

MSCC Techniques Speed Championship

Venue: Curborough

Date: 10th April 2022

Weather: Cold with sunny intervals.

I love frogs me, just not at five in the morning. I mean, don't get me wrong, I'm sure female frogs can be very alluring; the 50+ male frogs who kept calling out for a 'friend' on Sunday morning certainly thought so. The problem for me though was that I wasn't due to get out of bed until six, as Curborough is only just short of a two-hour drive from Liverpool, so I wasn't best pleased.

This was my first run out of the season, so I was looking forward to seeing everyone again. We've over 20 cars entered into the Morgan Speed Championship so far this year, including a few new to the group, so it's shaping up to be a good year.

The Midlands Automobile Club aren't ones for rushing things, and the event was undertaken at a somewhat sedate pace. First practice saw Simon Baines set the sprint pace with a 66.97, me with a 68.23, and Chris Baines with a 68.27. My old friend and adversary Paul Clarke, fresh from having his core plugs changed (not as painful as it sounds) and whose Roadster was now giving out the full 216BHP the factory intended, set a 69.24, and Clive Hall was having fun trying to put down 170BHP from his freshly home-rebuilt Ford Crossflow 4/4, setting out his stall with a 76.05. Paul Bryan, in his lovely +4 Supersports set a 76.25, with returnee to the fold Rob Stones in another Roadster, freshly minted (and dented), managed a 77.39; an unsecured spare wheel in his trailer having fallen onto the front wing. Still, the ribald consensus that 'it'll polish out' was taken in good spirit, I think. James Walter was up next with a 79.66, and 'Pa' Housley set a 87.93. Pa's a bit under the weather and awaiting a Ferratin infusion, and took the suggestion he might want to lick a few girders in the manner one might expect from a native of Ripley. I never knew you could do that with a tyre iron...

Second practice saw everyone improve, as the ground went from 'frosty' to just 'very cold', but with Junior Baines receiving a 'No Time Recorded' due to timing gremlins. We then settled down for a leisurely lunch. Our forever tolerant time recorder, Brenda Bryan, let us put our grubby mitts all over the practice scoresheet, to see where and how we might improve, and we settled into the tried and tested lunchtime repartee and bonhomie of abusing Chris Baines (in the absence of brother Jonno) and encouraging Paul Clarke to eat as much as possible to try and slow him down.

The sun came out over lunchtime and warmed the track a little, and off we went with the first timed run. Pa Housley had clearly taken our encouragement to heart and knocked almost 3 seconds off his practice time to record an 83.71. Clive Hall was getting the hang of balancing his clutch and accelerator and set a 71.1, and I managed to dip below 67 seconds with a 66.97. However, the main talking point has to be the stonking time set by Chris Baines (65.49) ahead of his dad on a 65.96!!!! Simon's plan of putting Chris out first to warm the tyres had clearly backfired and whilst I wouldn't go so far as to say Chris looked a bit smug, if it had been me I suspect I might not have been so restrained in my celebrations.

Andy Hatch set a 74.46 which, like Pa, he couldn't improve on in Round 2. I overheard the start-line marshall ask if Andy was a naval man. I suppose with a battleship grey +4 he's going to have to get used to that...Paul Bryan and Paul Clarke also set their best event time during Round 1 with a 73.55 and 68.00 respectively.

Round 2 saw Clive Hall improved to end on a 70.25, James Walter improved to end on a 77.83, Rob Stone improved to finish with a 74.11, and I knocked a bit more off to finish on 66.82. But again, the talk of the day was the Baines Battle. We knew Simon wouldn't take Chris's 65.49 lying down and, sure enough, he improved to end on a 65.42, but by then it was too late as Chris had already set the best time of the day, finishing on a 65.12 and taking first place. Simon had to settle for second, and I came 3rd.

Chris's partner Rowan was in attendance at her first ever sprint event. Given the positive impact she had on Chris's performance, I suspect and hope we'll be seeing her again and, by the looks of things, they've both kissed their last frogs. I wonder if they'd have a word with my lot?

Clive Glass