



## Sour Leys Gymkhana 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021



After missing out last year, on our usual weekend gymkhana at Sour Leys due to Covid, we managed to book the site for the day and headed out in eager anticipation for a day off roading.

As a Club, we have always liked Sour Leys. Based in field, a few miles north of Helmsley, it's a mixture of gentle grassy hillocks, deep challenging craters and in one particularly corner, a bog hole, full of muddy smelly pond water which we all seem to gravitate to. The flat grassy area at the rear of the field is great for overnight camping and barbecuing when we are allowed to.



*Who let the Peugeot in?*



So, on this particular overcast, but generally warm morning, we gathered together in the field where we had set up base. Reminding people to observe social distancing and other Covid regulations, the vehicles were scrutinised, drivers' documents checked and we were ready! The farmer came and herded his grazing sheep out of our field into another adjacent field – this is why we love Sour Leys, it's just so primitive. We had a good selection of vehicles including a little Jimny, so after a refreshing cuppa, we jumped in our vehicles and rediscovered Sour Leys.



A course had been set out in Bog Corner – a challenging little run between canes and gates with steep inclines and descents along the way. The bog, a series of little filled ponds, separated by little mounds, was already muddy from the members setting it up and testing it. It would be a quagmire within half an hour. Amanda, one of our members, had diligently created flag markers – bright and fluorescent with large black numbers sitting on top of the poles, rather than our rather makeshift gaffa tape and biro effort. It looked more professional and made negotiating the course so much easier. Everybody was doing their own thing all over the field until eventually we were called over to the bog and a little challenge. Drive around the course without hitting a cane: no timing, no penalties, just ridicule for knocking over the marker. So off we set, one at a time, gently negotiating the ups and downs and the tight turns. The bog got more challenging as the mud was washed into a wider area and vehicles were starting to gently lose grip and slide – a little more power and concentration required.



The young girl who owned the Jimny was a little reluctant to take it around the course, but with her dad sitting beside her for encouragement, she completed the course with



a big smile on her face. The rest of us were just in awe of how this little car went around – it shot up the inclines without hardly any effort and clambered out of the bog easily. Our estimation of a Suzuki Jimny shot up and a couple of other members showed great interest in maybe buying one themselves. One lad, a core Land Rover man, was so bowled over by it, that we started calling him Jeremy Clarkson – always saying he hated a certain car, but in the end having to own up that actually he secretly admired it.

With mud dripping off wheels and weed hanging off axles, we retired back to base for another cuppa, letting our vehicles recover. However, three vehicles were suffering. The starter motor on one had stopped working and now was in bits on the grass as its owner tried to remedy it. Another driver had his bonnet up and doing repairs as well and there was a leak on another Land Rover. There is always a casualty on these days out – usually a part breaks through wear and tear, rather than actual damage. Most of our vehicles are fairly old and we are mindful that we need to get home again. We mourned the fact that we couldn't play our traditional game of rounders on the field – game involving a lot of cheating, dodging the liberal piles of sheep droppings and wrestling the accompanying dogs for the ownership of the ball. People have completed many rounders as we've chased after dogs who have run off with balls in their mouths and no sign of relinquishing their prize. We partially solved it with the purchased of about a dozen tennis balls, replacing the disappearing canine and ball with a bright brand new ball for the bowler to bowl.



*The muddiest car competition*



The starter motor still refused to co-operate, so sadly one vehicle needed to be towed home by another member. The other two were patched up, more extensive work to be done in the comfort of their own driveway rather than an isolated field in deepest North Yorkshire. Around 4pm, we broke camp and put our stuff back in our cars. We said our goodbyes and wished everyone a safe journey home before jumping in our slightly muddy vehicles and heading to our respective homes.

Not quite the same without the camping, the silly game of rounders, the 24 hours BBQ and sitting around a campfire, but that will return. The day itself was brilliant, we all had a lot of fun and it was just nice to be back to one of our favourite off road haunts again.

