

# MG CAR CLUB (MIDLAND CENTRE)

## HOW TO GET STARTED IN SPRINTING AND HILLCLIMBING

The MG Car Club has been organising motor sport since the 1930's and the Midland Centre also has a very long history of doing so. Currently, we organise two speed events each year at the Curborough Sprint Course, which is situated three or four miles north of Lichfield in Staffordshire, just off the A38, near the Fradley Industrial Estate. The Centre has recently celebrated fifty years of running these successful meetings there.

### WHAT ARE SPEED EVENTS?

Firstly. It important to understand what a speed event is and how it works. Speed events are either sprints or hill climbs and both disciplines are run in exactly the same way. The only difference between them is that the latter, as its name implies, involves driving up a hill, whereas sprints are run on a flat course. All speed events are run on hard surfaces, nearly all of which are tarmac, but there is the occasional concrete course.

Virtually any production car can be used in speed events and you will certainly find a class for every model of MG. The class structure allows for standard unmodified cars, road modified, race modified and racing cars. Unfortunately, at the moment, we un unable to accept entries from hybrid or electric cars.

Competitors run one at a time, so you see no other traffic. When directed by a marshal, you make your way to the start line, where the start light will be red. The start marshals will position your car correctly on the line and when the light turns green, you go. You hopefully complete the course, and your time is recorded when you cross the finish line. You usually run-in number and class order. Most speed events allow you to have two practice runs and two-timed runs, although at Midland Centre events, competitors often get three or sometimes even four timed runs.

One way to reduce the overall cost of competing in speed events is to enter the car with someone else. You each pay the same entry fee and you will be given different numbers. You both go to the starting area, one of you will compete and then, in a safe designated area, you swap drivers and the other one competes. This means that you only have to find and prepare one car.

### WHAT DO I NEED TO DO BEFORE ENTERING A SPEED EVENT?

Firstly, you will need to apply for a competition licence from Motorsport UK, this organisation was known as the MSA until recently and it is the national governing body of British motorsport.

To compete regularly you will need an Interclub licence and, unlike starting circuit racing, you **DO NOT** have to attend a course or take written and practical examinations, **nor** do you have to have a medical examination. You do, however, need to put your doctor's name and practise address on the competition licence application form. Some events will allow new competitors to run in their Introduction class using a RS Clubman license, check with the promotor. These licences last for twelve months. New for 2021 14-16 years year old will be allowed to compete in the Introduction class at some events, again check with promotor. This can only be in a post year 2000 standard mass production car with no more than 1400cc running tyres from a controlled list (MSUK List 1A). 14–16-year-old drivers will need to demonstrate to the Clerk that they are competent drivers before being allowed to do official timed runs. 14–16-year-olds can compete in a hill climb once they have competed in 3 Motorsport UK Sprints. You can ask for signatures from the Clerks of the Course at the events you compete in, so that you can upgrade your licence to a National, if you choose to. Together with your competition licence, Motorsport UK will send you their rule book,

traditionally and affectionately known as the Blue Book. Most of what you need to know is in this book. In order to compete, you will need to buy safety clothing and the Blue Book tells precisely what you need and quotes the national and international standard codes that apply. Basically, you need fireproof race overalls, a crash helmet and fireproof gloves. I also strongly suggest you buy fireproof race boots as well. At scrutineering, before every event you compete in, the scrutineer will examine your overalls, helmet and gloves, to make sure they are still in date and they are in good condition. (Demon Tweaks and Grand Prix Racewear are useful contacts for these)

## **PREPARING THE CAR FOR AN EVENT**

All cars competing in motorsport must be in good condition overall and it is advisable to check tyres, steering brakes and suspension components before competing. There are a few things you need to do to your car in order to pass scrutineering and remember, without a valid scrutineer's ticket, you cannot go on track.

- You need to put a sticker near the ignition key, with the word **OFF** together with an arrow showing the direction of turning the engine off.
- Yellow tape needs wrapping round the battery earth lead from the battery terminal for about 15cms.
- You must show evidence of at least two throttle return springs.
- You need to put stickers showing the towing points.
- You need to put stickers to show where a fire extinguisher is placed (if fitted).
- The driver's seat needs to be secure.
- If you are a 14–16-year-old, then a 4-point seat harness to Motorsport UK standards need to be fitted.
- You need to fit a vertical timing beam splitter to the front of the car. (Details of size etc is in the Blue Book)
- If your car is in a roadgoing class, you will need to ensure that it is taxed for the road, is insured and, where applicable, has a valid MOT Certificate.

When you receive your final instructions before an event, you will be sent an entry list which will have your competition number on it. You will need to fix this number on both the nearside and offside door. However, if you are driving the car to the meeting, this will need to be done on arrival, as it is against Motorsport UK rules to display competition numbers whilst driving the car on a public highway. Numbers are self-adhesive, usually black and about 25cms tall. At Midland Centre events, competition numbers are usually available for a nominal sum from the paddock office. However, BE WARNED not many other meetings offer them for sale.

One tip to get over putting self-adhesive numbers on your prized paintwork is to acquire two white magnetic squares, which will stick to most doors. I put a strip of insulating tape all round to make sure it does not blow off at speed. At the end of the meeting, all numbers need to be removed from the car before it is driven on the public road. Just peel off the insulating tape and take the magnetic squares off the doors and there will be no marks. Another tip – Don't peel off the numbers off the magnetic square until you get the competition number for you next event, some of the numbers may be the same.

