

Snetterton Races 05/09/20

A report by Leigh Sebba

Six months into Covid pandemic. Schools are going back. Holidaymakers are dashing back from abroad to beat quarantine regs. Cases rise at Attleborough chicken farm just down the road – so how will Snetterton racing pan out ?

Remarkably normally and a good day (or a reasonable day) was had by all.

Living as I do in East Anglia I always claim that it is usually dry, maybe sunny, and sometimes a bit chilly and this was the pattern of the day – with perhaps just a few drops of rain in Race 2.

In a meeting organised by MG Car Club the Morgans appeared to have been guests of honour with prime race times at 11.30 am and 15.10 so all could get home in time for their Saturday night lockdown six person raves (or whatever it is that is permitted nowadays). Even the early practice at 09.00 is not such a hardship when Covid signing on is 'on line' and scrutineering is by 'self declaration' on line. Perhaps Motorsport UK will deem that this is adequate and the way to go in the future ?

23 cars rolled out for practice and on pole with a 2:10 was Andrew Thompson in his ARV6, a full 4 seconds ahead of the similar car of Simon Orebi Gann (SOG). Andrew happens to be married to the series organiser Katy T, so I did wonder if I persuaded my wife to take over Katy's role – would I achieve such a lap time ? As it happens Katy denied any helping involvement in the Andrew performance as during practice she had tripped in the paddock and damaged her ankle – hopefully not too badly Katy and you are fit for the schoolkids on Monday ? Third spot was Brett Syndercombe flying the flag for BHM in his 4/4, ahead of the only Class A plus 8 driven by Jerry Knight. Brett did give me an explanation for his fast lap time but I wont disclose it here. Jerry is a 'seasoned campaigner' but hadn't raced the car for two years – so was a little out of practice. Behind Jerry was John Emberson in his 'Baby Doll' – JE has been racing almost every weekend over recent weeks but in UK as opposed to past years around Europe. His quote " had forgotten how bumpy UK tracks are compared to those in Europe." Family racers included the Mr & Mrs Goddards in their similar but different plus eights, Tom & John Richards - quote John – "Tom has extra power and less ballast (on his body)", Paul & Tom Andrew (although only one of them in the Morgan race– they also had a lovely Elva), Simon & Kathy Sherry (in this case Kathy has moved to an MGB), James Sumner as sole representative of the three racing Sumners, and Jim Mountain was supported by father Pete who is a veteran of classic trials and sprints / hillclimbs "but had never raced". Jim has a beautiful light blue 4/4 and hadn't raced for eight years – "everyone seems to go a lot faster nowadays"

Philip Tisdall was suffering some mystery electrical gremlin " makes it feel like it is hitting a rev limiter ". Simon Sherry was plagued by a broken alternator so had to drive both races 'on the battery' which tended to fade towards the end. One driver whose name I wont disclose was a little slow as he had forgotten to change into his race shoes so had practiced in his rather clumpy hiking boots. Tony Kilby in his fifth ever race was discovering that not all tracks are as straightforward as Silverstone Club – but he continued to efficiently notch up the signatures.

And so to Race 1. I climbed the Snetterton paddock 'mound' which gives a scenic East Anglia view – pig arcs on the horizon and a chilly breeze – huddled with the Mountain family and Mrs Tisdall. Rocket Man Andrew Thompson 'does a Keith' and leads comfortably from start to finish. SOG manages to keep in front of Jerry Knight, Jerry's Class A Plus 8 car having the power but SOG's more modern ARV6 having the cornering. JE just pipped Brett and then behind them was a lively gaggle for most of the race – Mr & Mrs Goddard and Mr Tisdall, followed by Stephen Lockett and Tom Richards – a group won by Mrs G less than one second ahead of hubby. This despite Mrs G making an unscheduled bump into the back of James Sumner's four seater when it suffered a sudden halt (rumoured to be fuel starvation – a technical motor race term for 'running out of petrol'). Perhaps if James drove a bit slower it would use less fuel ? (No charge for this advice). The other retirements were John Milbank in his very quick 4/4 suffering an engine malady, and the lovely 1960s TR +4 of Paul Andrew which also had a mechanical problem. 'Driver of the Race' was awarded to Peter Cole for his driving in the three Roadster midfield battle with Tony Rivers and Rob Gilmore (Rob in the car famously rolled by ex England footballer Luther Blissett).

For Race 2 it was clear that James Sumner had a 'cunning plan'. Sumner household out of alcohol so if I start at the back and plough through the field I will get driver of the day and a bottle of champers. But to make it even more dramatic I will start from the pit lane to give the others a head start. And so it was – young James using all the skills passed on by his Dad proceeded to charge through the field on a mission – finishing fifth overall. There was again an exciting and close midfield battle, livened by a few spots of rain. Up front again Andrew won with ease from SOG followed by JE and Brett. Jerry Knight had retired his +8 with vibration problems and Tony Rivers was the only other non finisher.

And so the 2020 season Aero Racing Morgan Challenge came to an end. Covid restricted to three 'double header' race meetings – Donington, Silverstone, and Snetterton. Good grids and good racing despite all the problems that had to be overcome.