

MSCC Parc Ferme Speed Championship 2008

Event Report

Venue: Isle of Man

Date: 17th – 19th April 2008

Weather: Generally dry, but boy was it cold!

The Manx Classic, as the event is named, consists of 3 events run over 3 days, so with a busy schedule, there is little time to reflect on performances. The format this year was the same as 2007, with all events being run on closed public roads, a sprint up Bray Hill to the TT Course Grandstand on the Thursday evening followed by a hillclimb up the bumpy Sloc Hill on the Friday and finally another hillclimb up Lhergy Frissell, another section of the TT course, on Saturday.

The Bray Hill practice session ran through with little drama although such was the organisers' determination to avoid any delays that no sooner had we completed practice than we were herded back to the collection area awaiting a return to the bottom of the hill. At this point the weather did it's usual trick as the heavens opened. Eventually all Morgans returned to the bottom of the hill for the 1st timed run, only to learn, to our frustration, that the timing equipment was not working so no times either had been, or would be recorded. Nevertheless, we all took our runs up the hill but unfortunately the ever determined Margaret Parkes came to grief in the treacherous conditions, after which the event was cancelled.

Friday morning dawned on a cold, windy, but dry Sloc Hill.

1st practice was again relatively uneventful but an inspection of the times revealed that everyone was considerably slower than the times set the previous year. Of increasing concern was one Tim Hill, unable to enter the Morgan which is still undergoing a rebuild, he decided to enter his Skoda Fabia VRS diesel! This car had recently undergone a remapping of the ECU but was otherwise standard, however he was showing a clean pair of heels to the majority of the Morgan contingent.

After 2nd practice, the reason for the slower times became clear as it was noted that the finish line was considerably further up the hill so bogeys would not be under threat this year.

Following an excellent lunch provided by the Julie, Michelle and Sarah, who had interrupted their shopping expedition, the timed runs began.

Times continued to improve as everyone gained in confidence, particularly in learning not only the lines, but also the bumps, with Gregor Dixon Smith looking favourite, possibly because his car was most accustomed to roads of this type, although not necessarily at this speed!

By the 2nd and final run, any improvements were minor, the eventual victor being Gregor, with yours truly in second and Jim Mountain in third.

And what of the Skoda - it finished the day, albeit with a 3rd timed run, only 0.22 seconds behind Gregor, and had we used scratch times, it would have come home in 3rd place!

And so to the final day at Lhergy Frissell. This course has an interesting paddock as we are required to set up camp in a residential area although we were fortunate to renew an acquaintance with a local resident that Tim and Jane had made last year who allowed us to set up camp in his front garden.

Due to a number of delays during the practice session, only one practice was available to all drivers so lunchtime was spent with yours truly drawing maps of the course and Chris Bailey playing back a video on his camera taken the previous night, to help everyone learn the series of fast flowing bends.

After lunch, the tuition had clearly paid off as times tumbled, particularly for Chris with a time only 0.76 seconds over bogey whilst Gregor was charging again in 2nd place and Jim in a very close third. Nigel Housley and Clive Glass were split just over a second whilst the greatest improvement was gained by Peter Mountain clearly giving chase to son Jim. “Dangerous Dave” Simpson unfortunately went slower, helped no doubt by selecting 5th gear at a time when 3rd was clearly the better choice.

And so to the final runs. Due to the double drive of the Mountain family, Jim ran in an earlier batch and returned with the news that he had found just short of another 2 seconds, leaving everyone else now eyeing up the remaining places. Chris Bailey felt that he had gone much faster only to learn that he had found only half a second although he managed to hold on to 2nd place from another impressive effort from Gregor in 3rd. Another 2 tenths behind was yours truly in 4th and Peter less than 2 seconds behind in 5th place. Clive and Nigel were split by less than half a second for 6th and 7th with “Dangerous Dave” making up the final position.

For the record, after studying “in car video” from last year’s run compared to this year’s, the start line had been repositioned further down the hill, significantly lengthening the course by approximately 2-3 seconds, indicating the level of achievement by many.

Overall scores for the weekend were calculated from the aggregate scores of the 2 timed events, victor being a well deserved Jim Mountain, with Gregor less than 3 tenths behind and yours truly in 3rd, just over a second further behind.