

MSCC Techniques Speed Championship 2023

Venue: Gurston Down
Date: 2nd April 2023

Despite heavy rain during the previous forty-eight hours, the first round of the 2023 Morgan Sports Car Club Techniques Speed Championship got underway at Gurston Down, Wiltshire, on Sunday 2nd April.

Eight drivers were entered including newcomers to the Championship, Jane Peck in her 4/4 and Tom Dean sharing a +8 with father, James. Defending champion Simon Baines was there in his Lightweight Roadster. The rest of the field was made up of the +4s of James Walter and Andy Hatch, George Proudfoot in his Series 1 4/4 and Howard Burton in his 4/4. A dismantled Alan Foster, the +8 is still in the paint shop was there in support as were Logmoggers, Alan Clark and Ken Wilson. Philip Cowpland, another new Championship entrant, also turned up to spectate and learn more about hill-climbs and sprints.

The chilly and damp track walk revealed mud left on the tarmac from the previous day's event. Something to be avoided. The return of the season led to familiar questions about apexes, braking points and where a corner could be taken 'flat'. The practice runs passed without much drama, all of us tentative on our first outing. With a drying track and increasing confidence times began to come down. Tom's by nearly twelve seconds and Jane's by nine. The rest of us were satisfied by chipping away, gaining a second here and there.

After an early lunch we are ready for the first of our two timed runs. When the light changes from Red to Green we launch with some wheel spin, changing into second and then third before deciding whether to dab on the brakes, or lift on the accelerator, or take the left hand Hollow Bend flat out. Karousel, a ninety degree right hander with a very steep climb out comes up fast. Where to brake and change gear is always a dilemma and then there's Deer's Leap where single seaters can become airborne. Not much chance in a Morgan. The exit from the final left hand Ashes Bend is critical, a slingshot out means a fast time, a bad line means a precious half second is lost. Then it's flat out for the line. Those of us with rev limiters have to decide whether to wait for it to cut in or change up for the final few metres. We all remember, hopefully, not to brake too hard once across the line as the car can become unstable with the result of ending up in a field of newly planted corn. We approach the holding point where a Marshal guides us into a queue. If we are fortunate we can see our time on the digital screen. We wait for all our batch to arrive and then process slowly back down the hill for our next run.

R1 saw all of us improve our times. Now we are getting interested in tenths of seconds. And so to R2 with all to play for. It looked like a shootout between last year's Champion Simon Baines and the 2022 Champion George Proudfoot. Andy Hatch was also in the running for a podium finish. The final results on handicap saw George take first, followed by Andy, 0.9 points behind and Simon 1.5 points in arrears. Something must be right if a 1938 Series 1 can win, a road going +4 can come second and a specialist race car third.

The final procession down the hill is an opportunity to say 'Thank You' to the Marshalls, without whom none of this would be possible. Back to the Paddock to pack up, go to the prize giving, drive home and look forward to the next time.

Howard Burton