

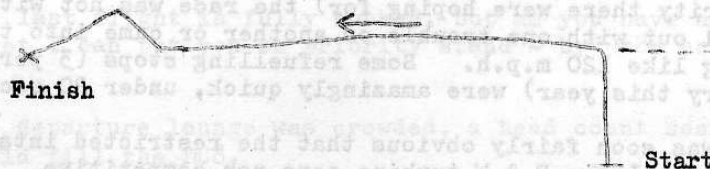
RAF LOCKING SUMMER SPEED TRIALS 1967 – 69

The newly built RAF Technical Training School at Locking, Somerset was opened in January 1939, about a mile away from Weston-super-Mare airfield. Over the next sixty years thousands of mechanics and electronics technicians received their engineering training there before the station was finally closed in 1998.

In October 1967 the RAF Motor Sport Association South-West centre, co-promoting with the local Weston-super-Mare Motor Club, organised the first of what would be a short series of six sprints utilising some of the roads within the camp. The track was approximately 500 yards long, with a right-angle bend near the start and a kind of chicane near the finish, while the paddock and scrutineering - for the first event at least - were in a large hanger.

In 1968 Graham Taylor, having competed in a Riley 1.5 saloon, provided his impressions of the course:

The course is as shown below:-



being approximately 500 yds long. From the start to the first corner the track is a road 5-6 yds wide, this continues around the first corner to the second. The first bend is a 90° left, the only problem with this one, was the two trees on the outside!

The second corner was constructed where the road meets a large asphalt square, the course here being marked by compressed fibre blocks. At first glance these blocks look uncomfortably like breeze-blocks which can be a little disconcerting when you are approaching them at speed. The second corner is the trickiest as it is approached at the fastest speed and I have yet to find the correct braking point always loosing my nerve and braking too early. This bend also has a bump about on the apex which causes my car to leap about in the most alarming manner. The final bend can also be fun as there seems to be a tendency to take it too fast. Also watching the other saloons round this bend one can notice the odd inside wheel being lifted and much body roll evident.

Hitting any of these blocks or cones used to mark parts of the course would also result in a five second penalty being added to the recorded time.

The first event on 1st October 1967, with a few invited local clubs in addition to RAF MSA and Weston, mustered 46 starters, and Bristolian Austin Healey ace John Chatham recorded best time of the day in his 3000 in 25.2 sec. Other local racers to break into the "25s" were Chris Boulter (Marcos Volvo GT) and Jonathan Buncombe (1.3 Mini-Cooper S)

The following year three events were arranged, in June, July and September, and with sponsorship from Guards cigarette makers Carreras Ltd, a trophy was to be awarded to the best performance, on index, over all three events. Another innovation was a special class for pre-1939 cars. Each competitor would have two practice and three timed runs at each meeting.

In 1968 1293cc Mini-Coopers dominated the results, with Buncombe winning the Guards championship trophy and two of the events and Tony Wadsworth the third. Buncombe also lowered the track record to 24.7 sec.



Gerry Bath rounds the 'chicane' in Mike Marsden's Lotus Mk.9, July 1968

For 1969 two events were scheduled, for June and September, and were now organised at Restricted status and open to members of all clubs in the Association of South West Motor Clubs (ASWMC), with around 50 entries received for each event. Recording best time of the day at both events was Jeff Hill in his newly acquired twin-cam U2 Mk.5, who also lowered the record to 23.2 and then 23.0 sec. on 28 September, in what would be the last sprint to be held at RAF Locking.

Although there was a desire to continue these events, difficulties with the venue meant that this couldn't happen. Instead, in 1970 the RAFMSA (SW) co-promoted a sprint with the Burnham-on-Sea MC at Dunkeswell, Devon, on 20th September.

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Locking Summer Speed Trials - BTDs

1 October 1967, John Chatham, Austin Healey 3000, 25.2s (established record)
 16 June 1968, Jonathan Buncombe, 1293 Mini Cooper S 1293, 24.7s (new record)
 28 July 1968, Tony Wadsworth, 1293 Mini Cooper S 1293, 24.8s
 29 September 1968, Jonathan Buncombe, 1293 Mini Cooper S 1293, 24.9s
 15 June 1969, Jeff Hill, Mallock U2 Mk.5 Ford t/c, 23.2s (new record)
 28 September 1969, Jeff Hill, Mallock U2 Mk.5 Ford t/c, 23.0s (final record)

Locking Summer Speed Trials - Results

1 October 1967 (46 starters)

Class Winners:

