



PIT SIGNALS



LATE BRAKING NEWS FOR VARAC VINTAGE RACERS - MAY, 2020 - JEREMY SALE



Above: Dennis Coad Lotus Mk IX, photo by Todd Treat.

Back In The Day at Harewood Acres

Originally an emergency landing strip for American Airlines flights traveling between Buffalo and Detroit on the New York to Chicago route, Royal Canadian Air Force Station Jarvis was a WWII British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) Station. It was home to No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School, training Air Gunners, Wireless Air Gunners, Air Observers, Air Bombers, and Navigator-Bomb Aimers. These airmen served as aircrew on bombers and maritime patrol aircraft. The BCATP plan was a temporary wartime measure that ended on 29 March 1945. The station opened 19 August 1940 and closed on 17 February 1945. In 1956, BEMC, abandoning Edenvale, another airfield track, came to Jarvis, laid out a 3.5-mile course, named it Harewood and began competition...

Harewood Acres



Jeremy Sale

I took the photo above so long ago that I really can't remember the date. I was at Harewood Acres, a former airfield turned into a race circuit. Some of our VARAC members raced there. Stalwarts such as Doug Durrell, Jack Boxstrom, Phil Lamont, Frank Mount, Gary Allen (he must be much older than he looks) Walt MacKay, John Greenwood and others. Even young Perry Mason went there to accompany his dad, Hamilton Burger, (no, just kidding) his dad Al Mason, who raced Corvettes and a Camaro Z-28 there. There is a wonderful Facebook page devoted to Harewood from which I have gathered some great photos that I hope you will enjoy, as well as some anecdotes from those who raced at Harewood.

Sincere thanks for the photos and my sources for the story, such as the late Bob Brockington, John Wright and the Canadian Racer website. I hope you enjoy a trip to "Back In The Day". Jeremy Sale.

PS. I never raced at Harewood, being much too young, (not) but I did drive the parts van there for Gord Brown, shown in this photo by Bill Derbyshire.



The Airfield Circuits...

Like the more famous race tracks in England, such as Goodwood and Silverstone, racing in Canada took advantage of former airfields. In 1950, racing in Ontario began at Edenvale, a former airfield near Stayner, at events organized by the British Empire Motor Club.

By 1956, BEMC, having come to the conclusion that Edenvale was no longer suitable for sports car racing, had found another abandoned WWII air base near Jarvis, Ontario. (At right armourers loading practice bombs at Jarvis.) A 3.5-mile course was laid out, named Harewood and used for competition in 1956. By the next year, it had been shortened to the 2.3-mile course due to deterioration of the central runway.



Green Acres, another former WWII airfield circuit, near Goderich, was operated by the London Auto Sports Club, from the middle 1950s until the end of the 1962 season, when the roughness of the track became an issue. So LASC moved on to take over Harewood Acres from BEMC, who in turn, had moved on to run the new purpose built race course at Mosport.

From 1963 to 1970 Harewood continued to host many club events. It was the home of the Great Lakes Trophy Races, The Mid-Summer Trophy Races, Burlington Autosports Club Challenge Cup for Sedans, The Trillium Trophy Races and various motorcycle races including the Ontario Grand Prix for Motorcycles. The track was part of the Canadian Road Racing Championship each year, both for sports cars from 1964 until 1968 and for the Gulf Canada Series for Formula A cars, which made two visits in each of the 1969 and 1970 seasons.



LASC continued at Harewood until the end of the 1970 racing season when farmer Russell Hare sold the land to Gulf Oil.

The Track at Harewood...

By Bob Brockington



“As to be expected in an ex-air force base, the runways were very wide (left) and the slip roads somewhat narrower. The area chosen for the pit straight was so wide, that more than 10 cars could be side-by-side in the run down to the first series of corners on slip roads called the “Esses”.

The track narrowed considerably which caused some bumping and scraping as the cars funnelled into the right-left-right combination before running down a long, wide straight called “Big Torque”.

