

The 28th Bodiam Hill Climb — is it the last?

Doc breaks record again

HOSPITAL ANAESTHETIST Dr Richard Thomson had not one but three surprises for the delighted home crowd when the Hastings 1066 Car Club staged the 28th Bodiam Hill Climb on Saturday.

But the biggest surprise he reserved for himself . . .

Last year after four years of trying to beat Doc Willoughby's 1978 record of 24.03 secs for the notoriously tricky 650 yard course, Thompson clipped it down to 23.35 secs.

Willoughby had vowed that Bodiam was "too dangerous" and would only return to regain his title if lost.

Despite the challenge thrown down he refused to take up Thompson's gauntlet: a crash a week before the event giving no opportunity for a change of heart, writing off his car.

Thompson arrived on Saturday clearly determined to rub salt into the wound of an old friend and rival.

His 1700cc Mallock had been modified with the latest rear suspension specification.

In morning practice he swiftly brought down his times before putting up an unofficial 23.09 secs to set the scene for an afternoon of excitement.

But in the Paddock at lunchtime the man who has taken fastest time of the day at

Valence this season and a second at Prescott against top national opposition was far from happy.

"They have left far too many stones on the track. It is very slippery," he said.

Thompson had persuaded friend and near neighbour John Gooch, of Highwoods Avenue, Bexhill, to make his first hillclimb attempt. Property developer John, a fellow Mallock owner, hit the bank first time out and spent lunch vainly trying to fix a busted nose cone and spoiler.

Ruefully, he said: "They warned me about the right-hander. I did not realise it was such a right-hander . . .!"

Gooch still managed a class win.

From out of a field of more than 120 in an event sponsored by South Coast Driver Training of Bexhill, all eyes were on Thompson for the first official run of the day. He electrified the crowd with a time of 23.12 secs — officially beating his own course record.

Not content with this he went all-out again on his second run.

Later he confessed: "I couldn't believe my time. It seemed like a bad run. The car was snaking and difficult to hold . . ."

The electronic timing device recorded 22.92 — a new Bodiam record and a challenge likely to attract the finest opposi-

tion next year — if there is a next year.

The future of the Bodiam event has been in doubt since land-owner, the Rev Malcolm France, always well-disposed toward the sport, put New House Farm on the market.

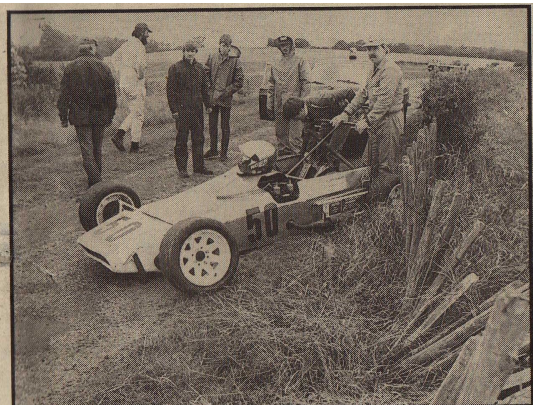
New owner-to-be Don Grammand, a keen motorist and former Ferrari Dino owner, was an interested observer at the event.

He told the Observer: "I like the organisation and the way things are run. There are plenty of marshalls and no problems."

"I cannot make a decision now but I will talk to the car club and I feel that this will not be the last Bodiam Hill Climb."

RESULTS: FTD: 1 Richard Thomson (Mallock) 22.92, 2 Alan Hall (Reynald) 25.27, 3 Bob Smith (Escort) 25.41. Class 1, Gerald Dale (Mini) 27.56. Class 2, 1 Nigel Humphreys (Mini) 28.00. Class 3, David Wilson (Westfield XI) 28.97. Class 4, Brian Moody (Ginetta G12) 28.32. Class 5, 1 John Gooch (Mallock) 25.65. Class 7, Simon Crook (Supernova) 27.52. Class 10, 1 Steve Pattinson (VW Golf) 28.81. Class 11, 1 Gary Baker (Fiesta) 25.58. Class 12, 1 John Sadler (Porsche) 25.56. Class 13, 1 Donald Parker (Bentley Special) 31.12. Class 14, 1 Alan Dix (Lotus 23B) 26.92. Class 15, 1 Wally Pratt (Fiat Arbarth) 32.00. Peter Erswell Memorial Trophy, Trevor Willard. Leeds Building Society Trophy, Brian Moody.

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● John Dewberry in his Swerv — he did, with disastrous results.



● Stuart Giles concentrates on the line, willing his Austin 7 Special to hold together.