

Mogs Among the MGs; - Aero Challenge, Donington.

Bob Bull

The MGCC played host to the Morgan Aero Challenge competitors at a rather gloomy Donington Park on July 2nd, with just seventeen cars turning up for the two 20 minute races. Many of the regular runners had elected to travel to France for the Annual Le Mans Classic weekend, where we hope they enjoyed better weather than the East Midlands.

Qualifying was held on a circuit still damp from an earlier shower, and most drivers treated the surface with respect, the better to avoid expensive repairs, however, Brett Syndercombe was the least cautious of all, recording the fastest lap to annex pole position. The Brands Hatch Morgans 4/4 had the more powerful ARV6 of Andrew Thompson for company on the front row, and Steve Lockett's V8 immediately behind, Steve also a member of the BHM team. Fourth spot on the grid was series newcomer Alex Lees, making his first start in a motor race in the familiar bright yellow V8 of father, Tony, dad being demoted to Chief Mechanic for the day. Simon Sherry and James Sumner shared row three, with Greg Parnell, Phil Merson, Rob Gilmore, and Kelvin Laidlaw completing the top ten. Jim Mountain, Richard Fearn, Peter Rafter, Ian Sumner, Tony Kilby, John Bevan, and Paul Bryan were the final starters.

By the time the Morgans' first race was called, the track had dried out, and from 2nd place, Andrew Thompson used the superior torque of his V6 engine to take an immediate lead, from Brett Syndercombe, Stephen Lockett, and James Sumner, with Alex Lees in fifth, Alex making his first ever standing start. Behind, the field spread out according to power, and talent, except Jim Mountain who insisted on trying to rise above his station in life, and kept endeavouring to move his Class 4, 4/4 ahead of the Laidlaw Class 2 V8. Despite his best efforts Kelvin refused to yield his place to the upstart Morgan although his margin of victory across the finishing line was under 0.5 sec, while Phil Merson made a determined effort to demote Jim, failing by a mere 0.171 second to snatch 10th place. Ahead of this squabble, Alex Lees had move into 3rd place with James Sumner, Stephen Lockett, Rob Gilmore, Greg Parnell, and Simon Sherry coming home in that order, but never indulging in any unseemly behaviour, by fighting among, themselves. Richard Fearn, Paul Bryan, John Bevan, Tony Kilby, and Peter Rafter were the final finishers, however, Ian Sumner retired his +4. Andrew took the flag 41 seconds ahead of Brett, both winning their respective Class 2 and 3, Steve Lockett clinched Class 4.

For race 2 the cars lined up in the finishing order of race 1, although Kelvin Laidlaw failed to take up his place, why I have no idea. Once again it was an Andrew

Thompson master class of winning a Morgan race, romping into a lead that was never threatened, although he admitted to spinning harmlessly at one point. Well I suppose it can get boring out on your own. Things may have been easy for the winner, but second place was an entirely different matter, Brett Syndercombe and James Sumner could not agree about who should be next up, spending the entire 15 laps constantly swapping places around the circuit. James led around the last corner with Brett inches behind, and almost taking the place, the pair separated by a mammoth 0.175 sec, as they passed the chequered flag, great racing in the true Morgan spirit. Alex Lees added a fourth place to his earlier 3rd to show that he is rapidly getting the hang of this motorsport business, Rob Gilmore in 5th continues to improve, while Steve Lockett took Class 4 honours again in 6th. Jim Mountain, Greg Parnell, Phil Merson, and Simon Sherry filled out the top ten, followed by Paul Bryan, Richard Fearn, Tony Kilby, John Bevan, and Peter Rafter.

Phil Merson is in his first season, and is another driver improving every time out, and it was good to see Peter Rafter back in action after a variety of mechanical problems had sidelined the 'Pretty Red Car', as he has dubbed it.

Next round is at the Bentley Drivers Club, August Silverstone meeting, and with two rounds of the Challenge and the much loved Techniques Trophy race for four cylinder Morgans, plus a plethora of Bentleys and 50's sports cars in action it makes for a perfect day out.