Big Torque was followed by a fast right called “Drift” and another straight that led into a fast left-hander called “Zig”. A short straight followed “Zig” and the track turned right at a tight turn called “Zag” onto another short, narrow straight into the “Chicane”. Another short straight followed called “Gunnery” after the huge concrete gunnery target on the outside of the corner and a fast right-hander led onto the start/finish pit straight. Lap times were in the high 1:50’s.

The infield part of the track was used by Phil Hare, the owner, for growing corn. As the season wore on, the corn grew taller effectively blocking the view of Drift, Zig and Zag for the spectators grouped along the south end of the track. But, at this May event, those with binoculars could see virtually the whole track. Favourite viewing spots were in the Esses and at the Chicane, although some people parked along the straight after the “esses”. Hare also had the concessions and his family and friends made very memorable grilled hot dogs and later in the season, of course, sold corn on the cob.” Bob Brockington.

(Editors note: There were at least three different track layouts ultimately used at Harewood, changing as the various runways grew rougher and rougher...)

The Control Tower

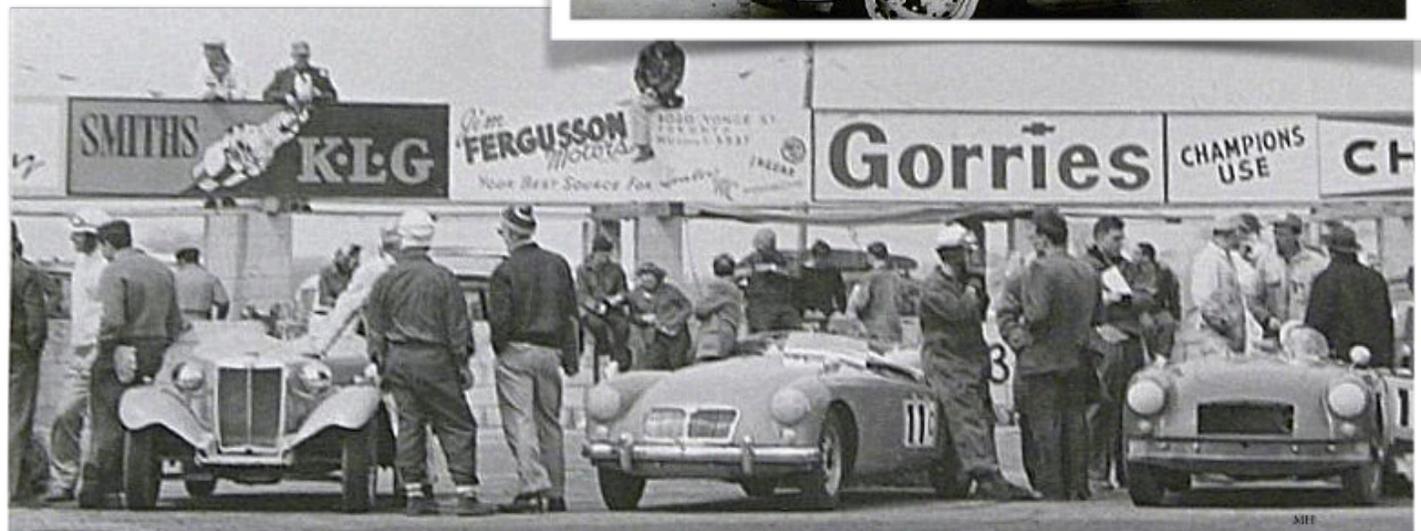
Beginning as a somewhat ramshackle affair, left, the control tower gradually improved over the years...



Le Mans start. L to R; Al Pease, Mini Cooper, Francis Bradley, Hillman, Ron Goldsack, Lotus Cortina, Werner Gudzus, Volvo.



