

MSCC Techniques Speed Championship

Loton Park

18th May 2025

Weather: Sunshine, Hot.

A near record turnout of sixteen drivers in twelve Morgans took on the challenge of one of the longest hill climbs in the country on a glorious day at Loton Park on the Shropshire-Wales border. The course is just under 1500 yards long and runs through a deer park. At this time of year it is a verdant green with a mixture of oak and ash trees in full leaf and new bracken emerging in patches alongside the track.



We had four cars being double driven. Wife and husband Michelle and Chris Bailey were in their cream +4; Ella Frow and father David shared their newly acquired hot 4/4; son and father Simon and Paul Clarke were in Paul's Roadster Lightweight and Tom Meredith shared the 5 litre +8 with his father, Mike. This car had belonged to Mike's father. There can't be many people who have competed in grandad's car.

A family affair, the drivers and the pit crew

To keep up the family theme, Chris Cowpland was competing in his first season driving a green +8 under the watchful eye of father Phil, also in a +8, aided by pit crew Dylan, Chris' younger brother.

The rest of the field was made up of George Proudfoot in his glorious 1938 Series 1 4/4; the 4/4s of Jane Peck, Paul Bryan and Howard Burton; Steve McDonald was making a welcome return to the Championship in his +8 and finally, defending Champion Simon Baines was competing in his Roadster Lightweight.

The sun was already bright in the early morning as scrutineers checked that cars and drivers were all safe to run. The Morgans were in the last batch so there was time to walk the course, always important, to try and work out the right lines through corners and braking points.

The trouble is what seems clear at walking pace is very unclear at sixty miles an hour. The first of the two practice runs was an opportunity to settle into the rhythm of the day.



Jane Peck pushing in her 4/4 "Billy" along Cedar Straight

We were assembled in running order by the paddock Marshals and then called forward, one by one to the start line.

The red light changes to green and then it's off up the short uphill to the tight left hander, trying to remember where the late apex was from the track walk. Now in third gear it's a dash through a couple of tricky left-handers and then downhill past a lake towards a hundred degree right hander, Triangle, holding ones nerve to brake somewhere between the 50 and 25 yard markers. Coming out of Triangle, trying to avoid the grass on the left it's then on to the esses at Keepers.

The exit is critical for a fast run up the long Cedar straight where the +8s and Roadsters approach ninety miles an hour. The marker boards for Fallow, a left hand hairpin come up very fast. The run off for those misjudging their braking was put to good use later in the day.

There can't be many corners on circuits that are completely blind but the approach to the final right hander is just that. Putting faith in what was learnt on the track walk it's brake hard as the slope rises, change down and then turn right before you can actually see the exit of Museum corner. There is a short sprint to the finish and then if you remember, a look up to see the time of the run displayed. At the holding point before the return down the hill, there is a chance to watch the remaining Morgans and Porches on the final part of the course, often providing drama of screeching brakes, smoking tyres and the occasional clouds of dust as someone leaves the tarmac.



Second practice finished, it was time for lunch and then to the two timed runs that will determine the winner.

Our handicap system works by taking into account the power of the engine and the combined weight of the car and driver. An algorithm calculates a target time for each car. The driver nearest their target, wins.

Almost all drivers improved on their first timed run. However both Ella Frow and Tom Meredith took excursions which left them way down the leader board.

Mike and Tom Meredith share drive the 5 litre +8. Mike set a new Morgan record for Loton.

The standout drive was by Mike Meredith who broke Simon Baines's 2017 record for the climb by five hundredths of a second or in distance terms he would have been just over a yard in front of Simon if they had been on the track together. Something of course not permitted on hill climbs or sprints!

So after the first timed run it was Mike who headed the field, Chris Bailey second and Simon lying third.

The second and final timed run left all to play for. Simon Clarke pushed father Paul to the limit finishing only fourteen hundredths of a second behind. Not bad for someone's first time on a hill climb and only his second competitive drive.

Ella Frow pushed her 4/4 up the leader board from rock bottom on the first run to finish seventh. Mike Meredith not content with breaking Simon's record on his first run clipped another eight hundredths of a second off the record he had set earlier.

However in the end it was Chris Bailey who won the day on handicap with a personal best time at Loton. Mike had to be content with second and a new course record. Phil Cowpland was third, also with a personal best. Michelle Bailey also recorded her fastest time for the course.

Simon Baines was fourth, having to rely on his first timed run as he missed the braking point at Fallow and crossed over the track limit which meant he didn't record a time.



Ella and David Frow are driving a "hot" 4/4 this season



A great day's motor sport in glorious surroundings with drivers giving it their all. It was good to see the younger, new recruits to the Championship.

Simon Clarke, Tom Meredith and Chris Cowpland joining in the paddock banter and enjoying their first experience of driving up the hill at Loton.

Hopefully their positive experience will encourage more, younger, drivers to enter Speedmog.

Perhaps with a similarly enthused parent?

Howard Burton

Chris Bailey won the day with a personal best time on his last run

All images supplied courtesy of David Burrridge and Howard Burton