

MSCC Techniques Speed Championship 2013

Event Report

Venue: Gurston Down, Wiltshire, England

Date: 23rd June 2013

Weather: Overcast, some light drizzle and a very cold wind

Flaming June . . . the BARC deserved better weather for their 5th Tony Marsh Memorial Weekend. Tony, who lived in neighbouring Hampshire, was 6 times National Hillclimb Champion and architect of the Gurston Down course nearly 50 years before his death in 2009 at 78.

Set high in the chalk Wiltshire downlands, this 1,057 yard course, in the midst of a working arable farm, is unusual in that it starts *downhill* with the fastest cars reaching 130mph within 5 seconds before the 140 foot rise to a potential 150mph finish. In between is the tricky bit - the tight double right-hander at Karousel quickly followed by the 90 degree left hander at Ashes.

Paul Weldon (TR engined +4) and I (+8) took advantage of our BARC membership and competed on the Saturday to get a bit of practice in before Clive Hall (Class Three 4/4) joined us on Sunday. A damp track and more showers than bright periods was the Saturday diet so not a time for heroics!

Sunday started with odd glimpses of sunshine and Paul and I cautiously carried on from where we ended the previous afternoon whilst Clive had to regain his confidence from 4 years previously and not lift off at 70+mph going into the deceptive sweeping bend at Hollow which follows the downhill Park Straight. First practice saw Clive only 1.39 seconds away from his target, regrettably a feat he could not repeat during the rest of the day. Meanwhile Paul was relentlessly creeping up on Gerard Sykes' long standing target whilst I was doing battle with my Tim Ayres Class 9 time - and losing!

Final runs saw Paul take 0.22 seconds off Gerard's target whilst I could only get within a second of my goal . . . and Tim was there to see his record time remain in place. One day . . . !

Such a shame that only 3 Morgans turned out to compete at this traditional hillclimb which reaches its half century in a few years time. The English Channel is not north of Devon, Dorset and Wiltshire so there is no danger of drowning more northerly folks in their journey south. Turning out old papers a few weeks ago I found some Wiscombe results from the late 90s - 10 Morgans. Where have they all gone?

An extra treat on Sunday was the opening runs by 'Bloody Mary'. This was built in the late 1920s by the late former technical editor of Autosport magazine John Bolster and his brother Richard when they were still teenagers. Featuring a wooden chassis and a pair of JAP engines combining to give nearly 2 litres engine capacity, the seven hundredweight projectile was one of the fastest hillclimb cars of its day. An eighty year old car with 350bhp per ton on 3" wide crossply tyres and Austin 7 front brakes - brave?

We missed the chocolate brownies . . .

Alan Foster