

BARC - Harewood Hillclimb report (Midland Speed Championships & NSCC)

Sunday 24th August 2003

A day of ups and downs

It was a full entry of 150 cars at Harewood, all parked up very neatly on the hillside. Ranging from Citroen 2CV's, right up to the row of very expensive single seaters, with their cling-film covered tyres (What is all that about?). I'd sent my entry off to the BARC in April to secure an entry, which was just as well as the event proved very popular amongst BARC championship contenders. Another 9 NSCC members joined us, & several Midland Speeders were also present, so in all there were plenty of familiar faces to go and say Good Morning to.

My second visit to Harewood in 6 weeks, this was the 1st time I could see if the improvements made to the front suspension in August had actually made the car any faster. I'd also changed the front springs from 300lb to 275lb, and lowered the rear of the car another 50mm the previous weekend, with no testing in between, and on the first run it was soon apparent that the rear was now too low. The tyres were catching on the arches under cornering, and the car was filling with smoke from the burning rubber from the rear tyres.

Returning to the paddock, I refitted the rubber cups to the rear springs, which raised the back of the car 15mm, enough to prevent the symptoms from reappearing. I also had to adjust the length of the panhard rod, to compensate for the change in ride height. I don't like having to work on the car at events, getting my hands dirty is what the days leading up to the events are for.

And then on to the 2nd practice run, and I was really pushing hard. But it was all over too soon halfway up the final hill, when I somehow managed to select 2nd gear when I really wanted 4th at 70mph. Ouch. That's the second time I've over revved the engine. But, once again, it appeared to survive the 9000+ RPM burst, however it ruined the run, and shot my confidence to pieces. How was it that I managed to select the wrong gear? It's definitely something that needs addressing. More driving lessons maybe?

Later, on the 1st timed run, I really concentrated on making slow, deliberate, gear changes to avoid any more risk of damaging the engine, and I recorded a clean run of 73s up the hill. Hmm, 2 seconds off my PB from June. But why? The car should be much quicker! Of course, with the two earlier aborted attempts on the hill, the 73s run should have been the time I set on my first practice run, something I could then build on during the day, but it was only after lunch that I finally established a reasonably quick time (for me).

So for the 2nd timed run I dropped the pressure of the front tyres by another 1lb, and sat and pondered for a while on what I had to do to get my times back on track. I really had to dig deep, concentrate on the job in hand, and luckily I had an excellent run up the hill, and beat my PB by 3/10ths. Much happier now, even with the slower gear changes. The "sitting quietly and psyching yourself up" thing seemed to work.

At the lights on the 3rd and final timed run I was held up by 5 minutes because of a problem with the timing system, and by the time I had the green light, my hot sticky tyres had cooled, and I had real problems with grip on the first couple of corners so I just worked on getting the corners right, and didn't worry too much about beating my new PB.

It was a long, tiring day, fraught with stress in the morning, and I never really relaxed till later in the afternoon. The gear change problem is going to be addressed after my last event, Loton Park on the 31st, and I was just relieved to get the car back on the trailer with the engine still intact. It means I will compete at all 10 planned events this year, with no reliability problems, which is quite an achievement for my first season. I'm really looking forwards to Loton, and praying that we get another beautiful hot and sunny summers day.

1st practice: 78.19s (incorrect ride height)
2nd practice: 74.87s (gear selection problem)
1st timed: 73.42s
2nd timed: 71.15s
3rd timed: 72.55s
Result: 2nd in class F (Sports Libre 1400-2000cc)

Next event: Loton Park August 31st

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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
Harewood (July 13th) – 1st in class
Curborough (July 20th) – 1st in class
3 Sisters (August 10th) – 2nd in class
Harewood (August 24th) – 2nd in class

Future events

Loton Park (August 31st)



Queuing for the start with the other Sports Libre competitors



Starting my 2nd timed run



Storming through the Farmhouse complex



Rounding farmhouse bend, starting the attack on the final hill.