

Donington Park 18 July 2021

The Challenge joined with the MG Car Club at their Summer Race Weekend for round 3 of the series, again with 2 races. The sun was out and the temperature in excess of 20 degrees by 9am; umbrellas were in use to provide shade!

There were 26 cars entered and 29 drivers: Chris and I were sharing Gromit in Class 5, with Geoff Lewis and Jason Kindle sharing the roadster in Class 3 and Bill Lancashire sharing the Plus 8 with Howard. This meant some changes to qualifying as there was not enough time for the drivers of the shared cars to get their 3 laps in.

Chris and Jason went out with the Equipes, but only one at a time, and both started from the pit lane; I am not sure where Howard managed to get his qualifying in – if he did at all. There were now 3 members of the Pratt family competing (well I assume they are related), with Martin joining the fun in a Baby Doll in Class 2.

Donington is a long circuit with plenty of space, and qualifying seemed to go by rather quickly as I was concentrating on Geoff in the roadster in front, and keeping out of the way of the faster cars. I could see a black flag out involving a number with a 7 in it – so I knew it wasn't me.

End of the session saw pole position go to Bill Lancashire, followed by Oliver Pratt and Roger Whiteside. Peter Rafter had an issue in his 'pretty red car' after it having been out of action for the last year, and Rob Gilmore had suffered the black flag.

The timing of the races was brought forward, due to the heat, and the ice cream van was doing a roaring trade. I am sure I saw more than 1 Morganeer with more than 1 ice cream!

Race 1 got off to a good start, and I settled in to pursue Geoff and Tony Kilby. We had been joined by Simon Orebi Gan at the back of the grid, who had been competing in his SLR at Silverstone.

It took a few laps for the guys at the front of the grid to start lapping me. I think we were over half way through when the yellow flags were waved. I came through the chicane onto the start/finish straight to find an oil flag also being vigorously waved, and James Sumner's yellow car parked up at the far side on the grass. Going down the Craner Curves the Safety Car signs were out, promptly followed by red flags. We were not the only race that day to have the Safety Car out, with Lewis and his chums also doing so at Silverstone.

We gathered behind the Safety Car and were brought to a halt on the grid, for 15 minutes in the blazing sunshine whilst the oil was dealt with and James' car removed; it wasn't as hot as I expected. We were then informed we had a 10 minutes race, were reformed on the grid and started again.

No further incidents occurred, although Geoff Lewis didn't restart, John Emberson seemed to have disappeared and Phil Tisdall suffered a disconnected wire shortly before the end.

End of the race and Bill Lancashire took the win, followed by Oliver Pratt and Roger. Class wins to Andrew Thompson, Brett Syndercombe, and Steve Lockett.

Race 2 had Oliver Pratt on pole, with Roger alongside him, followed by Andrew Thompson and Phill Thomas, and William and Martin Pratt both on row 3. The back of the grid was joined by Howard Lancashire. The race was exciting to watch, with close racing all through the field.

Oliver took the win, from Howard, Roger was third and William was fourth. Class wins to the same class winners in race 1.

Michele Bailey