

# FAMOUS TEST HILLS AND HOW TO CLIMB THEM— NO. 2—LITTON SLACK

This article is the second of a series specially prepared for "The M.G. Magazine," with a plan drawn to scale, photographs and hints to novice trials competitors, from a special survey by . . .

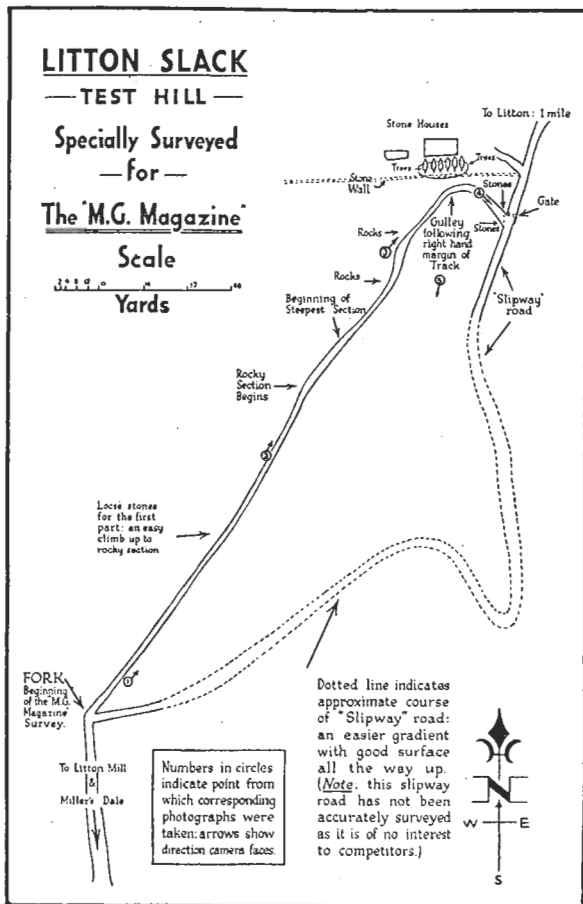
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THE simplest route to Litton Slack is via the main Bakewell-Buxton road, turning north at the R.A.C. telephone box (7½ miles from Bakewell and 5 miles from Buxton) to Miller's Dale. In this little village take a right-hand fork (just after passing underneath the railway bridge) where a sign-post indicates "Litton Mill." Follow alongside the river's edge for a little more than one mile, coming to a hamlet of stone houses. On the left is a row of stone pillars standing slightly back from the road; and on the right a post-pillar box set in the wall. Leave the river at this point and bear left, through gate pillars and up a steepish, stony incline, swinging sharply to the left in a few yards and then following a straight, narrow by-road uphill with the surface inclined to be stony in places—a fitting approach to Litton Slack itself.

Although the track is narrow, a smooth and usually firm grass

margin extends for several yards on each side, gradually rising and merging into the hills which form such a magnificent grandstand for the spectators in a reliability trial. Soon one comes to a fork. To the right is a narrow track sweeping upwards and taking a wide, double bend as it reaches the top by a comparatively easy gradient. To the left is a steeper and more difficult climb, known as Litton Slack. This fork is taken as the starting point for our survey.

Success or failure on Litton



NO. 1. THE APPROACH TO LITTON SLACK. Our survey begins at the fork, just beyond the left-hand edge of this picture.

Slack depends very largely upon the weather. I have heard of a motorcyclist going up non-stop with both feet on the saddle, and of a car climbing successfully in second gear all the way. Such feats are not impossible, but they demand conditions which, if normal, would speedily lead to the omission of Litton Slack from all further trials. Surveyed in January, after a fall of snow followed by frost, the surface appeared so bad that personally I would not attempt the climb without chains. In better weather, with some of the big, loose rocks cleared away and a few ruts filled in, the average M.G. owner could make a clean ascent nine times out of ten.

Litton Slack lies in a valley, and from fork to gateway meas-

ures 262 yards, varying in width from 8 ft. 6 in. to 11 ft., with a gradient which reaches as much as 1 in 4, one sharp bend near the summit, and finishing in a

jects on the right. Both these obstacles must be avoided, even if only to safeguard the sump! At 208 yards the surface narrows to 7 ft.; at 220 yards another

large rock juts out. At 234 yards the track sweeps round to the right, with a deep gully on the right (following the grass margin) and a stone wall in front, with trees and several houses beyond.

Having rounded this bend, one sees the radiator silhouetted against the horizon: but beware! There is a T-shaped junction here, successful competitors taking a sudden left-hand turn, through the gate towards Litton village; while in competitions where a second attempt is permitted, the failures may turn right and follow a "slipway" road (indicated by dotted lines on the plan) back to the starting point far below.

