

RESULTS – HATTON PARK, JUNE 2026



Report and Pictures by Kevin Dyras & Dave Govier

From last month's report:

"The 17th of May saw the club descend upon Croft Farm in West Malvern on what promised to be a very wet Sunday. The committee had been watching the weather forecast all week with a lot of trepidation, especially Dave Govier, who was laying out with just his trusty 90. With only one 4 x 4 on site he had to be very careful not to get stuck or slide down the very steep slope on the big field. As usual though the weather forecasters seemed to have got it wrong. Yes, the site was damp, but nowhere near as bad as forecast, so Dave was able to lay out 9 sections without too much trouble."

This month's report:

The 7th of June saw the club descend upon Hatton Park near Warwick on what promised to be a very wet Sunday. The committee had been watching the weather forecast all week with a lot of trepidation, especially Dave Govier, who was laying out with Dave Burns. With only two 4 x 4 on site they had to be very careful not to get stuck or slide down the very steep slope on the site. As usual though the weather forecasters seemed to have got it wrong. Yes, the site was damp, but nowhere near as bad as forecast, so the Daves were able to lay out 9 sections without too much trouble.

Well that's 232 words completed without me having to think about it!

We had 12 competitors on the day, including 4 drivers in Land Rover 110s. For those of you who have not been to Hatton, it is basically a dense woodland area, with some very steep drops that is very slippery when wet, not exactly ideal for a long wheelbase. Add in that one of the 110s was being driven by Ant Tate in only his second event and you could see some of the marshals having cause for concern. To make matters even more worrying for us, Ant had brought his daughter along. Billie is just 17 and passed her driving test very recently. She is very experienced (NOT!) behind the wheel of the 110, having driven at least a mile in it. So, a very young novice driver, in her first event, driving a 110, in a wet, densely wooded site, to use the common phrase, "what could possibly go wrong?".

After a quick discussion it was decided to have Dave Burns take Billie round each section in his Land Rover so that Billie could see how the sections were driven by a very skilled driver, and then Dave sat in with Billie and coached her as she drove. This worked very well and Billie was as good a pupil as Dave is an instructor.

At the last event we had Jack Mogg compete after a long absence. This time we had another member take part after an even longer gap, and in a most unusual vehicle. Long time members of the club will remember Jim Bow. Jim was a founding member and great supporter of the club. He was also a bit of a character and liked to compete in "different" vehicles. Some of the members will recall his Lada Niva, fitted with a Ford Granada V6 with an automatic gearbox. Well at this event we had his son Lee Bow take part in a Fiat Panda. Lee last competed with the club in 1992, when he joined the army and disappeared for the next 25 years. It was great to see him again and hopefully he will be back again in less than another 25 years.

With 12 drivers, some double driven and a tightly wooded site, we decided to split into two groups. Dave Govier took over one group, along with Steve Burrows on video camera. Steve could only stay until lunchtime as he had an important appointment with his family for a meal to celebrate his birthday, one of those that ends in zero. No, not beginning with an eight, nor a six, you work it out.



Steve's 3D birthday card

I took the other group and we set off. Thanks to the lack of overnight rain the sections had dried slightly so were not as bad as we feared. The ground was a little slippery and when we reached section G the conditions caught out a couple of drivers. There were two uphill turns to the left on the section and as the drivers tried to climb the small ridge the weight of the vehicle meant that the front of the car just pushed straight on instead of turning. The 110s took their shunt there, but that meant that when they reached the gate where they needed the shunt they no longer had one available.

The first section saw everyone except Billie clear it without too much trouble. Bille reached the six gate, which for her first experience of driving off road everyone agreed was very impressive. Perhaps even more impressive was Lee in the Panda.

Compared with the conventional idea of an off road vehicle the Panda lacks a few things. For example:

- Ground clearance.
- Low range transfer box.
- Tall, aggressive mud tyres.
- Axle articulation.
- Engine torque low down.
- Plenty of wheel travel.

Ground clearance was actually not as bad as it looked, but still gave Lee a few problems, especially when driving between sections....



One beached Panda

The lack of a low range box was more of an issue as the Panda wanted to go faster than Lee did in the tight sections. Normally the driver would dip or slip the clutch, but with the Panda if Lee tried to slip the clutch the car's electronics would not allow him to rev the engine. With first gear being too tall this meant that the engine was not revving enough, so kept wanting to stall. All credit to Lee for managing to overcome this.

Not having much wheel travel turned out to be both a problem and an advantage in the deeply rutted sections, thanks to the very short wheelbase. Lee quickly worked that if he went quicker then momentum would let him drive over the ruts with at least one, and sometimes two, wheels high in the air. He was sort of cross axled without stopping, very entertaining! The big surprise was the amount of traction he could find on the wet, muddy banks. The tiny tyres gripped well and the Panda just flew up the steeper sections. In fact by the 7th section he was still on clear and the other drivers were wondering just what would stop him.

