

Nottingham Sports Car Club Championship round – Harewood Hillclimb

Sunday 29th August 2004

Wet'n'wild

Second visit of the year the North Leeds venue, and I was hoping for another improvement on my PB from July '04. Stiffer front springs were fitted the week before, to try to give the car a more neutral feeling when approaching the limits on corners (she started hopping at 3 Sisters when pushed), and with it being a non-championship round, I had a chance to relax and have a bit of a play.

In the morning, I walked the course with John Beardmore, allowing me to benefit from his knowledge, having completed one of the excellent school days held at the track earlier in the year. I was pretty much on top of things, but never having walked the hill before, I didn't realise that there were hidden dips and camber changes on some parts, so a different line would certainly contribute to a quicker time.

It was a cold and windy morning, for the first practice run the track was extremely slippery, following heavy overnight rain. Large wet patches lay in waiting, and I cautiously drove round in 76.06 seconds, 8 seconds off my usual pace. John had just as much fun with the Minor, and Les Proctor wasn't exactly pleased with the greasy conditions.

Second practice run saw an improvement, though my first attempt was red flagged following an off ahead of me (my first ever red flag!) so I lined back up again with warm tyres and transmission, and had another go, but I was still miles off the pace, with a 70.38s.

Then, whilst we sat eating lunch, a mini monsoon passed through the valley, and we must have had ½ an inch of rain in 10 minutes. But the surprising thing was, that because of the strong breeze, the track quickly started to dry out.

I'd decided to try using 3rd gear through the Esses for the first time (instead of 2nd), and on the first competitive timed run it appeared to make a difference. I improved my first sector time, and posted a 72.11, which was still 3.5 seconds off my PB, but the track was green again following the fresh rain fall. I was 2nd in class at this point though (38th overall too), even beating Les up the hill in his OMS, though I was country mile (2.8 seconds) behind Jim Naylor's Mallock Mk14.

I sat and watched the video footage from my first three runs, to see where else I could make up more time, and I decided again to use 3rd gear through the Esses, try to get higher exit speeds from all of the corners, and not to brake for the first corner, or at Quarry (at the warning lights on the left). This paid off and I zoomed round in 68.45s, a new personal best (was 68.59). Very pleasing. I had gone round 3.66 seconds quicker than my first timed run. I'd improved my technique, and the kamikaze run had paid off.

A third run was in the pipeline, and the weather stayed fair to us. However, at around 5pm, one of the Westfield's dumped its sump along the Farmhouse bend, and it looked like the marshals had their work cut out cleaning up the slick. So I decided that enough was enough, and loaded the car back on to the trailer. Those who stayed for their third runs, almost all recorded slower times, so the oil definitely had an effect on grip.

So first in class went to Les Proctor (63.2s), with Jim Naylor second (64.24s), me third (68.45s), and John Beardmore in fourth (70.23s), so not a bad days motor sport, and I did set another new PB.

I'm making a few more small changes to the Fiesta for Loton Park. I have to finish with a 1st and 2nd at the remaining two events, in order to retain my Sports Libre title. The odds are stacked against me, but I will certainly try my hardest to get the best possible finish to the season.

Graham Blackwell
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Next event:
Loton Park Hillclimb, Sunday September 19th 2004



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Jim Naylor's class winning Mallock Mk14



Andrew Henson's gorgeous DTA P8PRO managed single seater.