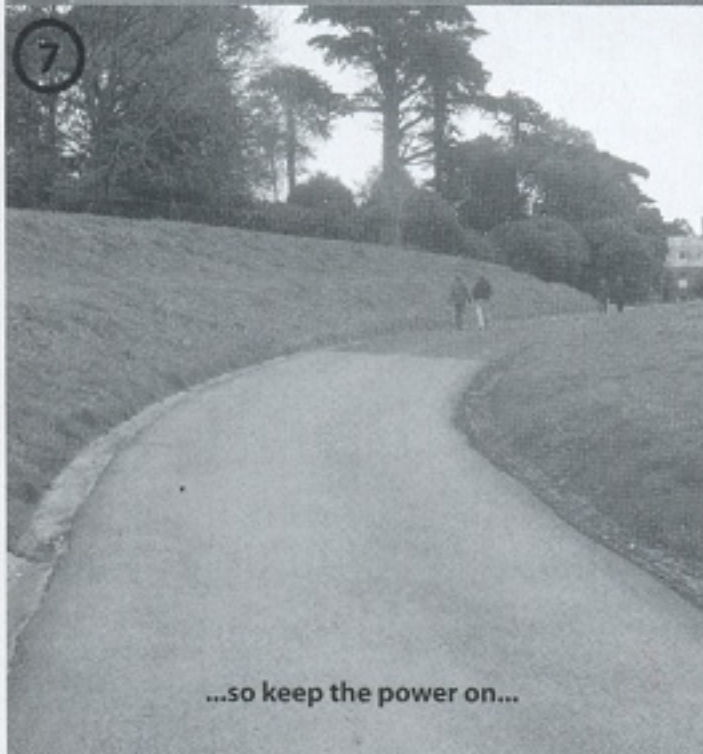
4
The straight is bumpy into the long right-hander



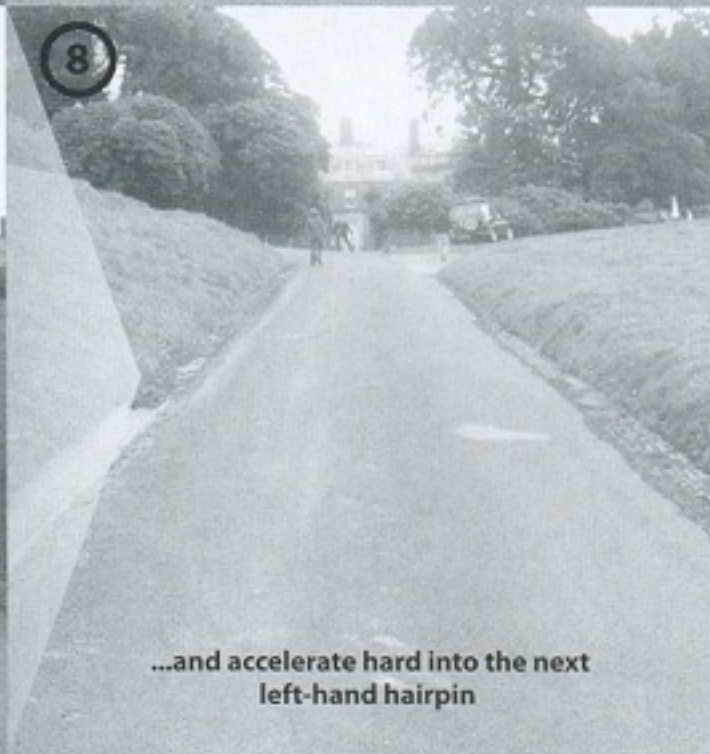
5
This bend can be taken surprisingly quickly...



6
...as there's plenty of grip...



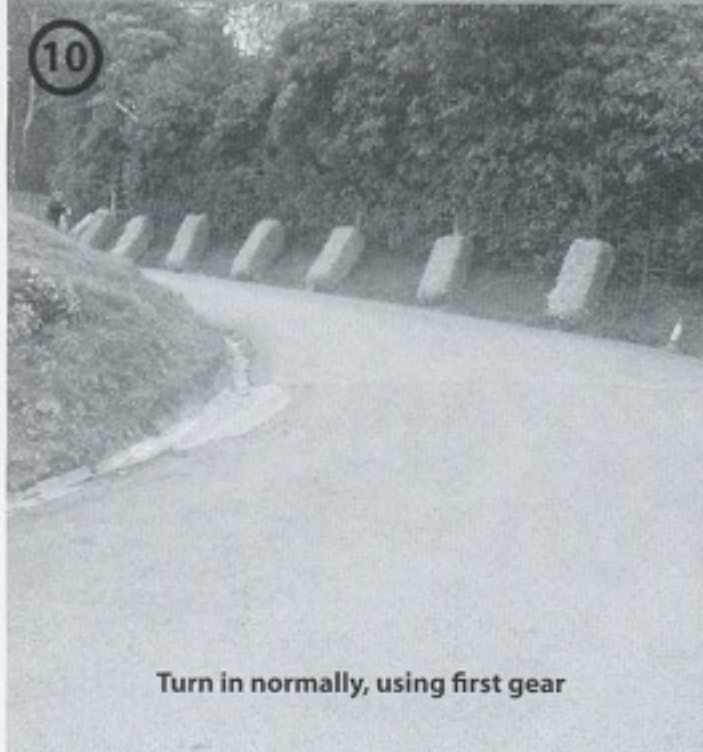
7
...so keep the power on...



