



**ROBERT HALL**

**THE STORY SO FAR**



## ROBERT HALL. LIFE SO FAR.

I guess you should say that my story starts when I was born on February 9<sup>th</sup> 1990 but in actual fact it really began many years earlier when two people met at Silverstone Racing School in 1984. Little did they realize that 24 years later, I would be writing this.



Babe in arms at Silverstone

In 1984 when my Dad, David, decided to enrol at the Silverstone Racing School (owned by the British Racing Drivers Club), my mother worked there and part of her job was to sign on the drivers. Five years later she moved down to the family farm in Herefordshire and she and Dad were married and I was born.



Babe in arms with Nan & Granddad

However, continuing with the 1980's, in 1985 Dad was the recipient of the Silverstone Racing School Scholarship, a very valued prize whereby the BRDC sponsored him for a complete season's racing in the UK Formula Ford Championship, operating through one of the top Formula Ford teams, British Racing Prospects. This sponsorship enabled Dad not only to race full time in 1986 but also to bring on board one of the leading computer gaming companies of that time, US Gold (who were eventually taken over by SEGA) for both 1986 and 1987 to promote their new game called OUTRUN. So, in effect if it had not been for Silverstone and the BRDC, I would never have happened.

Anyway I digress, I was born into a typical farming way of life and 18 months later was joined by



Me at Hereford Market

my brother Andrew. When I was still a toddler I would spend hours a day just sitting in the back of the tractor cab going up and down the fields as dad was ploughing, cutting or baling hay, fascinated by the machinery, or was quite happy to sit in the back of the JCB as it moved bales around or was loading farmyard manure on the muck spreaders. In fact one of the first words I spoke was apparently "BB Tractor" which was what I called the JCB, fascinated by its bright yellow colour no doubt (and years before the pop song "Me and my JCB" became popular).



Me & Andy in the yard



Mum, Andy, and me with Becky

Growing up on the farm was a great way to live, plenty of room, plenty of places to play no matter what the weather. Mum had a horse just for hacking around and when I was five we were loaned a lovely little Welsh pony called Becky (who we still have) and I started riding, which was brilliant as it was much quicker than walking even though it hurt if you fell off!

When I was six a friend gave us an old mud buggy to race around the field in and both Andy and I would come back smothered from head to toe with mud, just our eyes showing through, having just 'won' the RAC Rally.



Andy & I in the mud kart



Me on Soldier

We both had our farm jobs to do (and still do) although there are no cattle or sheep on the farm these days - but there's still plenty to do from looking after the pony to getting firewood ready for winter, not to mention harvest time,

When I was seven Dad bought our first kart and we tried it out in the farm yard. Off I went flying across the yard straight towards a solid earth bank at what seemed like brake neck speed so it was either stop, hit the bank or take a ninety right and shoot of down the farm drive. Dad just stood there dumb struck, then to his amazement I braked hard and spun the kart through 180 degrees

ending up facing the way I had come and stopped just by pure luck.. 'Jeez!' Dad shouted 'That was awesome. I can't believe he just did that!' Then as the dust settled he ran across to me as I was still sitting in the kart holding on to the steering wheel and I started to howl and the tears started to flow. "What's up mate" said dad "that was brilliant"

"No" I cried "what happened?"

"Well I think you just learnt how to get yourself out of trouble. Come on lets have another go"



My first kart



First race

And that was the start of my motor racing career.

Soon after that we started going to the local kart track at Kinsham where we continued to go regularly for many years both honing my skills and the kart



Dad & I at Silverstone

I did my first race at Shennington when I was eight and at the end of the race was nearly lapped but I loved it and from that day on was hooked.



First Win

To get the kart to the track we used to use the livestock trailer towed behind the Landrover but then Dad bought a van for the building company that he ran along side the farm and used that at weekends for karting.

I was lucky enough to get an entry for the McLaren Mercedes Champions of the Future Championship when I



Kerb Hopping



Derek Warwick with me

was nine and along with many other karting families spent most weekends over the next six years travelling the length and breadth of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland competing at many different tracks. We began by living totally in the van, but eventually bought an old caravan which was a big improvement especially in the winter when at times you would wake up at a kart track with 3 inches of snow covering everything. Thousands of miles were travelled during this time with great friendships being forged not only between the parents but also the young karters. One of the highlights of this time was a prize I was awarded for setting the fastest lap at a national meeting and being invited by the Vauxhall Touring Car Team to spend the day with them at Oulton Park and also being introduced to Derek Warwick a former Formula One racing driver - a great experience for a boy of ten. I was also lucky enough to be asked to drive for the works Biland team run by Saxon Motorsport.