Few American cars of the fifties were suitable for racing, other than in a straight line. "Furrin" cars were the order of the day, mostly British. MGs were tremendously popular in the fifties and sixties, beginning with the TCs and MGAs.





Top: Ed Leavens,
Gorries Corvette,
Jerry Polivka, Lotus
IX. Middle: Mystery
GP Maserati!
Bottom: Bill Klinck,
#25 Lotus Mk6.





Above; Gillian Field in her Triumph TR3. At right, Gord Brown and Dudley Smith seem to be urging her to take some extra Castrol R with her....

The Gunnery Tower, (right) a relic of RCAF days, made a great viewing platform for us railbirds....





Above; John Fitch, Cooper Monaco. Below; Bruce Jensen, Elva Mk.7S



Bruce Jones

Harewood with Doug Durrell



Doug Durrell at left in the KiKi with Walt Mackay coming up behind in the McLaren.

Doug Durrell: “The first time I was at Harewood was in 1964 for my driver’s school in a 1958 VW. I remember doing Le Mans starts, which the VW was very good at, because you could start the car in first gear while you did up your seat belt!

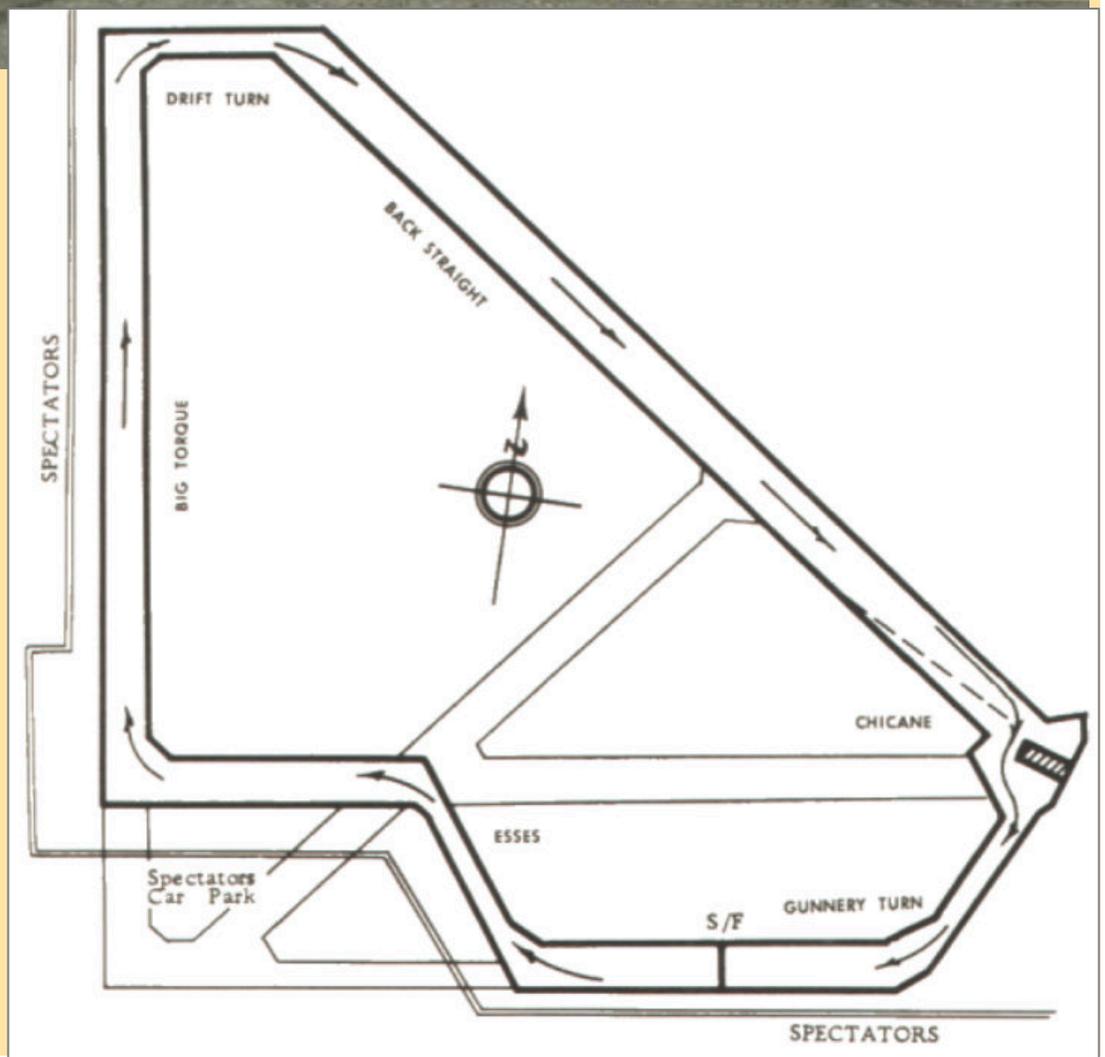
In the following years I competed there in the KiKi 3 & 4 as well as a Sadler FJ. The track was quite rough, especially in the S’s into Gunnerly Corner. The Sadler would get the rear axle airborne in the fast left turn entry, which was hairy enough that that marshals would bet on when I would lose it, which I occasionally did! The hay bales lining the course had been there for many years and they were heavy and attached to the concrete, so hitting them always messed up the aluminium tail cone on the Sadler.

