

"Wall to wall Morgans" at VSCC Silverstone!

A report by Simon Scott

The Morgan Challenge was hosted by the prestigious VSCC for the very first time at a dry but cold Silverstone circuit on Saturday 23 April as part of their Spring Start meeting. That meant we were sharing paddock space with anything from pre-war ERAs and 1960s Lotus and Cooper GP cars to a mighty 11,760cc Amilcar-Hispano Special. These delights made up, to some extent, for the Morgan fraternity being scattered in small pockets across various paddocks and runways, unlike our normal village encampment.

Thirty five Morgans fighting for a clear lap during one 20 minute qualifying session on the short National Circuit was always going to prove a rather frantic affair with few managing a clear lap. This must have made it a baptism of fire for series newcomer Paul Clarke in his Lightweight Roadster - sprinting was never like this! At the front, normal service was resumed as Keith Ahlers (who missed the first races of the year at Snetterton) planted himself firmly on pole with a margin of a fraction over 2 seconds from fellow Class A runners Philip Goddard and Roger Whiteside. Next up and first in Class B was the ever-impressive Elliot Patterson, still smiling from his stunning wins in the wet at Snetterton, followed by John Emberson and Tony Hirst.

First laps from standing starts often provide the best opportunity for racers to make up a few places before the running order settles down, so whilst Messrs Ahlers and Goddard made a break for it, there was action aplenty behind. First, John Emberson overcooked it on the entry to Becketts, spinning wide. Drama then at Brooklands when Dominic House spun broadside in the middle of the pack, scattering cars both sides of his Bugatti Blue car. There were winners as well as losers though with Simon Scott completing the first lap in 12th place having started 20th. Sadly, John Bevan wasn't even able to make it through Copse first time round - with clouds of smoke coming from his car he pulled over at the end of the start straight - making it a complicated journey home for one of the few hardy racers who normally drive to and from the circuit in their race cars.

The next big loser was Clive Glass whose car lost fluids through Becketts, leaving a slippery track for those next on the scene. This caught out Sharlie Goddard who ended up beached well into the gravel trap, necessitating the frantic waving of yellow flags by the marshals. Amongst others, it also caught out Tim Parsons who had been comfortably leading Class R until a very grassy moment at the exit of Becketts dropped him briefly to third in class. In the midst of all this mayhem, one man on a mission was undoubtedly John Emberson who completed the first lap right down in 26th place after his spin yet hussled his car back into 9th place by the finish. Driver of the race was, however, awarded to Tony Lees who finished just a second and a half behind third overall Elliott Paterson but clear of the rapid Tony Hirst.

In the end, a fine drive saw an under-the-weather Keith Ahlers pull off another commanding victory, finishing 28 seconds clear of a field of, in Keith's words, "wall to wall Morgans". Up and down the field drivers were looking to overtake the car in front whilst defending from the car behind whilst keeping a look out for the leader who lapped everyone up to 9th place by the end of the 20 minute race which saw five retirements. Next up is a double header at Castle Combe on Bank Holiday Monday with the second race being televised live on Motors TV. If the race is anything like as entertaining at the Silverstone round, it will be well worth tuning in...

Overall result:

1st Keith Ahlers
2nd Philip Goddard
3rd Elliot Paterson
4th Tony Lees
5th Tony Hirst
6th Simon Baines

Class A:

1st Keith Ahlers (FL)
2nd Philip Goddard
3rd Roger Whiteside

Class B

1st Elliot Paterson
2nd Tony Lees
3rd Tony Hirst (FL)

Class C:

1st Tim Ayres
2nd Steven McDonald (FL)
3rd Kathy Sherry

Class D:

1st Henry Williams (FL)
2nd Jack Bellinger
3rd Paul Bryan

Class E:

1st Chris Bailey (FL)

Class R:

1st Kelvin Laidlaw
2nd Tim Parsons (FL)
3rd Simon Scott