

Midland Speed Championship – NSCC Curborough ‘long course’  
Sprint

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2004

### Up, up and away ?

You'd not be mistaken by feeling rather apprehensive. You've just unloaded your pride and joy, when you spot a hot air balloon lurking close by. We kept an eye on the balloon for 10 minutes, as it appeared to be getting closer and closer to the Curborough circuit. Not quite sure of the pilots intentions, worried looks were soon showing on peoples faces, as the balloon crept ever closer to the paddock. Luckily the pilot had the sense to hop over the paddock before landing the full basket in the adjacent field, but for a few minutes we were all ready to jump in our cars to move them out of the way. Still, it was quite an exciting start to the day.

Les Proctor's twin 900cc bike engined OMS was still poorly following the problems the previous weekend at Harewood, so he'd decided to bring out a stunning 70 year old MG for the day, though if the weather turned Les said he'd be the first to retire, as he didn't relish the prospect of cleaning the car from head to toe. It was immaculate though, and a pleasure to watch as Les wrestled it around the Curborough long course. I sat and watched him go off the line twice, and although not the quickest car on the day, it was still a site to behold as he wrestled with the pre-selector gearbox and the skinny tyres, off the line.

My first practice run saw me record a new PB, and I had John Beardmore to push me along all day, with his equally stunning Morris Minor. John had competed at MIRA the day before, and was intent on wringing more speed from the 2.0 Fiat Twin cam engine. On my second practice run, I threw the gauntlet down

by improving on my PB by over 2 seconds, to record what was going to be my quickest time of the day, a 66.69s run. John was more than 2 seconds adrift, and a little surprised by my sudden turn of speed. The suspension and slick tyre combination were working extremely well together, and I was even recording decent 64ft times too, of between 2.56 and 2.58 seconds. My quickest ever starts. I have a new clutch/throttle technique for launching now, which seems to suit the tyres quite well.

Of course, we had a break for lunch, and by this time the clouds started arriving, and as John and I queued for our 1<sup>st</sup> timed runs in the afternoon, of course it started raining. And when I set off there was a fair amount of rain at the far end of the track. I made my quickest start yet though, despite the rain, though somehow with rain falling on the windscreen and the prospect of my first ever drive on slicks in the wet, I was a little unnerved. I recorded a 67.81s run (2.56s 64ft) and beat John by just 4/10ths overall but it was enough as the heavens truly opened when we returned to the pits, and we then had heavy persistent rain for around 40 minutes.

For the next run, on a waterlogged track, John adjusted dampers and took off the front anti-roll bar, and I looked at my car and thought better of it. I didn't want to lie under the car and get wet. So I just left everything as is and had a go.

As I lined up for the second timed run, it again started spitting with rain. I switched on the launch control, and gave it full throttle. The rev limiter holds the engine at 3200 rpm, allowing it to drop to 2000 rpm once you start moving, and using some clever PID formulae the ECU measures the speed of the car from a sensor on the rear wheel, and retards the ignition to limit power, to allow you to gradually build your speed up off the line. However, I still haven't quite got the parameters set right, and one of the start line marshals claims that the big

bang from the exhaust, as the un-burnt fuel combusted, knocked at least a couple of years off his life expectancy. I'm surprised I didn't blow the system off the car. Maybe I'll stick a warning sign on the back window for the next time.

"Caution: Launch Control [under development]"

I tentatively attacked the wet track, and soon found tonnes of grip from the tyres, far more than I ever expected, and the fact that I went round 3 seconds faster than John, and only half a second slower than a Mitsubishi EVO5 says something for the set up and the performance of the car. I tried left foot braking, but that no longer works with the Ferodo pads. The car just stops!

I took first in class, with John second, and Les third. Another 21 points towards my Midland Speed tally, and I'm finally ahead of Bernard Armitage (for now anyway). We both start to drop scores soon, and it looks like it's going to go down to the wire to determine who wins Sports Libre this year. My budget is somewhat smaller than others, and I'm only doing as many rounds as time and money will afford me, but I'm still beating personal bests, and improving as a driver with each event.

Next event is the Ford Fair show at Silverstone on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004, with just three further rounds of the Midland Speed Championship remaining.

Note: It would be nice to see some sunshine at an event soon.

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Next event:  
Ford Fair show, Sunday August 1<sup>st</sup> 2004



Les Proctor's 1934 MG



John Beardmore's space framed 2.0 16V Morris Minor convertible