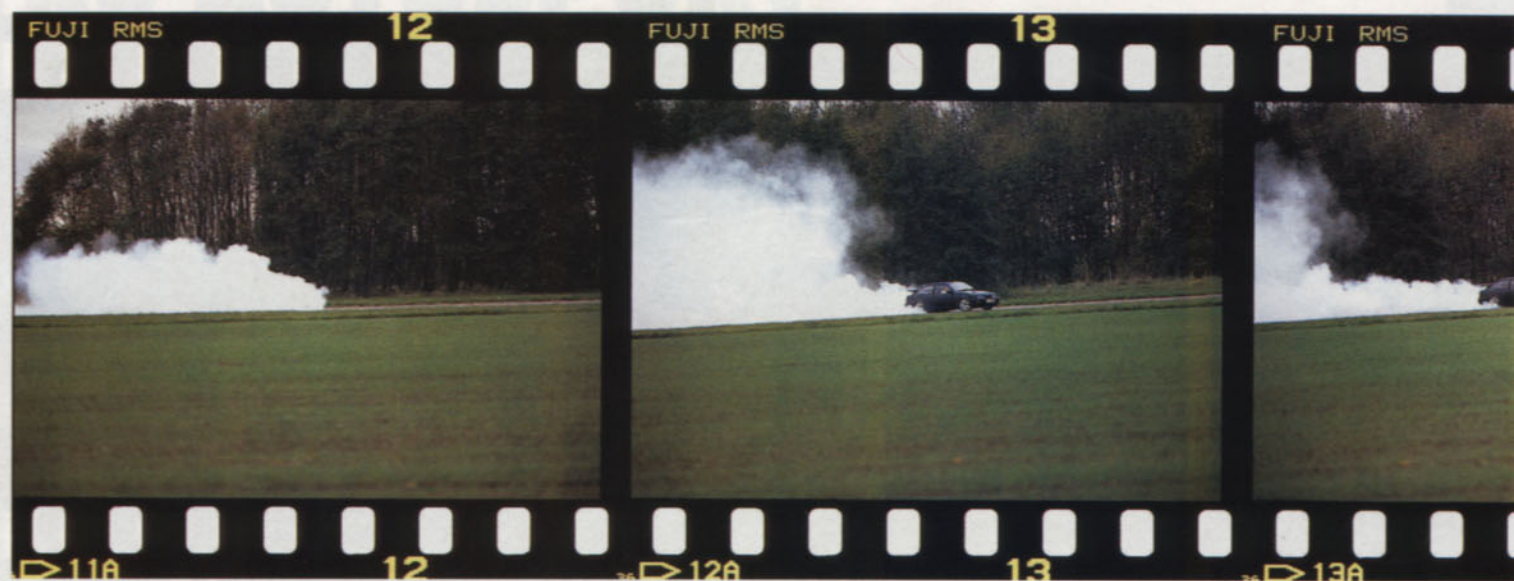


What's that, can you smell something burning?



At £250 per boot, it would probably be cheaper to use Afghan remoulds.



accelerated down to the first corner, braked, turned in and nearly ended up in the gravel trap!"

It seems that what he thought handled quite well on the road was a different ball game under track conditions. What he needed was a few modifications to really get the most out of his track time. His first engine rebuild — with a tuner who'd best remain nameless — was a disaster because it was as reliable as a weather forecast.

Then he turned to Alastair Mayne at Graham Goode Racing (0116 2440080) who was the answer to his prayers. Having run successful RS500s for his boss and others in the British Touring Car Championship, what Alastair doesn't know about building and tuning a Sierra Cosworth really isn't worth knowing.

They agreed the spec which would provide a very fast car but it also had to be reliable. "GGR has done the trick because since then it's been used about once a month for track days where it clocks up about 200 miles per day and is trashed to within an inch of its life," as John cheerfully admits. Aside from some teething problems while the turbo was sorted and brake problems which have been cured by adding water cooling, the car has run like a dream with no major dramas or engine rebuilds in two seasons. The only real weak link had been the standard gearbox which seems to have a bit of problem coping with massive power. The racing cars had the advantage of a competition spec box, but that's really silly money.

Alastair reckons the car is kicking out at least 490 bhp and that's big horses rather than Shetland ponies. GGR has tested a similar spec engine with less boost and a smaller turbo, and that produced 468. This engine cost John about £14,000.

John's track activities mainly come via CMS Trackdays (01992 579191) and On Track (01953 888989) which, I was surprised to learn are covered — without nasty excesses — on his fully comp road insurance. He says the reasonable deal is the one benefit of being 44. Favourite circuit? Probably Castle Combe. Least favourite? Cadwell Park, just too tight to be much fun. Favourite bend? No contest, Paddock Hill at Brands Hatch where it drops down the hill off-camber and you go up onto three wheels.

Touch wood John's never had to make a claim and despite all his outings can only recall one iffy moment. He was coming up to the Old Hairpin at Donington (where Mansell had his BTCC shunt) and it got a bit sideways. He backed off so as not to scare his passenger and the car snapped round and shot off across the wet grass at over 100 mph, heading for the wall. It could have been very expensive but he stopped about a foot short. "It handles like a dream, I can even get traction in the wet, the worst thing you can do is panic and