Harewood was used for a lot of testing, as it was inexpensive and relatively safe. The KiKi 3 sports racer was tested there mid week, the body was finished and painted and the car was raced at Mosport that weekend, we finished 4th in the Sundown GP which lasted 3hrs and 28 minutes. I fondly remember dicing all weekend at Harewood with Mo Carter in his Tran-Am Camaro with the Mk3.

Camping at the track was quite primitive but the after race BS evenings at the Jarvis Hotel more than made up for that!”



There were at least three different layouts used at Harewood, the changes mainly came about as the runways grew rougher and rougher. The layout at right was used from 1959-1970, measuring 1.9 miles.



The Le Mans Start...

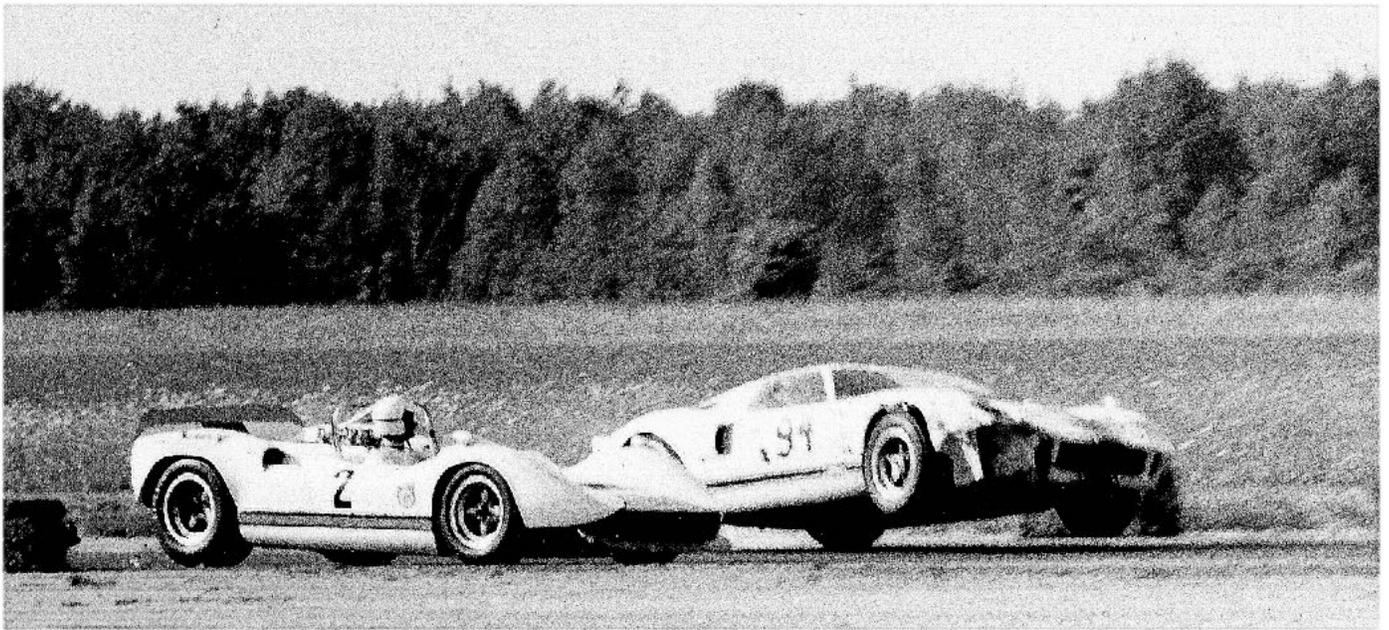


Unfortunately the dramatic Le Mans start is a thing of the past...

Drivers would line up across the track from their cars and at the given signal, sprint over, jump in and, well, ...then came the problem! The ideal objective was to get away first, so sometimes the task of doing up the seat belt came second. That meant fiddling with the belts at the next long straight...

Harewood hi-jinks...

Ross de St. Croix



Ross de St. Croix: "During our 1967 Championship Race at Harewood I was leading the race in the very early laps when I was run over by Eppie Wietzes in his Ford GT40! We were coming into the the chicane with me in front and Eppie came charging up from behind and inside the chicane ran over the left rear of the McLaren and rode up and over the left hand side of the car. I was concerned that I may have a flat tire on the left rear and so I stopped in the pits to confirm the flat and change the wheel and the tire and get back into the race. I finished third by the time I got caught up. By the way, we considered the back straight at Harewood to be the fastest straight in the series.

