

## **MSCC Techniques Speed Championship**

Round 11

Longcross 19<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Sutton and Cheam have traditionally hosted two sprints each year at Longcross over roughly the same course but in different directions and Speedmog were due to compete at the August meeting. However this was cancelled due to filming activity - an impressive Roman backdrop of plywood and scaffold was being built in the area previously used as a paddock - apparently for a Clash of the Titans epic - and the earlier meeting was substituted in the Championship. Being able to compete in the earlier meeting instead was in fact a more interesting option as it is the one which has the banked curve at the start.

Longcross is a superb sprint course located within a former military training area and includes two long flat out bends and a fearsome twisty undulating section known as The Snake in its 2.3 mile length. The Snake which runs through a wooded area must rank as one of the best experiences in the sprinting world with double apex bends, adverse cambers and a blind summit and would be a challenge to any driver. It was a pity that because of the re-scheduling only 5 Morgans were able to attend the event and relish the experience.

The day started with a walk of The Snake and a two lap convoy run to give a taste of what was to come but of course nothing – not even the video - can prepare a driver for the challenge of driving the course at speed. Although the track is fairly wide much of it is tree lined giving little forward visibility and instinctive reaction is at a premium although the need for practice was ably demonstrated in the first of the days runs by Mike Hughes and Paul Bryan who both had to reverse to negotiate the final chicane after underestimating their approach speeds.

On the second practice the driver of a very fast Mercedes engined MG Magnette lost control after becoming airborne at the summit of The Snake, fortunately with no injury except to a toad found in the exhaust pipe but it was after this that the chief marshal approached Roger Shadbolt urging caution as his car was reckoned to have the second highest airborne leap after the MG. We thought this advice was a little late as Rogers time had already become the benchmark for the afternoons targets in accordance with the Speedmog Regulations 'new venue' rules and they looked daunting.

The adrenalin fixes continued after lunch with three timed runs and straight away a determined Joe Philips was ahead of target with some very fast driving in his Class 1 car but Roger showed he had no intention of being cautious as he too went quicker to edge towards the 100 second barrier. Paul and Greg were looking for that elusive speed and Mike was still getting practice with reverse gear.

On the second timed run Joe went faster still and although Roger chipped away some hundredths it looked as though Joe's handicapped time was going to be unreachable as Greg was the only other to improve his time.

Much discussion ensued on where more speed could be found and on the final run of a memorable days sport Roger, Mike and Paul all had their fastest drives but the overall order was unchanged and Joe was confirmed as the comfortable winner from Roger and Paul.

If there is a sprinting heaven then it would surely include a venue modelled on Longcross but for mortals there seems to be a real possibility that the costs of putting on the event are a threat to its future and this may be the last one staged by the host club. If so there are 5 Speedmoggers who can say that they were there to experience a course like no other and that they confronted The Snake and survived and others can only hope that they have a chance in the future to do the same.

PB