

MSSC Techniques Speed Championship

Venue: Gurston Down
Date: 18th June 2017
Weather: Scorchio.

As I headed down towards Warminster at 6:00am it was already showing signs of being a very hot day. I wasn't wrong! This event goes down in my book as the hottest day of competition I have ever experienced.

Gurston lies to the west of Salisbury and is to be found within the curtilage of a fully functioning arable farm in the rolling Wiltshire countryside. Entrance is via the farmyard itself which leads to a well laid out and well maintained paddock area with ample parking for motor homes and trailers.

Gurston is unique in as much as the start is at the top of a hill and the first two hundred meters are steeply downhill. Thus you arrive at the first right, left, left sequence at pace! This is followed by Cascades (which should be named Cascara for the effect it has) a steep uphill right into a late apex ninety right and on to an open ninety left and the long left two hundred metre blast to the line. Bizarrely competitors are advised not to back off when they cross the line as the camber and tarmac contours serve to unbalance the car enough to throw it off left into a welcoming field of wheat if you fail to follow the guidance!

There was a great turnout of nine Morgans for this the fiftieth anniversary of Gurston Hillclimb. All the usual criminals were in evidence and it was great to see Simon Ashby and son in law Andrew back on the hills. First practice was at 8:30am. Scrutineering and marshalling was extremely well organised and very professional, a real credit to the club. There was, however, a very lengthy wait of over two hours prior to the second practice run which didn't help competitors get into and maintain the rhythm needed for producing faster times. In order to relieve the boredom Pappa Smurf (George Poundofruit) regaled us with details of his high fibre diet. All this and more for a paltry entry fee of £120 quid.....what value.

The day grew hotter. Second practice saw much improvement with the laconic Clive Hall breaking bogey and leaving the rest of us needing between two and four seconds to stay in touch. Simon Ashby suffered with overfueling in his immaculate 4/4 while your scribe was checking for leaks from a recently renewed gearbox that appeared to be discharging its contents. George P was peddling hard as was "Dr" Foster who broke the forty second barrier and was the fastest Morgan at the lunch halt with a 39.40.

The day grew hotter. Andrew Farr drove his revitalised four seater with verve and got quicker with every run. James Walters in his lovely blue Plus 4 caused a dust storm at Ashes with a marginal offline excursion following oversteer, he crossed the line with a 45.18 which was to be his quickest run of the event, the grin indicated that he was enjoying the day enormously and would not be backing off!

The day was now melting, not a breath of air. At one point I had to defer my start as sweat was running into my eyes under my visor. Shorts were deployed and people sought shade under the trees or sat in cars with the air con running. One notable competitor (Mr. Johnson) was found to have placed his race suit in the fridge of his camper van between runs. Innovative or what??!!

The day grew hotter. Water was deployed to the deserving marshals and after a brief lunch break the timed runs began. George Poundfruit went half a second under bogey (51.99) and the wind ups began in earnest. Mr Hall went backwards by 0.5 and was not to repeat his under target time for the remaining runs. Your scribe needed to improve by a significant 1.2 seconds to be in the running but Andrew Farr was knocking chunks off his times with a fine 46.02 run. He gained the general consensus of being driver of the day. Mr Bryan also improved dramatically during the day, his final time of 40.70 being some 3.62 quicker than practice one.

Alan "coolparts" Johnson popped in a 42.42 but saved the best till last with a 42.24. James Walters did a Hall and also went slightly backwards. Both Foster and Toon were now in the sub forty club with your scribe ahead by a marginal 0.22secs.

The day grew hotter. There was no need to warm up engines prior to a run and those keen enough to measure tyre pressures observed a one to two lb per sq inch difference in pressures on the sunny side of the car.

One last push was required if we were to stop George Poundfruit from smiling inanely all the way back home but it wasn't to be. The heat of the day exacted a toll on both track and drivers but James, Alan, Simon and Paul all saved their best till last. So the final positions were Poundfruit first, Mr. Hall second with Toony third.

Hot, weary and tired we packed up and wended our way to respective homes. A great day but challenging in so many ways. We shall no doubt return for more in 2018. Our thanks go to Brenda Bryan for her usual hard work on the results board.

Toony