Years later Eppie and I were doing something related to the sport and he asked if I would like a photo of the event, he said his father had got it all on camera! Several days later the photo arrived, but when I pulled it out of the frame I saw that it was actually mounted on another photo, which is probably where Eppie got the idea his dad had taken the photo. It is actually an F. David Stone photo.

Incidentally this car was the 1966 team McLaren Can-Am car that Chris Amon drove. Mr. Soucy bought it at the first ever Can-Am ever while we were racing our team Brabham VIVA in a support race at Le Circuit in St Jovite, Mont Tremblant."

Frank Mount at Harewood



“In the spring of 1958, I began entering my MG TC in the local races at Harewood Acres and Green Acres Raceway. The farmer would round up the sheep on the weekend of a race and for about a \$20.00 entry fee we were racing! Initially the only safety equipment required was a lap belt, helmet, and a fire extinguisher. Within a year or so either a roll bar or grab handle on

the floor was required. I was one of the first to install a roll bar. I made it myself out of exhaust pipe tubing and since I had no way to bend it, the top was 1/2 of an octagon.

Later I decided to build a Chevy V8 powered Twin Cam. Doing something like that today would be considered sacrilege! The next spring I was at Harewood. I had no previous experience with Holley carburetors and at the end of the first run down the straight the second two barrel stayed open and caused an exciting ride off the end into a field of cattle corn!

The car went really fast but was too powerful for the stock MG Twin Cam brakes and suspension. In the first race I started from the second row with a space between George Eaton's new 427 Cobra and the Gorries Chevrolet 427 Corvette. When the flag dropped I shot through the hole and beat them both to the first corner by a good margin, but by the time we got to the end of the first straight, they had got up to speed and simply powered by me in the corner.