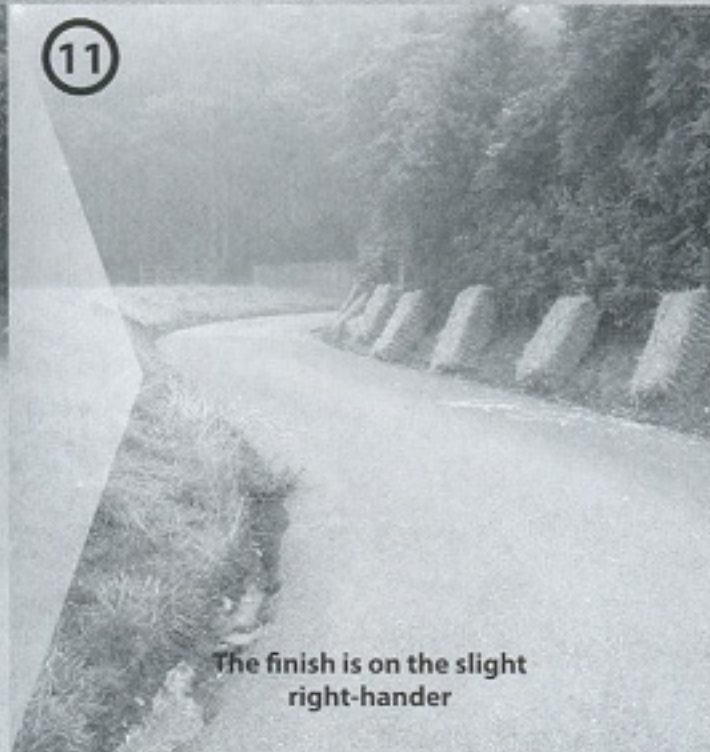
8
...and accelerate hard into the next left-hand hairpin



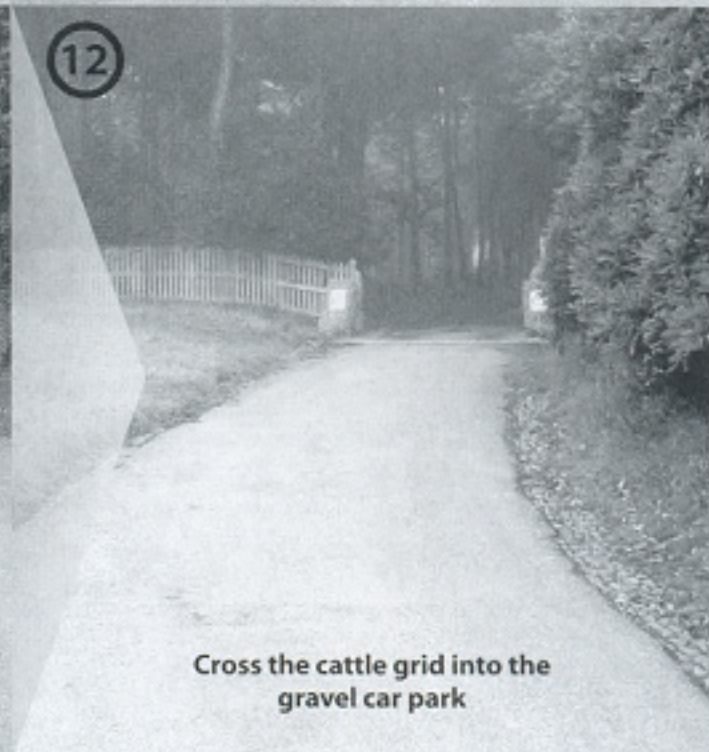
9
I tend not to jink right, rally-style



10
Turn in normally, using first gear



11
The finish is on the slight right-hander



12
Cross the cattle grid into the gravel car park