Left to right. Mark Webber, Alan Docking, Andy, Me.

When I was 11 my parents opened "Bromyard Tyres" a local garage, and from then much of my spare time was spent helping in the business and when I left school at sixteen I started there full time.

When I was 13 my godfather gave me his old Audi 80 to drive off road and we set out a rally

cross track around one of the fields where I would pound



Me on the Farm Quad



Driving the works Biland

around and around whenever I had the chance. In fact as you drove back to the farm from Bromyard you could always tell if I was back from school by the massive dust cloud hanging over the field. The field was by the side of the lane and passers by would stop and watch and come and have a chat - it was just amazing how interested people can be and how friendly. I took my Granddad

around once but "Once is enough Rob thanks all the same, I'll just watch in future" he said.



Peugeot 205

When I was 14 we bought an old Peugeot 205 rally car, not only to use on the field but also to take down to Llandow Race Circuit near Bridgend. We went as often as we could so that we had the chance to give me the experience of driving at speed in a car on a race track. This meant setting off at the crack of dawn to drive the 120 miles, and then back again at dusk. We also went with some friends to Kurbrough where one of the group's single seaters went on fire and unfortunately burnt to a cinder. Thankfully the driver was not badly injured, but it was an important reminder to me that motor racing can be dangerous and so you should be sure you have the right kit.

Then came the move to single seaters and Formula Ford. Dad contacted Chris Smith (who used to run him in the 80's) and they looked around for a suitable car to buy - eventually choosing a 1987 Van Diemen. We spent a lot of time going through the car making sure it was safe and reliable, burning the midnight oil on many nights in the farm workshop. When it was ready we set off to Llandow for the first test. First things first of course and after a full breakfast at the circuit café (which is always good value) we then got the car unloaded. Out I went for a few laps getting used to the racing gearbox and then came in, took a few pointers from Chris on balancing the throttle and brakes and was then on my way, taking to it like a duck to water which was a good thing as later it started throwing it down and in the wet it was just brilliant balancing the car on the throttle through the long fast corner and flicking it through the tight ones it was quite a day,



The Van Diemen



Swift cooper 06

I was then introduced to race car manufacturer Alan Cooper (of Swift Cooper) who offered to loan us a new car for the 2006 UK Formula Ford Championship. I had to wait until I was 16 in early February to start testing at any circuit other than Llandow. That season, 2006 was a hard season -jumping in at the deep end with no budget and no team mate. The car was run from the family

farm with help from Chris and proved to be a great learning year with flashes of brilliance but also the trials of accident damage and reliability problems and eventually having to miss some of the rounds through lack of funds.



Swift cooper 06

In 2007 Swift Cooper took me under their wing and ran me in the Castle Combe Formula Ford Championship from their workshops at Castle Combe.



First Race at Combe, Front Row,

At the first race I surprised every one (except myself and the team) by putting the car on the front row and well remember the comment of one well known and accomplished driver on the grid when his engineer said: "You've got nothing to worry about you've only got to beat the rookie"

"Yeah" was his reply "but he's not exactly slow is he?"

As it was, both front row men made a brake and we were trading fastest laps when on lap 4 going into one of the fastest corners on the circuit, I braked and the front suspension failed, rocketing me off into the scenery at over 100mph. Fortunately it was only the car that suffered serious damage and not the driver. The 2007 season turned out to be a classic season for me, wining several



races and fastest laps, setting a new lap record, coming second in the Championship and being the youngest recipient ever of the 'Young Driver of the Year' award at the end of the season.

2008 started off in the same vein as 2007 but then the opportunity came along to appear on the BBC programme Dragons Den. Though Dad and I weren't successful in getting the Dragons to invest in my future, the programme proved a great success, generating a lot of media and public interest - so much so that the BBC were keen to follow the story through to see where the future leads.

Through the Dragons Den appearance Irish racing driver Noel Roddey loaned me his Mygale to use in four of the Castle Combe rounds and Dragons Den featured us in their follow up programme Where are they now which was aired in August 2009.



