

MSCC Parc Ferme Speed Championship

Harewood, Saturday 7 June 2008

Weather: damp at first leading to dry later.

For various reasons, I have not been able to compete at Harwood since 2005 so I considered my best time there to be way off bogy given that John Stephens seems to constantly whittle this down each year. He was not to disappoint!

The event was billed as a "Classic and Vintage meeting" and well-known Morgan Racer, Tony Lees delighted the crowds and his Morgan compatriots, by campaigning his 1914 Vauxhall Viper; all 12 litres of it. No wonder it only did 2 miles to the gallon! He was in good company amongst Austin 7, 3 litre Bentley, Frazer Nash, Riley Specials, Alvis, Talbot, Lagonda and Bugatti so there was plenty of exotic machinery to drool over, even without the Morgans.

However, there was a strong field of Morgans as the entry numbered 21 but in the event David Simpson was a no show and Roger Williams having made a very long journey to what I believe was to be his first event found that he did not have his timing strut. If only we had known sooner we could have helped out since Nigel Housley always carries 2 with him; don't ask me why!

First practice was damp and the Morgans were amongst the first out. Nigel Ledger "Thomas" (as the commentator insisted in calling him all day) demonstrated to the rest of us that the track was most treacherous; no grip off the start line due to mud on the track and exceedingly slippery on the bends. Just how bad was shown by the fact that John Stephens was more than 8 seconds over bogy.

However, with a light wind and no more drizzle the track dried out remarkably quickly and most runners saw times come tumbling down for second practice. Richard Smith was an exception though as he continued to live up to his reputation of venturing off into the undergrowth!

The competition proper after lunch saw new boy, Jonathan Edwards continue to make progress despite a blip on his last run (probably following Richard Smith's line). Comparative newcomer, Roy Wilkinson was also chipping away, as too were the girls, Karena Carden and Michelle Bailey. Jane Hill came to spectate with husband Tim since both Morgans are unfortunately off the road. Jane was heard to say that it was quite nice to take time out from competition but had pangs when she saw how much fun we were having. Get well soon Moggies I say.

Frustratingly mid afternoon the timing mechanism threw a wobbly and this together with some red flag runs resulted in Nigel Ledger Lomas, Peter Rafter and others having 3 or 4 consecutive runs up the hill. This produced mixed results for them and Nigel must be wondering if he needs to put his teddy bears on a diet!

From the commentary box we heard that a "hairy Morgan" was on the hill and looked to see if it was Richard Smith spinning off again. However, it was Nigel Housley so we are unsure whether the commentator was talking about the car or the driver!

Up front, John Stephens was setting the pace being consistently and increasingly under bogy in each of his 3 competitive runs. So it was no surprise when he came a deservedly 1st overall. David Frow however, does not give in easily and was determined to get under bogy, which he did on his last run to take 2nd overall. As usual Tim Ayres and Simon Baines were fighting it out with Tim taking the honours on the day. Simon of course is still getting to grips with his new dif and no doubt the fight will be resumed later in the season. In taking 3rd place overall Tim also has the satisfaction of being the fastest Morgan on the day and so wrestles the Harwood Cup from Simon. Well done to Tim.

As to my own performance I was pleased to cut 3 seconds off my previous best; it's just a pity I could not have shaved another second and given Richard Smith a run for his money!

On behalf of my fellow competitors I would like to say how much we appreciated the support amongst the spectators of a strong contingent of fellow Morgan Club members.

Finally, I must mention the red kites circling overhead. As if there was not enough excitement on the track the sight of these magnificent birds of prey was a joy to see.

Brian Lee