

## Nottingham Sports Car Club – 3 Sisters Long Course sprint report

Sunday 10th August 2003

### Heat wave, what heat wave?

Its not every day you get invited to take your car along to the workshops of one of the countries most respected motoring journo's. So when I was told to turn up at Watton, Norfolk, on Saturday, I was more than happy to make the 3-hour trip from Leicester with the Fiesta in tow. Dave Walker from CCC magazine, test-drove the car on Thursday at DERA Chobham, and commented on the handling, or rather the lack of it.

"I can sort that out" he said, and sure enough, that evening I had a phone call inviting me down to Norfolk on Saturday. We'd been at DERA for the CCC clinic article. A professional photographer spent the day snapping, while Dave had a play in the car. He immediately found that the car wasn't handling right, something I'd just attributed to the extra weight of the Zetec 16V engine I'd installed, and the 178 BHP.

Well, everyone kept going on about torque steer . . .

When I arrived after midday, I unloaded the Fiesta, and Dave put it straight on the rollers, for some power runs. BHP was down on the figures I was quoted when it was tuned last year. However we could have spent a few hours tweaking the ignition and fuelling to squeeze some more power out from the engine, but the real reason we were there was to sort out the front suspension. So we moved the car off the rollers and in to the main workshop, and Dave fitted all the laser alignment kit to get everything measured. We found that there was -ve caster, 3 degrees toe in, and the rear axle wasn't square to the shell, so out came the toolbox and everything was adjusted to correct the faults. The front tie bars were too long to allow for

any caster adjustment, so we removed them and milled some slots in the bolt holes, and refitted, adjusted, and found that we now had around 1 degree of +ve caster, which was sure to improve the handling. I finally left Norfolk at 7:40pm for the trip back home, arriving at 10:30pm.

After unloading the trailer, it was then off to bed to grab some sleep, only to be awoken by the alarm clock on Sunday morning at 5:20am. We were soon on the road again for the trip to Wigan, our 2<sup>nd</sup> visit of the year to the 3 Sisters circuit. We arrived in a thick fog, and shortly after taking the car off the trailer, it started to rain very heavily, and didn't really stop until 10:30, delaying the start of the first practice runs by 30 minutes. Preparing for our first run, I spotted that the sunroof had sprung a leak, and the bucket seat had an inch of water in it, which took around 20 minutes to dry out. The cause of the leak was a kinked drainage pipe which was supposed to direct water from the sunroof to the sill. The car had never been exposed to rain as heavy as that before, so next time we get caught in the rain, I'll check for more leaks.

Both practice runs were in yet more rain, very heavy too, so I splashed round the boating lake, sorry, track, jumping from puddle to puddle. It was incredibly slippery, and my first two practice runs were a very slow 103 and 101 seconds. I could hardly see where I was going, with the damp seat, all the humidity in the car misted up the windows, and I was really struggling for visibility. The day before, competitors basked in brilliant sunshine all day, enjoying the high temperatures that the country had seen over the previous 10 days, but for some reason, Sunday was going to be overcast and wet. Typical.

The rain eventually stopped around lunchtime, and it dried out by the time I came out for my first competitive run. I was finally able to judge if the handling had been improved, and it certainly felt like it. Not only could I concentrate on lines in to

the corners, but also the exit lines. I still had under steer if I really pushed, but slow in fast out seemed to be working for a change. I again made improvements during the afternoon, but there was a light shower before my 3<sup>rd</sup> run, which reduced the grip levels, and I could smell burning plastic during my 2<sup>nd</sup> lap of the 3<sup>rd</sup> run, and although it turned out to be from the car in front of me, it was enough to concern me, and I lifted along conrod straight when I should have kept my foot down.

The car is certainly quicker now. I'll see at Harewood on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August if I've improved, as the last visit in July I had awful problems getting round the corners, and it should be much better now.

The clinic magazine article will probably be in the October CCC magazine. Oh, and keep an eye out for the October copy of Retro Cars magazine too, as I should be on the front cover alongside a blue Peugeot 205 GTI, following another photo-shoot last week, this time at Bruntingthorpe in Leicestershire.

With the chassis sorted out, I can now concentrate on getting the car round the circuits even quicker, so hopefully next year, with some more BHP, I can start to really make an impression.

1<sup>st</sup> practice: 103.98s  
2<sup>nd</sup> practice: 101.98s  
1<sup>st</sup> timed: 88.98s  
2<sup>nd</sup> timed: 88.22s  
3<sup>rd</sup> timed: 89.18s  
Result: 2<sup>nd</sup> in class 4B (Sports Libre)

Next event: Harewood August 24<sup>th</sup> 2003

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#### 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  
3 Sisters (August 10<sup>th</sup>) – 2<sup>nd</sup> in class (NSCC round)

#### Future events

Harewood (August 24<sup>th</sup>)  
Loton Park (August 31<sup>st</sup>)



Saturday: Getting the laser alignment treatment at Dave Walkers workshop in Norfolk.



Sunday: At 3 Sisters, negotiating Lunar in the afternoon



Thursday: Richard (snapper) and Dave take some more photo's for the CCC clinic feature



Thursday: Dave tries to convince the wife she should have a drive at the DERA test track (she did too, and enjoyed it)



Friday: Hanging around at Bruntingthorpe [Retro Cars photo shoot]