

Loton Park race report

Saturday 10th May 2003

British weather 1, Loton Park 0

Never before have I actually competed in a Hill Climb. I wasn't too worried about the prospects of driving up a hill at speed. The car has more than enough poke, and grip, even on road tyres, but with the possibility of rain, it all becomes a bit of a lottery.

Preparation during the week consisted of making a few tweaks to the throttle bodies, after discovering I wasn't getting full throttle (90%!). And I'm now on the road of getting the weight of the car down, even replacing the headlamps with laminated digital photographs (see if you can tell the difference) saving probably half a kilo here and there.

I arrived nice and early at the venue (west of Shrewsbury) and as I'd never been to the park before, I took the opportunity whilst it was quiet, to walk the course. I was getting pretty knackered the further up the hill I climbed. It just went on and on, forever! Maybe the finish is round the next bend? Nope, keep going. After the next bend, or over the brow of the next hill? Nope, still another

500 yards left to go. And so on. The hill itself is amazing. It's a twisty narrow tarmac road, through a forest on the side of a hill, and it is simply awesome. Run off areas comprised of trees, or ponds, or big grass banks, and I was pleased the sun was out as the prospect of learning the course in the wet was not a pleasant one. I lined up at around 11AM, for my first run, and set off, taking great care not to out brake myself, and keep the car on the black stuff. I needn't have worried. Posting a time of 73s meant there was little chance of doing any damage, though to me it still felt very fast. Then the weather turned for the worse, and my 2nd run just before lunch, was in heavy rain, and turned out to be a very slow affair, concentrating more on my line through Triangle than anywhere else. Wheel spin out all the corners still brought a smile to my face as I wrestled with the car. I posted a 80s run, which must be the best VFM I've ever had on an event.

Some praying to the gods over lunch saw the sun return, and the track soon dried out. My first timed run started at around 3pm, due to delays from continual stoppages. There were red flags everywhere, with people trying far too hard on their first competitive runs, and falling off all over the place. I warmed the tyres up, lined up and set off, determined to get in the mid 60's. I shot up the hill, even had 4th gear near museum, and recorded 68.25s. Not bad I thought. I was shaking

when I got out the car, must be the adrenaline. The technique appears to be keeping your foot flat on the floor, and just hang on. Something car and driver are still getting accustomed to.

But the bad weather then returned, and it rained for the rest of the afternoon. I decided there was no point in continuing, I wasn't going to improve my times, so I packed up (like many others) and headed home.

Result: 1st in class

Next event MIRA (Nuneaton) May 24th

Graham Blackwell

www.zetecinside.com

Video and photographs are now on the website in the [Event News](#) section.