On the way home on Sunday (no Sunday racing in Canada in those days) we stopped at the Cayuga Drag strip to take part in a day sponsored by the Sports Car Club of Toronto. My car ran the 1/4-mile in 12.4 seconds.” *Frank Mount.*

Walt MacKay at Harewood

“In the spring of 1957 I traded my first car, an MGTC with a Ford V860 engine, and \$400 for a pristine TC with stock engine from Bruce McEachern, a local sports car dealer and enthusiast. On June 6th (a significant date in more ways than one), I entered the car in a BEMC event at Harewood. Since I was in the process of changing to the supposed stronger 16-inch wheels and still had 19 inch wheels on the front, I was informed by the Club’s imperious Chief Scrutineer that I could not run with the MG’s but would have to run with the “modified” cars. “Oh, that’s okay” I said naively and found myself on a race track for the first time with three Lotus Mark 9’s, two Porsche 550 Spyders and various specials. I finished at the back of the pack but managed to keep out of everyone’s way and miss the hay bales, so I considered that an achievement. Also driving that weekend were VARAC stalwarts Van Worsdale in an MG TD, Oliver Clubine in an MGA and Lincoln Kinsman in a Crosley special. By the way, the entry fee was just \$10.

Later I acquired a very tidy, light blue, race prepared bug-eye Sprite, previously run by Dick Shelton and Ken Mansell. This car was entered in several races in 1960 including a 4-hour relay race at Harewood where, teamed with Peter Curtis and Reg Hillary in their Sprites, it took third place overall out of 27 teams entered. (Reg’s Sprite was easily recognizable as it was the one with the kitchen faucet extending from the back of the roll bar!)

In December 1960, now having a steady job, I purchased my Lotus 18FJ from Autosport in Cooksville. After many cold winter hours sitting behind the wheel and visualizing, in the early spring of 1961 I took it to Harewood for a test day. Back then you could pay Mr. Hare \$5.00 and drive around all day , being mindful of his sheep, which sometimes wandered onto the track...



Harewood, as I remember it.

by Perry M. Mason



“Back In The Day”, with my dad’s Corvette!

“The first road race I ever went to was at Harewood Acres in 1967. I was a kid and I was excited to say the least. My father, Al Mason, had just spent the previous summer and winter building his first race car, a 1960 Corvette and he was going to race it!

I thought I was in heaven with all the cool cars and noise around the paddock. The car only weighed about 1900 lbs. fully stripped and lightened so it went like stink with a seriously prepared 327CI Chevy small block and Holley 4 barrel and 4” open exhaust out each side. With later model extra wide drum brakes and special shoes; it would out-brake most everything as well. My job that weekend was picking hay out of the grille, from the hay bales which seemed to fly around the track after competitors would “modify” the racing lines. Al won the first race he was ever in and many more that season. The car was sold at the end of its first and only season. Al built his new Z28 Camaro for the next season and carried on racing with success. Racing today isn’t the same as back then, but VARAC keeps that feeling of simpler times alive.” *Perry Mason.*



“Testing our Trans Am car, 1969, great sunset...”

Peter Schwartzott “Harewood Acres holds a special place in the history of road racing; in my heart, and the hearts and souls of those of us fortunate enough to have raced, crewed or spectated there. What made it so special? It's a long list. For many of us, it was our early introduction to the sport. We were young, fresh, and passionate. We saw and heard exotic marques that we could only see in magazines. A Jaguar XKSS... holy cow! Can you imagine!! We, at least in our minds, had arrived. This is what we were born to do. There was Roger Penske, beginning his career, and future Formula One drivers...”

Racing was only a part of the aura of the place. It had the fragrance of new mowed hay. There was the clearest of blue skies, the fresh Lake Erie air. The campfires and song, and Mr. Hare's concession stand. Oh, the hot dogs were to die for: homemade, with bright green, fresh tomato relish glowing in the dark, cucumber, onion, vinegar, and sugar. I will never forget how good they were. Then there were side trips to Port Dover, watching the bib-covered farmers coming in to the beer garden dance hall on the beach and the amazing perch dinners. The track was old school with hay bales. You had to dodge the sheep droppings on the back straight. And certainly as one of the few American interlopers, I really appreciated the amazing graciousness of the people I met along the way. The great Bob Barg comes to mind. A special place, with special people...”