Meanwhile Billie and Ant, although they were scoring, were really enjoying themselves and impressing everyone with the way they were getting the 110 around the sections, well at least until section I. The start of this section was through the 10 gate, slightly right, and then a very hard 180 degree turn to the left, avoiding a fallen tree on the right. Sticking out from the tree was what appeared to Ant at least, to be a rotten branch so, when he could not quite make the turn without a shunt, he calculated that he could hit the branch with his heavy duty bumper, break the branch off without stopping, thus saving his shunt for later in the section. A good idea except for two small miscalculations...

Firstly the height of the branch was a bit more than the bumper, sort of wing and lights height, and secondly it was not rotten, in fact it was quite solid. As Ant drove on full left-hand lock a loud bang was heard by everyone but, as so many competitors do, Ant kept going and managed to reach the one gate. While he and Billie climbed out to inspect the damage I kindly retrieved the broken indicator lense for him. The beauty of an old Land Rover is that they are not difficult to straighten wings or replace lamp holders. When the rest of the drivers and onlookers had inspected the damage, we all commiserated with him and did not take the micky out of Ant at all. In fact we did not mention it again throughout the day, even though Billie not only managed to reach the eight gate without hitting the same branch, and went on to clear the section without the use of a shunt. This was Billie's first clear and she was delighted with it and everyone gave her a loud round of applause. I am pretty sure that I didn't even mention Ant's minor mishap more than a couple of times at prizegiving.



Ant and Billie with all lights

My group was taking longer to clear the sections than the other group, thanks to the 110s and novice drivers, so Dave broke for an early lunch while we caught up on the sections. During lunch we had a visit from one of the neighbours and his daughter who came to see what we were up to. They had met the Daves after they had set out and asked if they could watch. They had a great time and even took the trouble to send an email to the club after the event, thanking us for letting them spectate.



Lunchtime.

While the drivers had a leisurely lunch the two Daves went and altered the section in the bomb hole to give us 10 sections in all. Lunch over we resumed action again. My group started on section A and tackled all the rutted sections that had given the other group a few problems in the morning session. By the time we arrived the ground had dried considerably so the going was much easier for us apart from the depth of the ruts. Section B saw one of the ruts close to a tree, with the possibility of a vehicle sliding onto the tree if it took the wrong line on the approach to the ruts. However the two Daves had thought about this on Saturday so had placed a substantial log against the tree so that in the event of a vehicle sliding its wheels would hit the log and prevent any damage. At lunch Dave G had told me about this and said the log trick worked as planned. When Craig Howard approached the part of the section in question he did indeed slide sideways and hit the log. Unfortunately Craig's 110 is fitted with a large roof rack and as the 110 leaned over this clipped the tree with an ominous crunch. In the same spirit as Ant earlier, Craig continued on the section, without scoring, and then got out to examine the damage. To everyone's surprise apart from a mark there wasn't any noticeable damage. That is one tough roof rack.



Craig Howard

Section C was very eventful for my group, but not for any expected reasons. The section started with a sharp 90 degree right turn before a 120 degree U-turn, all on flat ground without anything to catch the drivers out. Or so we thought. Craig made a small mistake when he lined up for the start gate which meant that instead of being able to make the sharp turn to the 9 gate he had to take a shunt to get around the corner. And struggled to make the 180 degree to get through the 9 gate. He then straightened up and continued to the 7 gate, missing the 8 gate entirely! Oh well, we have all made mistakes like this in the past and Craig took the friendly comments about his navigating well. Billie wisely decided not to drive the section as not only was it tight but there were some deep ruts at the end of the section.

Lee drove up to the start gate but did not see a very deep rut on the way. The Panda nosedived into the rut and became high centred with all 4 wheels off the ground. Once everyone had stopped laughing Lee jumped out and pulled a piece of string and a paperclip from the boot for Ben to pull him off the lump.



Once free Lee packed up everything and drove to the start gate. Now a big advantage of the Panda is that the turning circle is tiny so Lee had no problems whatsoever making the turn from 10 to 9. He should not have had any problems making the 8 gate either if he had not followed Craig's line and drove past the 8... Cue lots of helpful comments from fellow drivers!

By now my group had two drivers on all clears, Dave Burns and Ben Lawton. Both had been driving exceptionally well, without making any mistakes. In the other group Dave Ball was also on all clear until section C, where he scored a 1, his only score of the day, as we all moved on to section I.

Section I was a mixture of the sections we had run in the morning in the bomb hole with a couple of very steep drops and a steep, rutted climb to the 1 gate. Ant and Billie again wisely chose not to drive the section and Craig had had to leave early, leaving 9 drivers to attempt the last section.



