

MGCC Midland Centre Spring Sprint Curborough 11-04-21

Anybody turning up at Curborough for the Spring Sprint, first Speed event of the season, might have expected a crisp, clear morning, not so, pretty well everybody encountered snow somewhere on the way there. The course was wet and surrounding fields white, so practice was on a wet but drying track. Some were confident with quick attacks, some were tentative, others not quite tentative enough, one Clio exploring F1 like g forces at the first turn, swapping ends. After lunch and a 2 minute silence to respect the passing of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh the sun was out, the track was dry and the entry ready for timed runs.

In the week before, the entry list was full at 85, with a back-up of 7. As things conspired to thwart best intentions we had 83 starters on the day, including all the reserves; the largest entry for a long time. Covid 19 rules still excluded spectators, afraid they missed a treat. Judy Fry, Covid 19 officer, kept an eye out, everybody was well behaved, masks on and 2m apart.

Stuart Dean was a mechanical casualty during second practice, his 1954 Dick Jacobs 1500cc YB Special coupe spat out a core plug at the hairpin, dumped its coolant and gave the marshals a chance for a good warm up with the brushes. It must have been a revelation in period with its fully enveloping fibre glass body, running against the late Colin Chapman and his Lotus MK VIII, also MG powered, an equally fierce competitor.

Ten MGZR's competed in the 1400 standard class, Jack Twomey pedalled his to 40.47, a 0.03 sec over Steve Wood, the closest class win of the day. Renault Clios dominated the 2 litre protagonists; Rob Thompson bested Paul Glendenning by 0.30 sec with 37.97, their extra 200cc kept the MGT's at bay.

The MGCC Speed Championship standard class saw fastest time for David Coulthard, 39.63. He shared the MGZR with Helen Waddington on 41.37, second in class and winner of the trophy for the fastest lady driver. Both admit to their own go faster mods, equally successful, so a good outcome for the journey home.

The group 4 specials class was a battle between the Midgets of James Thacker and Richard Watkinson, 37.05, the latter faster by 0.39 sec, continuing the form that won him the class championship in 2019. He won the 'Midnight Cup' for FTD in an MG by an MGCC member. The LHD froggy Sprite of David Tandy is an ex US oval racer. As David explained, over there it had a very powerful methanol burning engine, monstrous compression ratio and no electric starter. Not surprisingly the engine digested itself, some tuners just don't know when to stop. That was when he bought it, now powered by a correct engine. The US starting technique was to push the car up to about 50mph, then drop the clutch. A custom built close ratio gear box was used, now replaced for UK sprinting. It held several US lap records for its class, how other petrol heads live.

The Sports Libre cars, Radicals, got into the low 30s, David Large won with 32.08. Fastest time of the day and winner of the Weston Trophy, was set by Steve Miles in a Van Diemen FR96 with 29.72 secs and a finishing speed of 122mph. Not bad for a 25 year old Formula Ford. Now it has 2 litres turbocharged, 307 hp, a wing and slicks, it weighs 437kg.

Awards were presented at 17:30, when David Wood received the PJ Evans cup, in the gift of the Midland Centre chairman to the committee member making the most contribution to Centre affairs in 2020; for his work in rejuvenating the website, well done David. Belinda Knight was awarded Marshal of the Year. MGCC have a small and dedicated band of marshals, in 2020 Belinda's efforts were noticed as being outstanding beyond the marshal team, by drivers and club officials alike.

The organisation was in the safe hands of Simon Morris, Clerk of the Course and Dave Russell, Entry Secretary, both of whom put in some big shifts to make it all happen, the last week was hectic. Thanks to David Bowlas and Keith Meakin too for their scrutineering diligence.

The Marshals, who loves ya baby, once again delivered a speedy response when needed, it's a tribute to driver skill and mechanical reliability that it wasn't very often. The meeting stuck to schedule with 2 practice runs and 3 timed runs. Pretty good value, sets the tone for the rest of the season, roll on the Summer Sprint on Sunday 01-08-21. See [www.mgccmidlandcentre.co.uk](http://www.mgccmidlandcentre.co.uk) for entry form and regs. Paddock announcer, Derek Murphy, kept the classes on their toes. Grateful thanks also to David Pattison, deputy Clerk of the Course, to be seen scudding all over the place on his fastish response vehicle, a bicycle! Pleased too that Steve Wood rounded up a very healthy S&DCC contingent

Finally, Centre chairman, Roger King, held the whole thing together from the commentary box, now resplendent with digital display of time for the first 60ft off the line, finishing speed and total time.

Tony Lake

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