

## **Back of the Grid and spectator report**

### **Morgan Challenge races at Brands Hatch, 29 May 2017**

#### **A report by Michele Bailey**

The Peter Morgan Memorial Race meeting returned to the Indy circuit at Brands for 2017. It is a bit of a trek from Yorkshire so I had 'bribed' the spanner man with a race entry. He had chosen race 2 as there was a 4 cylinder trophy at stake in the shape of the Techniques Cup. Unfortunately the bribe hadn't worked as he was unable to trailer Gromit due to working away the following week. More on that later.

We arrived in good time on Sunday evening and the gate monitor let us into a car park to wait. There were a couple of Morgans already waiting. The MMC 'posse' were there with their matching pair and there was a black Roadster parked up: John Bevan's new steed. I had a quick look, and decided he wouldn't get too far without a steering wheel, although he was already practising (see picture).

I had been anxiously perusing the weather forecast, and it wasn't looking good. Brands in 2015 had been a wet experience and I was hoping that we didn't have a repeat. Monday morning dawned reasonably bright, so I was hopeful.

There were 12 of us lined up in the assembly area for race 2 qualifying; unfortunately Leigh's Plus 8 had expired the day before so he had swapped into another Morgan and joined the FISCAR race instead. Qualifying was most enjoyable; plenty of space and time to get myself familiarised with both track and car. It finished with Tim Parsons on pole followed by Steve Mac and Phil Tisdall. I don't need to say that I was at the back, with John Bevan who was wisely taking it easy in the Roadster.

I didn't get to see Race 3 qualifying, but I could hear them, in particular Russell Paterson in 99OK; it is a glorious sound those Plus 8s make. They finished with Keith on pole, followed by Russell and Elliot.

It had been decided to amalgamate races 6 and 7, but qualifying remained separate. Chris seemed to enjoy qualifying, but he ended up in the usual Bailey position at the back of the grid, again with John Bevan. John was a remarkable 7 seconds quicker in this qualifying as he was getting used to the car. The combined qualifying saw Keith on pole again followed by Russell and Phil Goddard. Tim Parsons was in 7<sup>th</sup> place, which was a great position for him ahead of a number of Class B cars.

So to the racing. Paul Bryan was in front of me as we went round for the warm up lap. I tried to stay as close to him as possible in the hope of staying in front of John Bevan at the rolling start. When the lights turned green I could see all the cars in front jockeying for position. Mary got a great start, and so did Paul, but where was that Roadster? As we went round Paddock Hill bend I thought I could see John trying to sneak past me, but then I could see him in my mirrors as we went down the hill.

There was more jockeying for position at Druids and then things settled down. I spent the entire race concentrating on not letting John past. I had spoken to Jerry for his 'JTT', which I am sure helped me stay in front. 25 minutes is a long time for a race; those last few minutes seemed hours. At one point I was in splendid isolation and wondered whether the race had finished and the marshal had forgotten to show me the chequered flag?

Finally there it was. Tim Parsons won from Phil Tisdall and Steve Mac in third. Class winners were:

R     Tim Parsons  
C     Phil Tisdall  
D     Brett (although Paul Bryan had the fastest lap) and  
E     Me (not difficult although I did have a moment at Paddock when I thought I would try to get round without braking – didn't try it again!)

I didn't see Race 3 as I was recovering from Race 2. Keith won with Russell second and Phil Goddard third. Class winners were:

A     Keith  
B     Elliot and  
H     Tom Dailey.

The final Morgan race was the combined race 6, with all classes out on track together. I have to confess I was relieved that Chris was driving and not me. Although I had counted 30 cars in fact 25 started for various reasons. Keith had decided not to start after an issue with the car, which meant Russell was at the front followed by Phil Goddard and Elliot.

What a race! It was fabulous from the spectators' point of view. Exciting racing all the way through the field from Russell and Phil Goddard at the front; Craig and Phill Thomas in the middle; and the three Class C cars of Tim Ayres, Steve Mac and Phil Tisdall. Tony Lees stormed through from the back to finish fifth. Very well done all.

Class winners were:

- A Russell
- B Elliot
- C Steve Mac
- D Brett
- E Chris (again not difficult!)
- R Tim Parsons and
- H Tom

There was a very happy presentation of trophies, with Jamie doing an excellent job. Race 6 was decided on handicap. Elliot won the AR Motorsport Trophy with Simon 'The Baron' Baines second, and Andrew Thompson in third. Tim Parsons won the Techniques Cup.

A splendid day's racing.

I somewhat foolishly turned down Chris's offer to put up the roof on Gromit. Although it was sunny when I left Brands, the M11 was a shocker; torrential rain all the way to Huntingdon when I decided enough was enough and stopped to wring out myself and the contents of the car. I have never been so wet in a Morgan but it still didn't ruin the day's fun!



John Bevan demonstrates that a steering wheel is not necessary.