

Aintree race report

Saturday 28th June 2003

Midway point of the season

They used to race F1 cars around the Aintree circuit, back in the 50's and 60's. The place echoed to the sounds of cars driven by Moss, Clark, even Surtees. And though today's circuit just consists of three of the original corners [even the paddock road was part of the original track] the place definitely had an atmosphere about it.

After another 1st in class at MIRA at the end of May, I'd had to take a break for four weeks from competition, partly to fit in a 2-week trip to the States, and to attend a Fiesta XR2 shoot-out with Performance Ford magazine at Bruntingthorpe. In preparation for some straight-line speed testing for the mag, I'd reset the front suspension to zero camber, with zero toe-in. This gave me a recorded 0-60 of 6.5s, top speed of 107MPH and standing quarter mile of 15.05, which I was very pleased with. I'd been tinkering with the camber during the previous sprints, thinking it was giving me more grip round the corners, but I think I'd gone too far, as I was rapidly running out of straight line grip, particularly off the line. Resetting everything gave me another opportunity to start over.

This was our first visit to Aintree. We arrived around 7:45, unloaded and prepared the car, then attended the drivers briefing at 08:35. With no time to walk the circuit,

Yet again Phil Short down loaded some useful hints and tips about lines, turning in points etc, and so on my first run I was well and truly psyched up for a quick run. I'm trying to start with a bit more speed, as at other events I seem to get quicker with each run, but make too slow a start, so I really set about lapping the circuit with some enthusiasm, and managed to slip and slide round the track without running in to too much trouble, though I nearly out braked myself on the first corner on cold tyres 8-)

After the 1st practice run I did make a small adjustment to the camber by rotating the camber plates by 1 hole, and the second run was certainly faster, though I was experimenting less on the corners, and tried to stick to the right lines. At the 1st timed run before lunch I seemed to only make a small improvement, so I asked around the other FWD competitors during the break, and the consensus seemed to be to leave the car in 4th at the final corner, where I'd been changing down in to 3rd. After lunch my 2nd timed run was 9/10ths quicker than my 1st, and I was really starting to enjoy flinging the car around. Determined to go even quicker on my 3rd and final run, I folded the passenger door mirror back, and even removed the passenger side wiper arm, parking the remaining one vertically, and sure enough, I was another 8/10ths quicker, resulting in a 55.92s run, crossing the line just on the rev limiter in 5th (7250 rpm) at 107MPH, which at least corresponded to the time I recorded at Bruntingthorpe using GPS.

I was thinking about getting the gear ratios changed for next season, but Aintree is probably the fastest event I'll

get to compete on, and the gearing was spot on. For now, no other mods to the car are planned, but for the next event an oil change is on the cards, and I need to permanently fix the leaking exhaust manifold. The planned purchase of light weight alloy wheels and slick tyres have been put on hold due to Compomotive Wheels being unable to supply me with a set in time for the event, so I'm probably going to complete the rest of the season with just the one set of road tyres, and then next year, pending an engine build over the winter, I'll outlay the cash for a new set. I've now got a clinic feature with CCC magazine in August to look forward to, as well as the article from the shoot out in June for Performance Ford magazine, which should appear in the September issue, so we've a fairly packed calendar ahead.

1st practice: 59.06s
2nd practice: 57.97s

1st timed: 57.56s
2nd timed: 56.68s (106mph)
3rd timed: 55.92s (107mph)

Result: 2nd in class 4B (Sports Libre), 69th overall from 140 starters.

Next event: Harewood BBQ Hillclimb, July 13th

Graham Blackwell
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2003 Midland Speed Championships

3 Sisters (April 6th) – 4th in class
Curborough (April 27th) – 2nd in class
Loton Park (May 10th) – 1st in class
MIRA (May 24th) – 1st in class
Aintree (June 28th) – 2nd in class

Future events

Harewood (July 13th)
Curborough (July 20th)
3 Sisters (August 10th)
Harewood (August 24th)
Loton Park (August 31st)
Curborough (September 7th)



Waiting between practice runs.



Phil Short's 1380cc Mini



180 BHP 1600cc Ecotek Westfield



The busy Aintree paddock



Beautiful and very quick Vauxhall VX220