## HOW DO I ENTER AN EVENT?

This is the easy bit. In order to enter an event, you need to be invited and to be invited you need to be a member of a motor club. Presumably, as you are reading these notes, you are a member of the MG Car Club. As a member of this club, you automatically are eligible to enter MG Car Club events, together with events to which the MG Car Club has been invited, by other motor clubs. To find out about the speed events which you can enter, please visit the MG Car Club Speed Championship website, click on calendar and you find every event that season. On that page, you can go the righthand side and find in blue 'Regs' and Entry forms, some can be printed off, others can be entered on-line.

You need to find your appropriate class number in the regulations and have other personal details to hand, including your competition licence number. Most clubs accept Cheque payments.

### What to expect prior to the Event?

Around 1-2 weeks before the event you will be sent a pre-event sign on declaration form (or link to a web page). There are three purposes to this form. The 1st is to prevent queues of people signing on the day. That was how events used to run before COVID 19 Social distance rules. You will be asked to fill in all your personal and motor club membership details. You will be asked to fill in all your cars details so these can be passed to the scrutineers. You will be asked to read and sign a declaration about your health and understanding that you do not attend the event if you think you may have COVID 19.

The scrutineers may contact you directly if you have not filled in details of the car correctly or they have further questions.

About seven days before the event, you will receive your final instruction, entry list etc. Please read all of this, as there is often important information to understand.

## WHAT HAPPENS ON THE DAY?

Your final instructions will tell you what time scrutineering commences and when the first practice run will take place. They also advise if there is a briefing for new drivers. This will influence your arrival time. If you are using a trailer, you will need sufficient time to unload the car, stow the trailer in the trailer park before getting the car ready for scrutineering.

**Signing on** - Previously this was usually done at the Paddock Office on the day, but under COVID 19 rules this is not allowed but may return in the future. Remember to have with you your signed competition licence, club membership card and championship registration card, if applicable. These documents may be inspected visually by the Secretary of the Meeting.

**Scrutineering** - At some events prior to COVID 19 you will be given a scrutineer's card when you sign on. You must give this to the scrutineer when he or she checks your car and safety clothing. They will sign it and give it you back, together with a Scrutineer's ticket which you stick inside your car. The scrutineer's card is normally collected by a marshal as you go to first practice. You will be expected to lift your bonnet, so that the scrutineer can look under there, they will also ask you to give them your safety clothing, so have it ready to hand. They are not trying to catch you out, just to ensure everything is safe before you race. Under COVID 19 rules most of this is a visual only check and there is no paperwork or stickers involved. However, if scrutineers suspect something is wrong with the car they can perform a deep investigation. We do not know how Scrutineering will work post COVID 19 yet.

**Drivers' briefing** - There is often a drivers' briefing before first practice those drivers who have not competed at that venue before. These only last between five to ten minutes and you MUST attend them. They will be socially distanced in the open air.

**Walking the Course** – You will be given the opportunity to walk the course, with other drivers but you must SOCIAL distance. If it is your first time at that venue, you must walk the course. However, often things change from one season to another, track resurfacing may have taken place, new safety barriers may have been erected, etc so even old hands go and have a look.

If you are a driver aged 14-16 years old with less than 3 Motorsport UK events experience you will have to compete 3 laps under the inspection of the Clerk of the Course to ensure you are competent to drive competitively. Events may choose to do this in different ways, but MGCC Midlands state that 2 of the runs will be during the noncompetitive practice runs that all drivers complete. Which leave one other run needed. The Clerk of the course will request that any 14–16-year-old needing assessment are in the first group of cars sent to the start line. One at a time the drivers will be directed to take their run with no-one else on the track. At Curborough there is always only one on track but for 14–16-year-olds wherever you are it will only be one on track at a time. Remember the point of these 3 practice runs is not to set the fastest time, it is to learn the track and prove to the clerk that you are a safe driver. When you have completed your first observed lap, return to the paddock. For your second and third observed laps follow the rest of the cars in program order as called by the marshals. After the clerk has assessed all three of your laps, they will provide you feedback and advise if you are allowed to go ahead to compete in timed runs.

## **THE REST IS UP TO YOU!!**

You will be called as a class or group to the starting area, please follow marshals' instructions at all times. They are there to make the event run well. They are unpaid volunteers, often out in all weathers and we cannot play without them. Please remember – British marshals are the best in the world.

It is advisable to check your car over after each run, including tyre pressures. Your times may be displayed near the Paddock Office on a computer screen but under Social distance rules some events no longer do this. The event will have the time live on a web page, however. Check the event regulations for the www address.

Refreshments are generally available at most meetings and I find few pleasures better in life than a bacon butty after practice!!

This has been a whistle stop tour of starting sprinting and hillclimbing and I hope it proves useful and that you come and have a go. If you need any further help or advice, you are welcome to contact me. You can, of course, come and watch one of our sprints at Curborough, there is no charge to get in. Come and find me, chat to other competitors and find out more.

I wish you every success.

**Martin Price MGCC (Midland Centre) Sprint Coordinator**

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