

DRIVE IT THORESBY PARK

Nottingham Sports Car Club Speed Champion DAVID MARSHALL takes us up his home sprint course



A stately home set in beautiful parkland provides the perfect backdrop to the Thoresby park sprint which traditionally concludes Nottingham Sports Car Club's Speed Championship.

Usually blessed with excellent mid-September weather, the event is held on the park's internal estate roads, when the sterling efforts of the NSCC transform the tranquil setting into a fully licensed speed course. Catering facilities are up there with the very best, particularly the caravan specialising in venison burgers - not to mention the Gallery Teashop.

Run by the NSCC in its current format since 1994, this is one event where everyone returns home with a trophy. At signing on, competitors and officials alike receive a complimentary mug decorated with a map of the course. Competitors are often seen walking the course with mug in hand, and several making their Thoresby debut have been heard discussing how best to fix it to the dashboard for later reference!

I've now competed at Thoresby Park seven times in a standard production class Peugeot 205, so of course my comments are based on my experience in this car (front wheel drive, long gearing, etc.). I should perhaps also say that I take no responsibility for any mishap which may befall any competitor taking the following advice!

The course is fairly narrow at the start

and once off the line the road curves gently to the left for about 50 yards before Kiosk Corner, a hairpin right. Decisions seem divided on whether to use first or second gear, bearing in mind the length of the straight and the severity of the hairpin. Kiosk has a narrow entry and an even narrower exit. Taking a late apex tight to the bales works for me here.

After Kiosk the course again takes a long, gentle left which straightens between the trees just before Fiveways Corner. Personally I'm slowing down and changing from third to second gear as I pass the giant straw bales protecting the trees. Note that this area is often slow to dry and the surface is beginning to break up a little at this point. Although most of the course is tarmac, Fiveways is concrete and therefore you can expect different levels of grip. Fiveways, as you might expect, is where five roads join. The corner itself is clearly marked by bales, but don't be tempted to barrel in too deeply. This is another tight corner where some use first gear. It's probably slightly sharper than ninety degrees and the exit line is unsighted until you are well in. Exiting, you return to the tarmac briefly for a short straight to the first of the two chicanes.

Whether or not it's necessary to slow for the first of them, Rise Esses, depends on the exit from Fiveways and the amount of grip offered by the concrete. Note the marshals' post just before the

chicane. There's a fairly wide exit to the chicane and the concrete surface continues for about 25 yards.

Returning to the narrow tarmac, which the single seaters may find bumpy, all being well you'll have a fence on your left and a wood on your right. You're now on perhaps the fastest, and slightly downhill, section. Trees overhang this part of the course, which can make it slippery and slow to dry.

You next approach the second chicane, marked by 15 and 25-yard boards, braking as appropriate! The second chicane is a fairly simple 'bus stop' affair with the course marked by barrels; a fairly tight entry but a fast exit.

Having changed down to second gear for the last chicane on a good run, I just manage without third on the straight before braking very hard for Century Corner. The usual 15 and 25-yard boards mark the corner, but I mentally visualise coming to a T-junction. It's the only way I lose enough speed! Adjacent to the 25-yard board there is evidence of single seaters bottoming under braking. Century is a sharp, narrow, slow hairpin left, but to make life easier the track has been widened on the right. I need first gear again here and once more avoid going in too deeply as this will only make the exit more difficult. Just when you thought the situation was under control there are loose chippings and surface deterioration which can cause the front to run wide. When it all goes badly wrong the only way out is via reverse, which tends to be a bit time consuming!

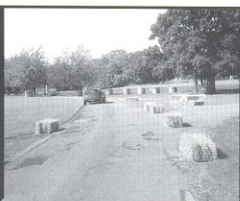
After Century, and one more surface change (but still on tarmac) it's a virtually straight 200 yard blast to the finish.

Well there you have it, a challenging course, a perfect setting and superb venison burgers - what more could you want?

Footnote: Although David kindly wrote this article for us back in 1988, it has only recently reached the editor's desk! But since it was written the course has been resurfaced - or more correctly, a 'pebble top dressing' was applied, which the two-day meeting promptly scrubbed off. The 1999 meeting was much better, with plenty of grip again. The 2000 meeting was cancelled due to the fuel fiasco, so this piece has now been published with competitors at the NSCC's 2001 Thoresby event in mind.



1 Off the start, the road curves gently left for about 50 yards before Kiosk



2 The approach to the right-hand Kiosk Hairpin



3 Kiosk has a narrow entry and even narrower exit -



7 I'm slowing down and changing down to second as I pass the giant straw bales



8 FiveWays - don't be tempted to barrel in too deeply -



10 The short straight to Rise Eses



11 The exit of Rise Eses



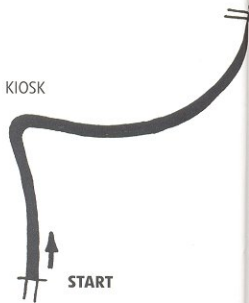
13 Into the 'bus stop' chicane -



14 - it's a tight entry but a fast exit. Bales in the distance mark the left-handed Century Corner



15 There's evidence of single-seaters bottoming under braking by the 25-yard board





4

- take a late apex tight to the bales



5

Into the long, gentle left towards FiveWays



6

The approach to FiveWays



9

- the exit line is unsuspected until you are well in



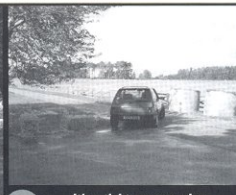
12

You're now on the fastest section of the course. Watch for slippery tarmac under the trees



16

Century Corner. I visualise coming up to a T-junction - it's tight!



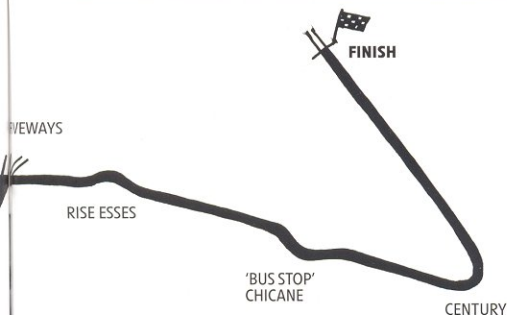
17

It's a tight, narrow, slow hairpin left. I need first gear here. The only way out when it goes wrong is in reverse!



18

After Century, it's a virtually straight 200 yard blast to the finish



THORESBY PARK 1200m