

## Nottingham Sports Car Club – Curborough Long Course sprint report (Midland Speed Championships)

Sunday 20th July 2003

### Another cracking day

With minor repairs required from Harewood the weekend before, and another hectic week with trips to Crawley and St. Asaph in N.Wales, Friday afternoons have become a bit fraught recently, as I rush round trying to prepare for the next event. I'd broken one of the alternator-mounting bolts at Harewood, where a 10.2 grade bolt had sheared, so I made a trip to Loughborough to find some 12.9 grade M10 bolts (indestructible apparently). Success, two quid later, and a quick dash home in the Quattro and within an hour I'd fixed the fault. I also set about fastening my control/fuse box securely to the floor of the car, as at Harewood it was jumping right off the floor on some of the left hander's, so some head scratching later, and I'd robbed some fasteners off an unsuspecting wooden box in the corner of the garage, and I now have a fuse box that no longer rattles around the inside of the car, and which can be removed quickly by releasing the two clasps.

And so on to Curborough, for a crack at the Long course event on Sunday. We arrived quite early, and soon unloaded everything, and had a good walk of the course. The right turn for the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> lap really only gave one correct route, so I imprinted it on my memory, and went back to the car, awaiting the scrutineer. Time for a drink and some food, these early starts and lugging the car around on the trailer certainly help work up a good appetite.

We watched the first few groups of cars round, to see what lines they were taking in to the 2<sup>nd</sup> lap, and they varied from the demon late brake'ers who locked up everything and threw the car round the corner, to those who braked far too early, and took a really nice line. Somewhere in between seemed ideal I thought.

Fred Currell in his mighty Audi Quattro took an early bath, with a momentous tank slapping moment around Paddock, leading to some rapid input to the steering, and a smashed near side front wheel as he slid across the grass and back on to the track. We all heard an almighty bang as the car shot across the track, but never guessed that he'd torn a wheel off. That was as far as the Audi got, Fred appeared to have damaged the suspension, so he promptly retired the car on it's first run, and set about persuading someone to let him share their drive.

My first practice run soon came around, and I set off with some enthusiasm again, but I also found the track to be very slippery round Paddock. In fact it was slippery everywhere, the car was really tail happy (At Harewood it was the other way round, bags of under steer) so I wrestled it round in a 71.06s, and was relieved to survive unscathed. The track was dry, it was a warm sunny day, so I was a bit puzzled why the car was behaving the way it was. I put it down to a cold track. (hence Fred's off earlier)

The 2<sup>nd</sup> run was just as entertaining though, and in spite of a 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> gear change approaching the finish line I improved with a 70.45s.

Lunch soon followed, and I asked various drivers what the cure for over steer was. Obvious really, stiffen the front, and soften the rear, so I stiffened the front dampers to 3.5 turns and softened the rears to 2 turns, and prepared for my 1<sup>st</sup> timed run. My target was to beat 70s, and as I set off I found

the handling was transformed, though I still lifted for Paddock, my bogey corner, I just don't have the bottle to keep the throttle wide open all the way round. I really enjoyed thrashing the car round for the two laps. 7000rpm in every gear, it was awesome fun. And I went quicker too. Posting a 69.49s. Brilliant, I'd broken the 70s barrier.

For the 2<sup>nd</sup> timed run I increased the stiffness of the front dampers to 4 turns, and set myself the target of getting in to the low 68s. Despite a short rain shower just before my run, I blitzed round and crossed the line in 68.6s, recording a 39.0s first lap, a 2.77s 64ft time, and crossing the line at 81MPH.

Wow! I was ecstatic. This sport is such a good buzz. I'm really getting in to it now, it's so satisfying to keep making improvements, particularly when there's no instructor sitting alongside you, it's just you making all the improvements all the time.

1<sup>st</sup> practice: 71.06s  
2<sup>nd</sup> practice: 70.45s  
1<sup>st</sup> timed: 69.49s  
2<sup>nd</sup> timed: 68.60s  
Result: 1<sup>st</sup> in class 4B (Sports Libre)

Next event: 3 Sisters double lapper August 10<sup>th</sup>

I'm now readying the car for our next outing, which is a trip to the Chobham test track, near Chertsey on Thursday August the 7th. Tuning expert Dave Walker from CCC magazine is reviewing the car for a Clinic feature, so I'll make sure all the sponsors logo's are clearly visible for the photographer to take some nice pictures for the magazine. I do hope he finds the car as much fun to drive as I do.

Then the following day I'm at Bruntingthorpe in Leicestershire, for another magazine article, this time being written by journo Simon Woolley from Retro Cars magazine. They're doing a *Hot Hatches of the 80's* article, and I'm sharing the track with a Peugeot 205GTI, Renault 5GT Turbo, and Golf GTI, which should make for some interesting reading. And if you're in WHSmiths in the next few weeks, take a peek at the September '03 edition of Performance Ford magazine, where I'm featured with a dozen other XR2's in a performance shootout taken in June this year. By all accounts it's a great article. (I didn't disgrace my self, even against more powerful Turbo charged Fiesta's)

TTFN

Graham Blackwell  
[www.zetecinside.com](http://www.zetecinside.com)

#### 2003 Midland Speed Championships

3 Sisters (April 6<sup>th</sup>) – 4<sup>th</sup> in class  
Curborough (April 27<sup>th</sup>) – 2<sup>nd</sup> in class  
Loton Park (May 10<sup>th</sup>) – 1<sup>st</sup> in class  
MIRA (May 24<sup>th</sup>) – 1<sup>st</sup> in class  
Aintree (June 28<sup>th</sup>) – 2<sup>nd</sup> in class  
Harewood (July 13<sup>th</sup>) – 1<sup>st</sup> in class  
Curborough (July 20<sup>th</sup>) – 1<sup>st</sup> in class

#### Future events

3 Sisters (August 10<sup>th</sup>)  
Harewood (August 24<sup>th</sup>)  
Loton Park (August 31<sup>st</sup>)  
Curborough (September 7<sup>th</sup>)

Thanks to Steve Kipping from <http://speed205gti.drive.to> for the hi-res picture of the Fiesta.



The wheel that Fred broke!



Some of the very exotic machinery at Curborough



Me surviving Paddock (again)

[Pic. Steve Kipping]



FTD winner Steve Miles 2.0 Zetec powered Van-Diemen