P.S. Some notes on this issue...Jeremy Sale

Sometimes producing an issue of Pit Signals is a bit of a journey, to say the least. In the last issue I profiled a number of wonderful photos taken back in the day by Michael Hunt. Some of them had been placed on a Facebook page devoted to Harewood. I decided to do an issue on Harewood, using Michael's photos, and some others from the site. Little did I know the journey I was going on! Looking at the history of the airfield I learned all kinds of things; that a key member of the famous "Dambusters" raid trained at Jarvis: RCAF navigator, Harlo "Terry" Taerum. In May 1943, he navigated the lead Avro Lancaster bomber piloted by Guy Gibson, at night and at very low level, to its target, a German power dam. Who knew!

Researching the history of Harewood, choosing the photos to use, talking to people who raced there back in the day, was fun. I made contact with some great people who were very helpful in identifying people and cars.

I remember sitting on top of the Gunnery Tower, watching the cars flying down the straight, clipping the hay bales in the corners, spinning off, winning, losing, breaking down, making repairs in the paddock. All of this stuff is brought back on the photos and comments posted, so if you are on Facebook check out: [Harewood](#). It's a journey back in time!

The issue is made possible by many people, and I hope I haven't forgotten anyone; many thanks for photos to: Michael Hunt, Diana Carter, Ron Kielbiski, Todd Treat, Kent Smith, Mark Golding, Mike Adams, Canadian Motorsport Hall of Fame Archives, Bruce Jones, and more. Thanks to the drivers who sent their recollections. Speaking of the drivers, it's amazing who raced at Harewood. Bobby Rahal's first race was at Harewood, Roger Penske raced there, as well as Lee Petty and son Richard, John Fitch, Olivier Gendebien, Peter Ryan and of course, Canadians Dave Greenblatt, Ludwig Heimrath, John Cordts, Eppie Wietzes, Ross de St Croix, Mo Carter, Horst Kroll, Bill Brack, Gary Magwood, Al Pease, Craig Hill, George Eaton.. well, the list goes on. Not to mention our more senior VARAC members, some of whom are still racing today. However, all good things come to an end...

"After 14 years of motor racing, Harewood Acres hosted its last motor race weekend on September 26-27, 1970" reported Canada Track & Traffic. "The weather, curiously enough, was very much like that on the first day held there in June of 1956. It was sunny, cloudy, then rainy and back to sunlight again. Al Pease and Francis Bradley, both of whom were there the day the track opened were on hand to run the last events. Pease won both his events, taking the final handily in his Brabham B."

Please allow me to introduce myself....

Alain Raymond

"I discovered Vintage Car Racing at Shannonville while attending a Solo I event. "That's what I want to do!". Right away, I purchased a racing outfit from CSA. But it took awhile before finding the car I wanted, to remind me of my first car: a used and abused 1959 Fiat 600. I found "The Red Scorpion" in Denver, CO. My first outing was at the 2002 Fall Classic at Tremblant. Right away, I am shown the "meat ball". "*Ton hood est ouvert*", says the pit lane marshall in perfect French, pointing to the open rear engine hood... "Tell the x?!x in the Tower, it is supposed to be open!" Shows you how well-known Abarth was in these woods!



Today, The Red Scorpion is RIP (Resting in Pieces), but that's another story. Still, yours truly intends to campaign another Red Scorpion, if and when we collectively get out of this virus mess. BTW, If you are on Facebook, join "The Red Scorpion"!

Above: Winning 1st place 1 Litre Class at PVGP, with Pit Crew Carl Lapointe.

Below: Reflections, Photo by Casey Keil at Lime Rock after downpour!





