Midland Speed Championship – MAC Shelsley Walsh hill climb

Saturday 3rd July 2004

A very steep learning curve

Another Saturday event, and this time a dry one. My first ever visit to the very atmospheric hill climb venue, I'd been watching a video all week that I'd downloaded from the web, of a Metro 6R4 assaulting the hill, and it looked quite a test of character, let alone the car.

I walked the course with Bernard Armitage, taking several breathers along the way, to admire the views and appreciate the steepness of the hill. "Its flat here" said Bernard on more than one occasion. "We'll see" was my reply. Scrutineering came and went, with just a concern about the rear wheel bearings being a bit loose. I checked, and it was just play in the collection of rod ends on the rear axle, nothing to worry about. I had to make a number 78 for the front of the car, as the commentators at Shelsley sit in a hut above the start line, and cannot see the numbers on the doors. The additional forward facing number is unique to Shelsley (as far as I know). Good job I'd taken some electrical insulation tape, nearly as versatile as tank tape.

My first practice run (batch 3) was quite slow, with a second gear approach to the first left hander, called "Kennel Bend". Then hard on the power, and in to third gear, lifting for "Crossing", and then arriving at "Bottom S" in second. A slow 41 second run, and I'd now got a better appreciation for what was involved.

Second practice run (batch 10) was delayed by Fred Currell's unfortunate accident, where he speared his new single seater in to the hedge at Kennel. There were bits of car scattered all over the track, and Fred was lucky not to be seriously injured. Once the hedge was patched, we were soon let out for our second run. I went a bit quicker and recorded a 39 second time, which I was pleased with.

Running at number 78, it wasn't long before we were again lining up, and I tried even harder, this time reaching Kennel in third gear, and just lifting a little. Then hard on the gas, and I was in fourth after Crossing, recording a run of 38.38s. Much better, but there was still room for improvement.

On the final timed run, with a few spots of rain just to put a bit of doubt in my mind about the grip, I pushed very and managed to record a PB of 37.60s. Not bad at all for just my 4th ever run up the hill.

Bernard went up in 34.00 dead on his 1st timed run, then recorded 33.50 on his 2nd, which meant I was only 4.1 seconds slower, and I'm giving away at least 130 BHP to him. I'd left my new slicks at home, as the forecast wasn't very good for Saturday, but I still recorded a respectable time, and Bernard wasn't that much quicker really! I think he's definitely catchable, I just need a few more runs up the hill to gain a more confidence. I also need to brake much later for Bottom S, and try not to lift for Kennel. There's always next year.

I'd fitted a pen-camera to the car for the event, and a solid-state video recorder, which captured the video signal at 320x240 resolution [mpeg4 quality]. I've footage from the first 3 runs, but not the quickest final run, as the recorder ran out of memory. The 2nd fastest clip is available for download from my Latest News page on www.zetecinside.com in the July 4th section, and is also available up on request via e-mail.

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Future events:
Harewood, July 11th 2004
Curborough, July 18th 2004
3 Sisters, August 14th 2004
Harewood, August 29th 2004
Loton, September 19th 2004

Bernard Armitage's rapid 2600cc Millington Diamond powered Mk2 Escort lines up for his first practice run.

Nic Mann's 1700 BDA turbo powered single seater, featuring 4WD, and an auxiliary power unit (jet engine) from a helicopter, which keeps the turbo spinning at full boost! 1.7 second 64 foot time, and 27 seconds to get up the hill! Simply mind blowing performance.

Jaguar XK120 and 140 owners discuss the merits of hill climbing such exotic machines.

Pete Hills immaculate 1380 Mini Cooper.