

60th Anniversary of the Imp launch Curborough track day report

Curborough Sprint Course, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 8EJ, 28th April 2023

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Where have those ten years gone? This was my first thought when I read in *Impressions* that April 2023 was the 60th anniversary year of our great little car. It was at the 50th event at Coventry that I first met Graham Anderson (our then Chairman) plus it was my first Imp show. I'd only bought my Imp (a non-runner) a few weeks earlier, an eBay purchase brought home on a trailer from Norfolk. Later that year I took it off the road for just under twelve months to carry out extensive upgrade/modification work.

Anyway, I digress. As some of you know, I now live only a few miles away from Curborough Sprint Course and when I saw that the list of celebration events included a track day there on the Friday before Coventry I was keen to mark it on the calendar and get an entry in. A few weeks later I received a phone call from Graham Anderson asking me if I would organise the track day as he was finding it difficult to fit it in along with his work commitments, etc. Of course, I said "Yes" and then after putting the phone down thought, "What on earth have I let myself in for?"

Firstly, a brief history of Curborough. This was formally a small part of RAF Lichfield, and construction on the airfield began in 1939 and was finished on 1st August 1940. Number 27



Eric Morrey awaits his turn on the track
Photo: Elaine Parkes

Operational Training Unit was based here and was tasked with training aircrews on Wellington bombers. The airfield finally closed in April 1958. Shenstone & District CC, who have their 80th anniversary along with Curborough's 60th in July, secured a lease on the track from a local



David Sellars in 'Laa Laa'
Photo: Mark Sistern



Henry Mitchell's Clan Crusader
Photo: Mark Sistern

farmer, who purchased the entire site for £240,000 in 1962, and continued to develop the site over the years into one of the finest sprint courses in the country.

I had competed at Curborough in my previous car, a modified 1700 cc Westfield, for over 20 years and had also done some



Martin Parkes has been here many times
Photo: Mark Sistern

sprints and track days there in my Imp but never organised one! The following day I got in touch with fellow Owen Motor Club member, Shenstone CC member and registered sprint school instructor, Howard Cotterell to see if he would help or at least point me in the right direction. “No problem,” he said. “Call in at my place for coffee and we’ll discuss it.” This was a huge relief to me and a lovely sociable chat took place in his kitchen later the following week. When I left him, I had a long list of things to do but felt that a huge weight had been removed from my shoulders.

There then started a regular flow of e-mails between me, Chairman Roy Blunt and Howard and gradually things started to fall into place. Catering costs were discussed and arranged with Jodie, track day insurance was arranged with MIS Motorsport and the itinerary was published with Roy doing a sterling job as entries secretary and ‘forms to be filled in’ provider!

To my amazement we had lots of volunteers offering to help on the day which was so good to see and I’m sure this was the first track day where there was not enough jobs for everyone so during the day people swapped jobs around apart from the paddock gate marshals who performed their task impeccably all day long, chatting and laughing with the drivers before making sure everything was safe to release them onto the circuit for their run.

I will admit to having some sleepless nights leading up to this event (as I know Roy did) going through stuff that had to be done, with one of my main concerns being the Drivers Briefing on the morning. I needn’t have worried though because Howard agreed to do it and covered all the important points which included a brief insight into Curborough which is known as the ‘home of grassroots motorsport’. I must mention that Howard was on a week’s holiday with his wife in Barmouth and drove back home on the evening before to help me, before driving back again on Friday afternoon. That is club motorsport commitment for which I applaud him and say a huge “THANK YOU”.

With only one car allowed on the circuit at any time we had the traditional one-lap format before a lunch break at 1 p.m. and then continued after the break with the figure of eight which, surprisingly, most competitors enjoyed more when I spoke to them.

The weather did us proud and everyone drove sensibly and safely, gradually increasing their speeds during the day with some great car control displayed by the younger members.

A testament to the build quality of these cars, we only had two retirements which happened during the afternoon runs on the circuit

Corey & Dean Cole
in their Stiletto
Photo: Tim Beckett





Andy Smith
Photo: Mark Sintern



Matt Lee
Photo: Mark Sintern



Andy Jones
Photo: Mark Sintern

and both were cleared away reasonably quickly using the owners' trailers with marshals cleaning up the minor oil spillage before recommencing the runs.

The track closed at 5 p.m. and since then I've received lots of thanks which makes the whole job worthwhile, and I'd like to say that in the end I enjoyed it too although I was relieved when it was all over and had finished without any major incidents or accidents.

So, thanks again to everyone who helped, including Elaine my wife who did a great job making sure everyone signed on and had the correct wristbands, competitors for keeping it all on the black stuff, Howard for his invaluable assistance, Roy for his clerical work, Jodie for great food and finally Dave Pattison who puts in so many behind-the-scenes hours at Curborough and tidied up after us.



Mark Maynard's spaceframe Imp. Note the angle of the rear wheel – it was about to become detached!
Photo: Tim Beckett



Dom Smith strapped into his Clan Crusader, awaits his session
Photo: Dave Jeffries