

FINDING YOUR LIMIT

Want to learn how to drive your Porsche properly? Total 911's Living The Legend UK fraternity descended on Car Limits to take part in an Advanced Driver Airfield Training Day. God help them...

Written by **Joel Newman** Photography by **Chris Wallbank**

Car Limits is a business that should be on your radar, offering driver training for all skill sets in a bid to help you improve technique and subsequently get more performance and enjoyment from any vehicle, safely. Based at North Weald Airfield in Essex, it's really easy to get to (being just off the bottom of the M11) and offers wide open tarmac and lots of run-offs to play with. It's a good thing as you can be sure you won't run into danger, even if you do run out of talent – which you will!

The company was formed in 1998 by ex-Benetton F1 test driver, Formula Renault and Formula Ford Champion, Andrew Walsh. Andy realised there were a lot of people out there who had very fast cars and no idea what to do with them. He decided his mission should be to change all that.

His ethos is simple. Take you and your car to the boundaries of what you think you are capable of, and then charge right through them. The purpose behind it is even simpler – there are too many people out having to hang their heads and quietly weep as their beloved (and usually quite new) motor is dragged out of a lamppost, hedge or ditch because they lost control through a corner and didn't know what to do. Andy just didn't feel that was right and knew his 25-plus years of racing experience could be used to help educate drivers and improve the safety and gratification for owners of all vehicles.

Today then, we've brought along pretty much the entire UK-based Living The Legend squadron to a Car Limits Airfield Driver Training Day to take part in the structured course aimed at improving our on-the-limit driving abilities. The plan was simple: to push

our cars and our skillset beyond our comfort zone and experience how Car Limits can improve us.

Mark Robins was our instructor for the day, a man who's been with the firm for over seven years, helping thousands of drivers perfect their approach to performance driving. With coffees brewed, our briefing explained what the day would entail and we discussed the areas of driving that we wanted to concentrate and improve upon as a group. Then it was time to buckle up!

It's fair to say that most Porsche owners rarely touch the true performance potential of their special vehicles. After all, a unique car such as the 911 is one that takes a great deal of time, skill and an understanding to get the best from, and one that's admittedly more capable than 99 per cent of the drivers that take its helm. ➔





Top A Car Limits tuition day is usually limited to a maximum of four cars to ensure lengthy driving time for all

Clockwise from above right There are numerous car control techniques you're likely to pick up on a driving day, making you and your 911 faster but also safer



Above Expect to put your tyres through their paces on a Car Limits driving day, ever a sign that fun was had at the wheel

Company profile

Founder: Andrew Walsh

First opened: 1998

Location: Various locations including North Weald, Essex; Llandow, Glamorgan; Blyton, Lincolnshire

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“If you love your 911 and have a thirst for improving your driving skill there’s no better investment”

Unlike many driver courses, we spent the entire day in our respective 911s as Car Limits firmly believes in seat time over theory in the classroom. As such, we went through six different driving techniques including applying varying levels of braking power, keeping off the clutch and ‘bleeding’ the brakes. We got to grips with steering and steering feel, learned to balance the car and trail the throttle, got the hang of left foot braking, weight transfer and the logistics involved with setting oneself up for a corner, from when and how to change gear to steering input and when to introduce the power.

As a group, however, we all seemed to get very attached to the High Speed Bend, a literal 90 degree turn onto an open expanse of concrete with a ‘virtual wall’, which is actually a metal gutter that runs perpendicular to the run up – something you can’t actually hit in other words!

We began at 65mph with instructor Mark in the passenger seat, but try as we might, we either careered right through it or span spectacularly. It sounds easy, it wasn’t. As I pirouetted in a cloud of smoke, Mark explained I was gripping the wheel too hard and fighting the car. “Let it do the work,” he explained, “loosen your grip, and get off the throttle!” In the end, one finger was enough to not only guide the car, but to ‘feel’ and react to the way it moved.

Fundamentally, one must remain calm and in control, which is not something you would ever do if this happened on the road. After an hour or so of practice, during which our 911s were streaming smoke from the rear tyres and we were looking out the side window half the time, we all got the hang of it, or at least managed to control the madness a little better! As we began to understand what the chassis wanted to do before it did it, we were able to get ever

closer to the ‘right’ side of the wall, even as speeds crept up to 90mph for some!

Small changes started to add up quickly and after lunch we drove around a tight coned course to get to grips with understeer and put into practice the techniques we’d learnt to reduce it; the less is more approach resulted in a tighter turn and more traction when you got back on the throttle.

One thing that’s worth mentioning is that Car Limits days is usually run with a maximum of four cars and four drivers; two cars and two drivers; or two drivers in one car! Today, however, we made life difficult and brought seven Porsches and seven drivers (I didn’t mention that to them beforehand and accept responsibility for that – sorry Mark!).

If you love your 911 and have a thirst for improving your driving skill knowledge, there’s no better investment that you can make in our book. One thing we can attest to is that not only will you experience what your car is capable of, but you’ll understand the invaluable clues your car gives that hint you’re getting closer to its limits, and that may just save your life. I am not sure why this sort of training isn’t compulsory for all drivers, because being able to make mistakes in safety are essential ingredients for improvement.

As a group, we spent pretty much the entire day in fits of laughter, watching 911s spin, drift and grip but this laughter did nothing to hide the fact we were all learning and the fact we all had far more to learn than we first thought. More than speed or technique, Car Limits helps you and your machine work together. You’ll be faster, you’ll be more confident and you’ll have a cracking time. Forget tuning your Porsche, nothing but nothing will make you a faster and more proficient driver than a day with Andy, Mark and the team. T911 LTL certified. **911**