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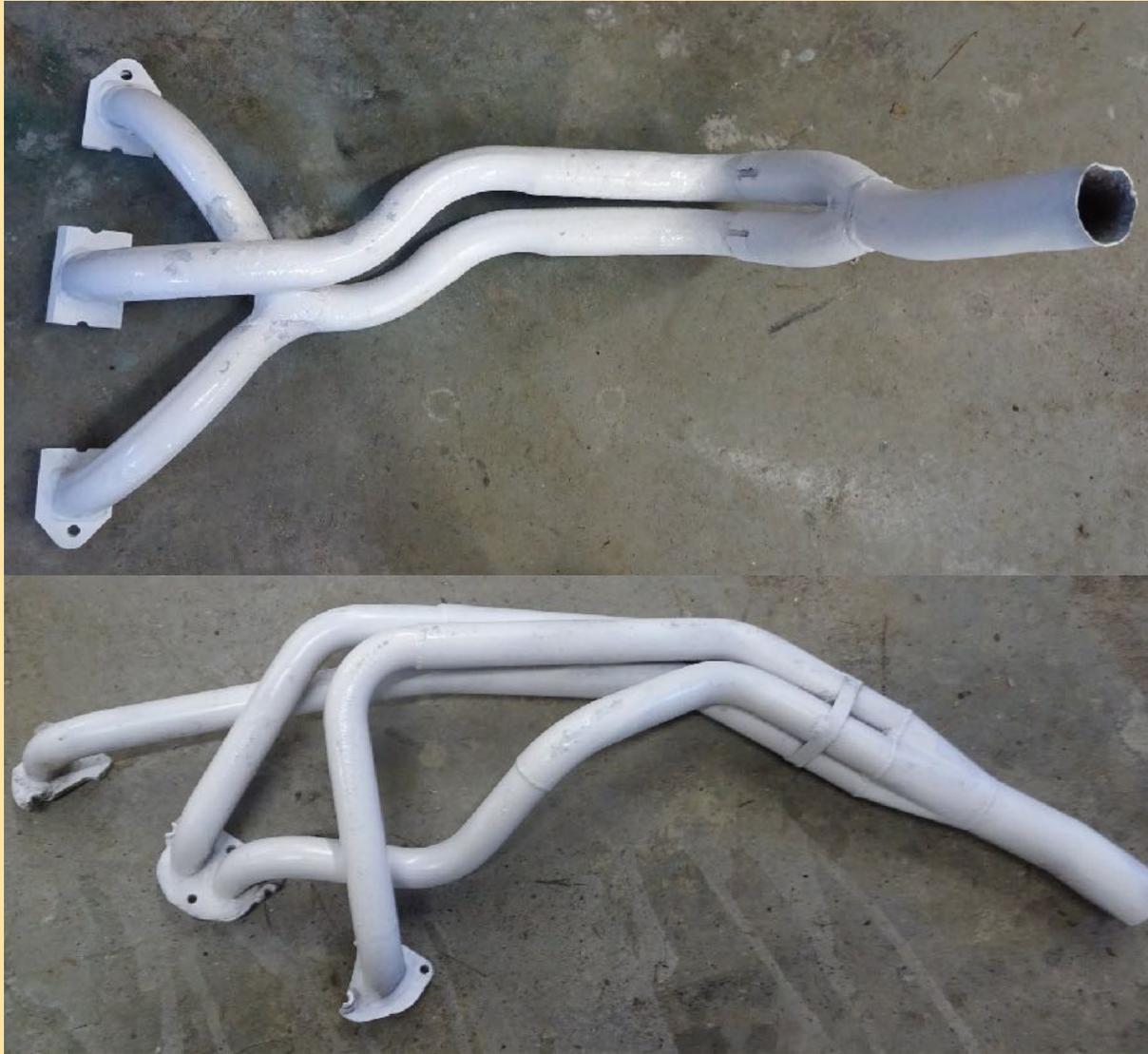
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