Mygale 2000

2009 season Mygale

Although we only competed in 4 races in 2009 we did manage to get the mygale up to the sharp end of the field and because of this and because they knew what I had achieved with them in 2007 Swift Cooper offered me the works drive for 2010 to help develop their new 2010 car.



2010 SWIFT This was a great opportunity for Me to start a two year project, working with the team to develop the new chassis, the team and my self into a race winning combination. This combination always looked like it might deliver the goods but it was not until the last 2 races of the season after an engine rebuild by Bold that it all came together with a great win in the championship and winning the Formula Ford Carnival both from pole position. This result earned Me the driver of the day award and at the end of the season I was also awarded "The Young Driver of The Year award" for the second time in recognition of the work both I and the team did in 2010 in developing the new car

2011

**In 2011** I was once again driving for Swift Cooper in the new 2011 car with support from garden machinery manufacture MITOX which has been a big help.

From the 9 races, we won five came second in three and fourth in one (where we had an engine problem). This gave the Swift Cooper team in the penultimate round of 2011 its first outright Castle Combe FF1600 Championship title in 25 years and gave Alan Cooper his first title using a car of his own design.



At the end of the season Saxon Motorsport offered me a drive in there Mygale at the Formula Ford Festival at Brands Hatch where after a fairly fraught time through the heats I managed to bring it home 8th after starting 14<sup>th</sup>.



Saxon Motorsport  
Mygale.  
Brands Hatch  
Festival



2011 SILVERSTONE WALTER HAYES TROPHY  
SWIFT SC10

I also competed in the Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone in my usual team Swift and the SC10. We put it on pole for the first heat and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> which put us 5<sup>th</sup> for the semi final where we finished 2<sup>nd</sup> again. In the final we started 4<sup>th</sup> and after what was noted as one of the best

Walter Hayes Trophies to date brought the car home 4<sup>th</sup> with the top 4 cars separated by just 3.5 seconds. This was a terrific result for all the team as the Walter Hayes is considered the premier Formula Ford meeting of the year attracting over 100 entries from all over the world.

## 2012

With no proper budget to move up the ladder I was fortunate to have an offer from Chris Smith my old engineer from 2006 to lone me his Mygale Formula Ford SC2000 car and help me run it from home under the British Racing Promotions banner.



2012 Walter Hayes. Heat I

We were able to test the car a couple of times at Castle Combe and Silverstone over the summer at went to our first race on 27<sup>th</sup> August at Castle Combe where we finished 1<sup>st</sup> with fastest lap and Driver of the Day award. We also won our second race and went to the Walter Hayes at Silverstone hoping for a top five finish.





As it turned out we were very much on the pace winning our first heat and coming second in the semi final. Unfortunately we made a small change to the car for the final which did not work and went backwards eventually finishing 4<sup>th</sup> and the top British drive, but an opportunity lost.

### **2013**

2013 I decided take a year out to replenish the coffers and during the winter of 2013/14 we set about rebuilding the Mygale ready for 2014.

### **2014**

After the winter rebuild I set up Rob Hall Racing with the help of Richard Morgan who had returned to the UK after a successful career in the States where he owned and ran Richard Morgan Racing.

The target was to spend some time testing the Mygale with a view to getting it on the pace for the 2014 Walter Hayes Trophy. This was carried out with test days at Silverstone and Castle Combe plus a race at both venues.

In May I had the chance to drive along side Nick Barrow of Saxon Motorsport in their BMW at the Britcar race at Donnington Park which was my first foray into saloon cars. After a great weekend we bought it home in first place.



## WALTER HAYES 2014

The 2014 Walter Hayes proved to be character building to say the least. During the two days testing prior to the event the car was not on the pace and it was not until qualifying that some changes were made that seemed to work although there was still work to be done. After the heat on Saturday some more changes were made and by the time of the final we felt that the car should be there or there about fingers crossed. As it turned out the car was right on the money and although I started in 10<sup>th</sup> on the grid I was able to come through to second place in what was described in the press a one of the best and closest Walter Hays finals ever.





Rob like a lot of quick young drivers has found it difficult to raise the finance to not only compete at club level but more importantly find the backing to move on up the ladder to national and international motorsport. He new when he started that the hard part would be finding the finance. **That being said “just because something is hard to achieve doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t try.”**