

MIRA race report

Saturday 24th May 2003

Improving all the time

MIRA, at Nuneaton is a very unusual place. As you draw nearer, along the A5, it looks really inconspicuous, just a large sign and a gatehouse. But as you then drive in to the venue, a matrix of roads unfolds in front of you. You pass buildings owned by Jaguar and MG, a wind tunnel, even a 2nd world war control tower. The paddock itself was ample for the 130+ cars that turned up. Ranging from 998cc Mini's, to brand new Ferrari 360 Moderna's, it was quite a sight seeing all the cars arrive. We were squeezed in at number 81, along side Steve Broughton's immaculate SBD developments Westfield Vauxhall, and several other very expensive Locaterfields. We still look out of place parked amongst such notable machinery. They'll get used to us.

After my first 1st in class at Loton Park on May 10th, I'd decided not to make any mechanical changes to the car, so once unloaded and warmed up, we had time for a bacon buttie and a coffee from the wagon, and then it was just a case of waiting for the scrutineer's to arrive. The clock was ticking, and under pressure for running late, the two

scrutes seemed very agitated. They were pushing and prodding the car, checking throttle linkages, fuel tank breather pipes, very thorough, though they failed to check my overalls or helmet.

Walking the course before practice, revealed that the 1.6KM track was not very technical. From the looks of things it was just a case of keeping your foot in and hanging on. The map from the datalogger shows just how smooth the track was.



Before practice, I made a change to the tyre pressures. I'd dropped the fronts from 21psi to 20, and the rears from 21 to 18. I'd been advised that Yokohama's have stiff sidewall's so pressures could be lowered to increase grip. During the day the car did seem to stick a lot better so it looked like the advise was valuable.

On the first practice run (dry) I discovered that

the car was handling most odd, changing direction when I lifted off/accelerated. After returning to the paddock I found that the bottom ball joint on the drivers side front suspension had worked loose, allowing the wheel sufficient travel to alter the angle of the front wheels. I took both front wheels off and torqued the bolts back up to 70 ft/lb, and that cured the problem. Moral: Take the car off the trailer and give it a thorough check 'between' events.

1st timed run in the afternoon saw the track very damp after some showers over lunch. I fluffed the 2nd to 3rd gear change (again) but still improved on my two practice runs, and after another couple of hours, set out on my 4th and final run (2nd timed) to knock another 1.2 seconds off my previous best. I managed a 60.30s, which was only 2 seconds behind Phil Short's 1380cc Mini, and he's on slicks, not road tyres like me. I'm growing more confident with the car all the time, and so long as the car holds together, I should soon be setting times quicker than the saloons in the ModProd classes. Something for me to continue to aim for anyway. I actually used 5th gear on this event, and reached 95 through the speed trap on my 2nd timed run. The print out said "108MPH" but I suspect the timing beams were not as far apart as they should have been, GPS isn't usually wrong.

I should have the new 15" lightweight Compomotive wheels for the next event, with some new super sticky slick tyres too, so as long as the dry weather holds out.....

No cameras were allowed at MIRA so no pictures this time. Sorry.

1st practice: 65.54s
2nd practice: 62.92s

1st timed: 61.56s
2nd timed: 60.3s

Result: 1st in class 4B (Sports Libre)
Next event: Aintree June 28th

Graham Blackwell
www.zetecinside.com