

MSCC Speed Championship 2008

Event Report

Venue: Prescott

Date: 28th September 2008

Weather: Fog to start (or not as the case was), followed by sun, sun and cloud for the final few minutes.

Cyril, the snail, was having an exceedingly good morning. The weather conditions were just perfect: moist, dewy and misty and there was plenty of uninterrupted leaf and grass munching to be had. All in the quiet surrounds of the Prescott Hillclimb circuit. Oh, he was well aware that some time soon he would be deafened by an eclectic mix of roaring and pulsating engines but he reckoned that wasn't going to be for a good while as the fog had descended on the circuit like a never-ending smokescreen. So, life was going well for Cyril at that time.

Of course, there's always an end to anything exceedingly good and it wasn't long before the mist cleared and Cyril heard the popping, spluttering and eventual thrust of engines. By Jove, he'd better get a move on as he had only just got from one side to the other of Semi-Circle as the first car hurtled upwards.

Back down the hill, the busy grouping of Morganeers (22 in all) began their first practice lead by Lizzie Stephens, who struggled with gears but stayed on track. Clive Hall followed to set the quickest time he had ever achieved at Prescott in 54.19s with John Cocks, Joe Phillips, Jim Mountain and I in Class 1 all posting times in the 60s with no problems. Peter Mountain, Nigel Housley, John Bevan, Peter Turner and David Frow all pushed along, while Martyn Whaley had an exciting time at the Esses and Brian Lee carried straight on at Pardon Hairpin. Both corrected and continued to record times.

Meanwhile, Margaret Parkes, having just set off had to wait by Ettore's Bend as nature and machinery had come to grief at Semi-Circle; the very same place Cyril, the snail, was continuing his delicious breakfast platter. Poor Cyril was in a snail's world of his own, thoughtfully musing on what he was going to do with the rustic leaf two paces ahead of him, when miaowing and squealing around the corner came a Lightweight Roadster in the hands of Andrew Potter. When Cyril looked behind him, his small, snail snapshot of a world went blank. Indeed, Potter had run smack into him as the Roadster bounded forth off the track and into the very patch Cyril had been working on. Unfortunate for Cyril but fortunate for Andrew who, thankfully, came away unscathed with only mud and possibly the odd scratch added to the car.

I'd like to propose a moment's silence for Cyril.

Thank you.

Continuing the practice runs, Margaret had her re-run in her Roadster as husband, Philip, Graham Watts, Greg Parnell and Dave Simpson in the +8s all posted reasonable times.

With an 'Ouch!' sticker across the front wing of his +8 from an incident on Saturday's run, Philip Tisdall wasted no time on reflection and it was clear that a competition between him and Simon Baines to beat their target time was inevitable. Likewise, Nigel Ledger-Lomas and John Stephens were not hanging about.

Although the weather conditions may have played a part in first practice with a number of drivers in different cars going off the track, second practice seemed a much calmer run for all Morgan competitors with virtually everyone beating their earlier times except Lizzie, who came off at Pardon and Greg, who hit the wall exiting The Esses giving the +8 more than a tickle.

Lunch was a sunny affair with crowds aplenty. Just as well Lord Unstone was not gracing us with his presence as the queue at the icecream van seemed to be getting longer with each passing moment. For a man who thought nothing of taking his icecream around on a convoy run at Elvington the previous day, a queue would seem like an unwelcome guest.

So, once all had digested and ruminated the timed runs got underway. A blistering run by Lizzie in 60.96s saw her coming home with a big smile, which she then reduced in Run 2. Dad was quicker in the shared drive, posting 55.91s and again reducing that by 0.41s to complete the day. Unfortunately, Clive Hall was slower than in second practice with 52.80s, which he couldn't beat in Run 2 in spite of trying very hard to do so.

In Class 1, John Cocks set a better time of 61.40s but was baffled to find himself slower in his final run. On the other hand, Joe Phillips had a fantastic run in both sessions, finalising with 57.57s – a mere 0.14s away from target. Shaking with the surge of adrenalin, Joe could only wait and watch the others to see if it was enough for a trophy.

Jim Mountain was also quicker in both runs with 60.64s going forward, while I held my breath to whittle the time down to 63.96s; my two bears, Coxwain and Mr Prescott most relieved to get home safely without a fur out of place. Which is more than can be said for the pesky squirrel, who insisted on darting on and off the return road in front of Millie and I.

“Mind out!” I hailed as I stopped Millie within an inch of its bushy tail. It paid not the slightest attention as it foraged for haycorns and incessantly dashed to and fro, under and in front of my Morgan.

I decided a more aggressive approach was in order; “Look here, you ten inch, nut-cracking nibbler! Move or become part of Dangerous’ front bumper.” It moved just as Nigel Housley crossed the line at 60.54s, which remained his best time of the day.

Peter in his +4 and Martyn and John Bevan in 4/4s had quick second runs, all in the early 60s, while Brian decided that he liked the run-off at Pardon from practice that he chose to visit there again on his second run. Thankfully, his first run was quite quick in 58.93s. Peter Turner also came off at Pardon but duly left it alone for his second run posting a cool 56.75s in his +4. In another +4, David Frow set off with a purpose in both runs with his final run only 0.75s away from target.

The Roadsters had better luck in the timed runs with Peter Rabbit using Rabbit Power to propel Andrew to a final time of 52.11s with all four wheels on the grey stuff. Likewise, Margaret sliced nearly 5 seconds off her practice time to come home in 60.80s. Philip, Greg and Nigel in their +8s all hacked away at the seconds with Dave Simpson having to resort to his first timed run of 54.75s.

However, the tension was really mounting for the final two +8s where Philip Tisdall and Simon Baines were already within a second or so of their target. Philip set off in attack mode and pushed hard all the way to record 50.04s, only 0.81s away from target. Then it was Simon. Cool, collected and quick - 49.72s and 0.49s away to win the duo's battle for Class 9. Squirrels, snails and anything furry saluted the quickest Morgan driver of the day. Then they returned to foraging and munching. They don't go for sprinting – not their scene.

Nevertheless, it was a small 4/4 that won the overall competition with Joe Phillips taking gold with 0.14s away from target, Clive Hall with silver and Simon finishing with bronze. Best of all 'though were the slices of chocolate cake provided by Sue Tisdall to mark the end of a very exciting and eventful Prescott Hillclimb.

Well...not quite. A small, slight bushy object darted in and out of tree trunks, hedges and finally made its scampering way up to Zone K, the area where, earlier, 22 Morgans had parked. Beady eyes focused on tiny pieces. Alert, upright and sniffing the air, the squirrel recognised the pleasing smell of a treasure trove: crumbs. Chocolate cake crumbs, to be precise.

Karena Carden