Rob Stephenson

The last section of the day was a very good one, combining all the features of the day into one, long, section. Steep drops, tight turns, trees, and ruts, before a steep rutted climb to the 1 gate. Robe Stephenson and Dave Burns both collected a score of 3 on the section, while Lee scored 1 due to too much power. He hit the rut between 2 and 1 at speed which sent the Panda airborne. As it came back to earth it had lost momentum and could not quite get through the 1 gate. Undeterred Lee backed up a bit and tried again, this time keeping at least two wheels on the ground, and flew through the gate.

That just left Ben Lawton, still on clear to go. No pressure then, and Ben drove the same way he had done all day, faultless, to clear the section and end the day on a perfect score of zero points.



Ben Lawton

Now over to Dave Govier.

In my group were Dave Ball, Jim Govier, Natalie Govier, Mark Howell, Rob Stevenson and Andrew Stuart. Sadly, Blythe Garner couldn't make it. We started on section A which was cleared by everybody except for Rob in his 110 who picked up a five. Rob's 110 has 900 tyres on it, so it does have a turning circle equivalent to a barge. But saying that he does remarkably well in it.



Rob Stephenson

Section B did cause a couple of issues for two drivers on gate three. This was when you crossed a little ditch and both Natalie and Andrew slid into gate number 3. Everybody else cleared the section.

The finish of section 3 that caused most drivers to score some points. The section had a cross axle finish between gates 2 & 1. This was the section where Dave Ball picked up his only point of the day.

Jim was trialling our red 80" Series One. This is the same vehicle that we did our very first competitive event with the MOC back in February 1990 at Ryton on Dunsmore. So it is nice that we still bring it out occasionally to do the odd trial with. On Section C Jim managed to get through the cross axle without stopping, but unfortunately the top of the canvas caught the 2 gate.



Jim Govier

Section D had both Mark Howell and Rob Stevenson pick up four points. Everybody else cleared the section and I'm pleased to say that sections E & F were both cleared by all the drivers.



Mark Howell

The only driver to pick some points up on section G was Rob when he clipped the nine gate, which was a real shame. On section H Jim was busy talking to his guest navigator when he caught the number four gate – which was next to a tree as well. Section I was also cleared by everybody, so having completed 9 sections and with a bit of time left we decided to put an extra section in.

This again was clear by the drivers except for Rob Stevenson who picked up a very respectable three.

My niece Natalie is driving has improved greatly over the last 18 months and she's got to the point where if she's coming naturally to her. She cleared nine of the 10 sections. Mark Howell also had a good day clearing 8 to 10 sections, but he was also conscious that he was going away on holiday following week and Wendy's Suzuki that he borrows to trial is the vehicle behind his camper! So he definitely didn't want to break it while he was at Hatton.



Natalie Govier

Andrew Stuart was using his very nice wolf 90 and he cleared 8 out of 10 sections picking up some points on section B and C.



Andrew Stewart

As I said earlier, Dave Ball was top of our group picking up just the one point on section C and clearing all the other sections.



Dave Ball

Thanks for the drivers in my group. I had a thoroughly nice day marshalling, and it's nice to see so many drivers with smiles on their faces.

Dave Govier

While the competitors collected the canes and cane tops I went back to the car park and added up the scores. The scores were really quite close, with one point gaps between several of the competitors, but at the end of the day Ben Lawton came first with a score of zero. Ben had driven very well all day and had not put a tyre wrong. Dave Ball was second on one point, and I seem to recall hearing a few, well maybe quite a few, comments from Dave G and others about the mistake he made on section C that gave him his only score. Dave and I felt we had to make special mention of Lee and Billie for the way they had both entertained their group throughout the day. Billie for the way she drove the 110, despite having no experience whatsoever on or off road, while Lee for the way he drove the flying Panda. If he had only driven through the 8 gate on section C instead of around it, he would have finished the day on just one point. Great driving.

This was another very entertaining day for everyone and the weather held off as well. Thanks to the two Daves for laying out the very good sections. The next event will be held at Kidderminster on the 12th of July and we hope to see you there.

Kevin Dyras & Dave Govier.

7 June : Hatton Park

name	scoring											rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	total	
Lawton, Ben	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ball, Dave	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Govier, Natalie	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Burns, Dave	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3
Stewart, Andrew	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	5
Howell, Mark	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6
Govier, James	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	6	7
Bow, Lee	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	8
Stephenson, Rob	5	0	0	4	0	0	9	0	0	3	21	9
Howard, Craig	0	0	8	5	4	0	4	0	0	10	31	10
Tate, Ant	5	0	9	10	4	0	6	0	1	10	45	11
Tate, Billie	6	1	10	8	0	6	7	5	0	10	53	12