Phillip Bentall (Sunbeam Imp) 30.00s; R Frost (Mini-Cooper) 28.00s;
 Tommy Pascoe (Porsche) 29.15s; John Routley (Mini) 27.15s;
 Jonathan Buncombe (Mini-Cooper S 1.3) 25.60s; John Dent (Ford Cortina GT) 28.25s;
 Chris Pook (Ford Anglia 1.6) 26.80s; Alan Harvey (Austin Healey Sprite) 27.85s;
 Chris Boulter (Marcos Volvo GT 1.9) 25.35s; Ian Perrett (Austin Healey 3000) 26.20s

BTD: John Chatham (Austin Healey 3000) 25.2s

16 June 1968 (57 starters)

Class Winners:

BS (Bev) Rainbow (Sunbeam Imp Sport 875) 29.9s; S Shapland 27.6s;
 Geoff Brown (Turner 2262) 26.6s; P Blake 28.0s; Tony Wadsworth (Mini Cooper S 1293) 24.8s;
 Carey Carnell 27.6s; P Harris (Jaguar 3.8) 25.7s;
 Mike Hahn (Fairthorpe Electron Minor 1150) 28.3s; Jeff Hill (Lotus 7 Mk.2) 26.0s;
 D Charpley 27.3s; BS Rainbow (Alvis Speed 20/25) 31.2s (*John Page's car, Page 2nd in class*)

BTD: Jonathan Buncombe (Mini Cooper S 1293) 24.7s

28 July 1968

Class winners included:

BS (Bev) Rainbow (Sunbeam Imp Sport 875) 29.1s;
 Mike Hahn (Fairthorpe Electron Minor 1150) 28.2s;
 Geoff Brown (Turner 2262) 26.0s (*Ford Zephyr engine*)
BTD: Tony Wadsworth (Mini Cooper S 1293) 24.8s

29 September 1968 (49 starters)

Class winners:

BS (Bev) Rainbow (Sunbeam Imp Sport 875) 29.9s; P Bentall 30.9s; S Shapland 27.9s;
 Ron Bowers 30.2s; P Blake 28.6s; N Blake 25.5s; Carey Carnell 27.3s; J Dent 26.5s;
 Mike Hahn (Fairthorpe Electron Minor 1150) 28.7s; Jeff Hill (Lotus 7 Mk.2) 26.3s;
 Danny Harford (Lotus Elan) 28.6s; Geoff Brown (Turner-Ford) 26.6s;
 John Page (Alvis Speed 20/25) 30.9s
BTD: Jonathan Buncombe (Mini Cooper S 1293) 24.9s

15 June 1969 (50 entrants)

Class winners:

B Lovell (Ford Escort GT) 29.1s; Ron Bowers (Plymouth Barracuda 4.4) 29.0s;
 P Button (Mini Cooper S 1.0) 26.2s; B Purvis (Mini Cooper S 1.3) 27.5s;
 T Mansell (Ford Anglia 1.6) 25.8s; A (Andy) Le Provost (Ford Anglia 1.9) 25.2s;
 Mike Hahn (Fairthorpe) 27.4s; Roger Andreason (Lotus 7 1.5) 25.2s;
 Judy Day* (Marcos 1500 GT) 26.2s (**the future Mrs Judy Andreason*)
BTD: Jeff Hill (Mallock U2 Mk.5 Ford t/c) 23.2s (new record)

28 September 1969 (51 entries)

Class winners:

L Bull (Ford Escort GT 1300) 28.9s
 S Shapland (Ford Cortina GT 1600) 26.8s
 Ron Bowers (Plymouth Barracuda 4.4) 28.3s
 Brian Eyles (Mini Cooper S 998) 25.3s
 Peter Mardizzi (Mini Cooper S 1.35) 25.3s
 A (Andy) Le Prevost (Ford Anglia 1.9) 24.8s
 E Hughes (Austin Healey Sprite 1.1) 29.0s
 Mike Marsden (Lotus Mk.9 Climax 1.1) 26.9s
 George Brown (Lotus Elan) 26.7s
 Geoff Brown (Turner Ford V8 4.3) 24.9s
BTD: Jeff Hill (Mallock U2 Mk.5 Ford t/c) 23.0s
 (new record)



Gerry Bath in his Minivan Special

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RAF Station Locking Location:

Coordinates: 51.338293°N 2.904596°W

Information sources:

Bristol Pegasus Motor Club archives, Autosport, Motoring News, Bristol Evening Post.

Over & Out – A History of RAF Locking told by the people who served, Sqn.Ldr. Ray Tillbrook.
 Forces & Corporate Publishing Ltd. (via www.raflaa.org.uk/overandout.pdf)

Pete Stowe 2021

Westcountry Motorsport HistoryWebsite <https://bpmc.org.uk/petestowe/wmh.htm>

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