Now for the actual climb. Start off in first gear, and even although this may seem rather low for the first 100 yards or so, resolutely ignore every temptation to change up. Of all trial hills, Litton Slack



No. 2. THE FIRST ROCKY SECTION. Surveyed in January, the surface appears really appalling. In dry weather it makes quite an easy climb—at any rate, as far as this point . . .

sudden left-hand turn through the gateway leading on to Litton village.

For the first 100 yards everything is plain sailing, with a rough but not difficult surface consisting mainly of loose stones and earth. On the right a wide stretch of firm and almost level grass runs parallel with the track, gradually becoming narrower until it merges into the track just before it takes a right-hand bend. After 130 yards the left-hand bank begins to rise sharply, and at 150 yards the surface becomes distinctly worse, with large loose stones, deep ruts, and projecting pieces of rock. At 190 yards a large rock demands careful negotiation, especially as another one—only slightly smaller—pro-



No. 3. APPROACHING THE LAST BEND. This picture shows the gully on the right-hand side of the track, and gives some idea of the surface. The climb finishes at the gate, on top of the hill, where competitors make a sharp right-angle turn to the left.



No. 4. A "CLOSE-UP" JUST AFTER ROUNDING THE FINAL BEND. Although not a very clear picture, this is included in order to emphasise the sharp left-hand turn at the gate. The road beyond is only an inch or two more than 9 feet wide and the gateway is hardly any wider, so that competitors must exercise considerable care in approaching this gate, otherwise they may fail to negotiate the corner.

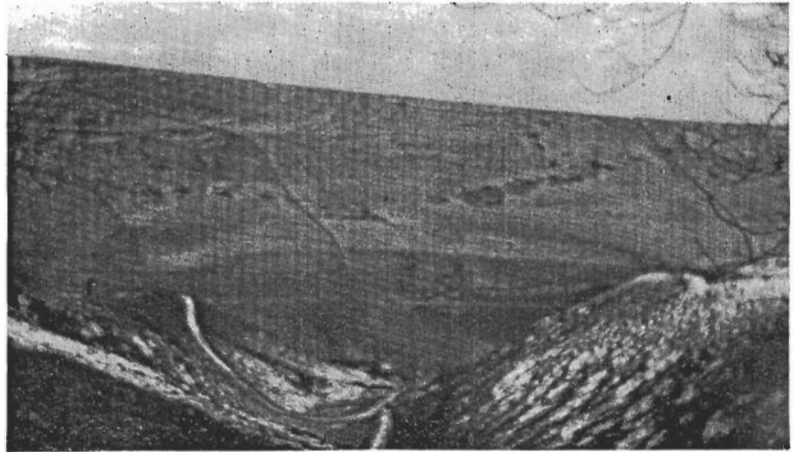
is most decidedly a first gear climb, all the way from the fork. After 100 yards or so one can see a rocky section ahead. Map out a suitable course, always bearing in mind the two rocks (one central and the other on the right) to which reference has already been made, at 190 yards. You may choose to keep left at

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this point, avoiding the central rock at the risk of a little wheel-spin perhaps on the left-hand grass margin. Later on, one must choose a definite course again, to avoid hitting another obstacle with the sump. On the bend itself, so much depends upon weather conditions that I hesitate to say anything at all, except that one's course here will be influenced to some extent by the gate through which one must pass immediately afterwards. In certain circumstances the last yard or two will test car and driver very severely, for one comes to a "T"-shaped junction (approaching via the perpendicular part of the "T") where the "Slipway" road (the horizontal part of the "T") is only 9 ft. 6 in. wide, with a maximum of 9 ft. 4 in. between the gateposts on the left. This, of course, does not allow much margin in which to make a right-angle turn on the level, after coming up a gradient of 1 in 5 or thereabouts, on first gear with the engine revving merrily: more especially when the last yard of the climb is complicated by large



No. 5. *LOOKING BACK FROM THE TOP OF LITTON SLACK to the fork. The slipway road may be seen faintly on the left, while the track itself begins at the fork where the slipway road joins it. This is the point from which our survey starts.*

stones right and left which prevent any attempt at cutting the corner very fine.

Litton Slack requires careful driving at three separate sections: (a) the projecting rocks at 190 yards, preceded and followed by soft patches of earth, ruts of varying depths, and loose stones, with a gradient of rather more than 1 in 5 occasionally; (b) the bend, which rises at a gradient of about 1 in 7; and (c) the final right-angle turn between gateposts at the top. As far as (a)

and (b) are concerned, tactics will vary according to the weather. In (c) however one must always beware of reaching the summit with too many revs. in hand. Pass close to the right-hand stones, and begin to lock over a few inches after the front wheels reach level ground, but the manoeuvre must be carefully judged lest the right-hand stones strike the rear wheels or any point projecting beyond the rear axle, such as the fuel tank or rear wing.