

“Formula Morgan”

A report on Silverstone 23rd April by Bob Bull

The second outing of the season for exponents of the Aero Challenge meant two races incorporated into the VSCC's newly launched 'Formula Vintage' series. Pretty much the same things they have been doing for the past 80 years, but with a new name. Never mind VSCC events are always well worthwhile attending, and with the added attraction of plenty of Morgans on track, it was a feast to look forward to.

However, before commencing my usual detailed and analytical dissection of goings on, I must correct an error in my report from Snetterton. Apparently it was Laurie, not Cameron who was unwell at the meeting, and I am happy to report that whatever he is called he is back in the paddock, hale and hearty. Best wishes to him.

Race 1

I won't bore you with qualifying as we all know who was on pole, anyway I failed to obtain a copy of the results so am unable to comment. Lurking at Copse Corner, my designated position for Tripos Media, I was ideally placed to see what a storming start the estimable Tony Lees made arriving at the corner alongside Keith Ahlers (pole sitter), and threatening to take the lead around the outside, however, both found themselves behind Roger Whiteside. Elliott Patterson clung to the inside with Simon Baines also well to the fore. I know this is true as I have a photograph to prove it.

As expected Keith then drove off into the distance establishing a lead of some 13 seconds after just five minutes of the 20 minute race. Unsurprisingly reigning Champion EP was well clear in second spot, with Roger holding third ahead of Andy Green who was well out of the way of the two cars behind. Probably as well because Andrew Thompson and Tony Hirst went at it like a couple of squabbling alley cats constantly swapping places for the entire race, both on the ragged edge most of the time and oft times using more of the Northampton country than allowed by the rules. One rarely sees such close quarter action without someone making a mistake, but full credit to the two combatants, not a flake of paint changed hands throughout the twenty minutes.

Dominic House, and the returning Jonathon Edwards filled the next two slots, with Craig Hamilton-Smith going well just behind, and not far in front of another scrap between John Milbank, Tim Parsons, and Phil Thomas, who gave a fine demonstration of how not to behave like saloon car drivers finishing in that order and less than two seconds between them at the flag. Great entertainment. Phil Tisdall had been playing with the threesome for most of the time but clearly tired and left them to it. Well he is getting on a bit, you know. Tim Ayres plugged along behind, no doubt worried about the impending court action for non-payment of debt. (To be fair he did subsequently pay up in full.). Brett Syndercombe scraped home in front of the redoubtable Peter Cole, and Tony Rivers. Greg Parnell risked sunstroke in his topless Aero 8, recovering well from a wild Gilhooley at Copse early in the proceedings, a fact I can personally attest to. Tom Daley and Richard Fohl were another twosome seen in each others, close, company, followed by a lonely Steve McDonald. At two laps, Alex Laidlaw, Richard Carter, James Sumner, Paul Bryan, and Will Sargeant, led home Lanterne Rouge, John Bevan at three laps. Simon Baines, Peter Rafter, and Tony Lees were classified as non-finishers, Tony suffering his first ever puncture on a racing car, while 'Compo'Rafter suffered the indignity of being bundled off of the starting grid when he discovered the reason his 'pretty red car' would not start was a lack of petrol in the tank. Once this was remedied he joined in the fun, but only managed 9 tours. Perhaps one of the most amazing facts to have ever surfaced in the history of the Challenge series is Peter being credited with fastest lap in an apparently classless class. I have no explanation for this, but no doubt someone will explain all in some future tome on Morgan trivia.

Quotes;

Andrew Thompson. "It was spectacularly close racing with no paint swapped."

Tony Hirst. "It was an honour and a privilege to compete with such a great competitor."

Both drivers were still bubbling with excitement well after the race was over, and well they might, it was a fabulous scrap.

Formula Morgan Part the Second.

And now for something slightly different.

The second race of the day lacked Tom Daley, and Richard Carter otherwise had a similar cast as the initial outing, although a couple of fathers swapped with their sons just to confuse the diligent reporter present.

In 28th place was John Bevan three laps in arrears. There are, probably, several good reasons for this lack of laps, firstly the car is not the most competitive of Morgans, secondly as this is hopefully John's last outing in the car he would obviously not want to mis-shape it, thus reducing any re-sale value. Thirdly JB as a volunteer scribe for the meeting, naturally would have been busy making notes of proceedings as he circulated.

In 27th spot on 17 laps Peter Rafter, now with a full complement of fuel, would have been pleased not to be last. Again. Up ahead also on 17 circulations, James Sumner managed not to pass Paul Bryan for 25th place, while Kelvin Laidlaw held station behind Richard Fohl to remain 24th. neither bold enough to scrape by Peter Sergeant, all within a second when the chequered table cloth was wagged. Oop 't rood, Brett Syndercome pestered Greg Parnell thorough out affairs, lacking the grunt to hold the topless wonder on the straighter parts, but doing the 'cheap suit' bit when it got squirrely. Both managing 18 laps in the process. Tony Rivers preferred his own company in 19th position, as Peter Cole did in 18th. however, Tim Ayres stubbornly refused to allow Steve McDonald to have his 16th place with less than another of those seconds between them when it was all over, and more time was being saved by Phil's Tisdall, and Thomas who shared the savings with Craig Hamilton-Smith finishing 15/14/13th.

Tim Parsons, Tony Hirst, Simon Baines, and John Milbank saved petrol by only completing eighteen laps filling the spaces between C H-S, and a returning Jonathon Edwards, in a creditable 8th. berth, unable to catch House the Younger. in 7th Tony Lees after a busy interval with a puncture repair outfit, possibly borrowed from Jerry Knight's bicycle kit, managed to fill the otherwise vacant sixth space not too far behind Roger Whiteside who was therefore 5th.

Now my Mum used to say "There's no peace for the wicked", which if true, does not say anything good about Andrew Thompson, who after being constantly badgered by Mr Hirst in race one, found that Andy Green coveted his eventual third place, and refused to let him rest for 21.13.68 secs. as he took only 0.86 secs longer on his way to 4th. Some four and a bit seconds further along the car with number 1 on it was just one place off number one step on the podium occupied by Keith Ahlers, who with almost 20 seconds to spare had plenty of time to ensure he had a firm grip on the top step.

All that remained was for the inevitable distribution of mysterious blue boxes by the young child mentioned in previous reports. There was the usual plethora of awards handed out, and to the uninitiated onlooker it seems that everyone gets something. Apart from winners and runners up one assumes that the best dressed driver, most shapely legs, bushiest moustache all attract a shiny trinket.

Observations of a complete inexpert nature;

Roger Whiteside looks to be getting a handle on his fearsome Class 'A' beast, while Craig Hamilton-Smith shows impressive progress, and Brett Syndercombe demonstrated a fine turn of speed. Fellow Brands Hatch Morgans entrant Greg Parnell continues to display improved form since removing the lid of his Aero 8, his fight back after losing control in the first race was genuinely praiseworthy.

Next round at Brands Hatch should see John Bevan out in the ex-Simon Scott roadster, and we look forward to seeing how he copes with the more intense pressure in mid-field.

Jerry Knight is still hors de combat, but it is nice to see him and the lovely Jan supporting the series with their attendance, and luxurious motor home, especially when supplying breakfast to the Media. (Hint)

Tripos Media had three photographers stationed around the circuit to capture as much of the action as possible, with well over 1000 images snapped there should be something of everyone, so watch the web site for details of how to view their efforts. How many series can boast their own dedicated photographic team?

Rumour has it that Peter Rafter has not cleaned his teeth for six months as he has mislaid them.

Roll on the MSCC at Brands.

Bob Bull.