

SOUTHERN STUFF 2 2011

ABINGDON SPRINT

I'll start with the usual weather report, the event was held in sunshine and blue skies sandwiched between two very wet days, in fact as I was loading the van on Friday evening it started sleeting (in June !) Held on an RAF airfield, Abingdon is a unique event as there are two courses, Abingdon and Bentley; both are driven during the day. This achieved by splitting the entry, half drive one course in the morning and the other after lunch. It makes for a busy day for the organisers and competitors alike. Abingdon is a fast flowing series of bends with one chicane, Bentley is a straight line blast with two chicanes, the first being a long 'U' shape and the second a tight 'V' shape. There were fifteen Luffield competitors present with the usual mix of old and modern MGs. After the convoy run, which seems to be a rarity these days the practise runs began, everything seemed to be running smoothly and we were soon into the proper timed runs. After lunch it was time to switch courses, the timed runs went very smoothly and due to attrition we seemed to be going out again as soon as we returned from our previous run. The fastest times from each course are amalgamated to give a total time, the times of the Luffield competitors times were; Stuart Gilbert (MGB V8) 100.96, Andy Walker (MGB V8) 103.25, myself (MGA) 109.12, Steve Luscombe (Midget) 111.85, Les Cole (MGB V8) 113.57, Michael Milligan (MGB) 114.61, Martyn Phillis (MGA) 118.77, Andrew Till (ZR) 119.53, Alan Atkins (MGA) 120.73, David Jones (MGF) 122.74, Dave Butler (TD) 122.99, Tim Read (MGA) 128.93, Martin Woolacott (MGA) 129.01, Paul Constance (MGB) 130.70, Paul Batho (Midget) 132.22. All credit to Sutton and Cheam and Farnborough Motor Clubs for getting 130 cars through two sprints by 3.30 in the afternoon, maybe a lesson for some of the 'premier' events in the UK?

GURSTON HILL CLIMB

Gurston is one of my favourite hill climbs, set in the rolling downs of Wiltshire. There were 12 Luffield competitors assembled for today's hill climb, a few of the regulars were missing due to car troubles. The course was damp after overnight rain and first practice was slippery, especially the climb after Karousel. Gurston starts downhill which results in rapid acceleration through Hollow and into the first bend and then a sharp steep turn into Karousel, then a left hander onto the finish straight (almost) resulting in a fast finish. A lady competitor in a Subaru lost it after the finish line and ploughed several metres into the hedge, leaving an impressive hole in the scenery, fortunately she was unharmed. The weather couldn't make its mind up with occasional spots of rain and grey skies but due to the wind the course slowly dried and practice times improved. Due to the absence of the V8 MGBs and racing Midgets our first run after lunch resulted in myself, Rob Orford and Richard Withers leading the Luffield class, we had a brief spell of rain as we were lining up for our second run but the course was almost dry by the time we set off. The final run times were very similar for most competitors. Myself, Richard and Rob were first, second and

third in class respectively. New Luffield competitor Steven Horne driving a group 2 MGB was finding the target times a bit out of reach but I'm sure he'll get the hang it after a few more events. Bill Sharp made the long trip from up north, he said this might be his last season as a regular in the Luffield and wants to drive all the sprints and hill climbs that he has never competed at. Andrew Till was still nursing a suspect head gasket fault but completed the day. Thanks to BARC for an enjoyable day especially the army of marshals who are extremely efficient and kept the event running smoothly all day.

GOODWOOD SPRINT

This year's event was a non-championship round due to the clash with Silverstone sprint, we had a grand total of 3 MG's flying the MGCC flag, this intrepid trio were me, Rob Orford and Martyn Phillis. This year's the event was a one lapper instead of the usual two due to noise constraints enforced by the local authorities. Overnight rain made practice very slippery due to the high speed nature of Goodwood, luckily it dried out during the morning and times became quicker. We had a great day and improved with each run and we came first, second and third in class! Goodwood track is a real challenge to drive and what with the increasing noise restriction being imposed it would be a great shame to lose this venue. The Aero Club café well worth a visit, the breakfast is highly recommended. The light aircraft seemed to be grounded that day due to the low cloud but still was a very pleasant setting. Let's hope Goodwood is back in the Championship next year.