

MSCC Techniques Speed Championship

Venue: Loton Park
Date: 16th July 2017
Weather: Mildly moist with a dry and warm final run.

For the first time in quite a while, the assembled group of 17 Morgans – the majority of the entrants for this year's championship - was a sight to behold!!

Loton is a stunning venue for a hill climb and, once at the top, the view over the North and Mid-Wales hills is spectacular. A small number of competitors, including yours truly, took advantage of the non-championship Saturday run to get a little bit of practice in, and the new track proved addictive. Hagley and District, and the course management team, have undertaken a magnificent job to re-surface the whole course, and fell a number of trees at the start, and the results are spectacular. If you've never taken a run up Loton, you don't know what you're missing!!

The weather for practice, and the first run, was damp and overcast, meaning Alan Johnson's patented race suit cooling system (busting his suit in the fridge) wasn't necessary. Practice was therefore taken steadily, apart from George Proudfoot, who even in the 'moist' conditions managed to get himself 5 seconds under the Class 1 bogey. Mr. Toon and I had a brief discussion and decided a new handicap system was in order, which involves letting the air out of the front-runner's tyres. If only George wasn't such a lovely bloke.....

Second practice was a similarly cautious affair. I tried a little late braking at the top of Cedar. A little advice for anyone thinking of competing at Loton in future; you can't apply brakes in a Plus 8 at the 50 metre board in the damp.....

Oh, and special mention must also go to Alan 'Two Cones' Foster who, as his new moniker would suggest, managed to collect two of the aforesaid cones by going too deep into Triangle, and took both to the top of the hill. The second was only discovered when he returned to the paddock and investigated the strange noise under the car..... Still, no damage done, and we all settled down after practice for a nice lunch.

It was a long day as the large number of entrants, and the frequent 'offs' of other (ahem) non-Morgan drivers, meant runs were taking an age. Michele Bailey took the opportunity to knit a coverall for the soon to be opened Runcorn crossing, whilst Brenda showed us a very intricate christening shawl she was producing for a friend. I'm not sure my comment about it being fine once all the holes had been filled in went down too well.....

It was also nice to see Rob Stones and his partner Nicky, who arrived in his 'all bells and whistles' new shiny carbon black Aero 8. He very bravely put up with all our 'ribbing' about it likely to be a bugger to get up the hill without scratching the paint, and Chris Bailey kindly adding a few numbers to the driver's door in (thankfully easily removable) white tape.....

First timed runs were in the damp, and we all were beginning to feel a bit frustrated that the long delays, and limited opportunity to stretch the legs of the cars, would turn the day into a damp squib.

Needless to say, despite the weather, 'Gorgeous' George remained under bogey, by four seconds, whilst Simon Baines was only 0.15 over, with Rob Toon only a couple of tenths further back. Our own 'international playboy of the western world' (Ian Hargrave) had flown in from Germany for the event, and was heading back off straight after, whilst Simon Ashby was keeping an eagle eye on my time as we were both hovering a second or so over.

Things were running late, and it was close to 5.00pm, when there was a further delay for our second timed runs whilst the marshals dug a single-seater out of the undergrowth. However, this meant the burgeoning sunshine could finally come out and warm the track for the final run, when all hell broke loose!!!

Chris Bailey did a storming run to go 1.67 seconds under bogey, George increased his advantage to 7.98 under, Simon Baines managed 1.36 under, Rob Toon 0.4 under, and your scribe 0.3 under. Simon Ashby and John B Stephens both finished within a second of bogey, Paul Clarke a smidge further back, and the usually ultra-reliable Clive Hall, Alan Johnson, Andrew Farr and Alan Foster just a couple of seconds or so over and all very closely grouped. Michele, Nigel Housley, Ian Patton, and Ian Hargrave had a ding-dong battle, with Michele coming out head of that group.

So, despite the initial frustrations, all in all, we had a fantastic day's sprinting. I told you the new track was good didn't I.....

Clive Glass