

500 Owners Association Circuit Racing Championship – Rounds 3 & 4
CMCC Meeting, June 16th 2019
Mallory Park, Leicestershire

Third circuit meeting of the year brought a double-header at Mallory Park for the 3rd Classic And Modern Motorsport Festival. A curious hotch-potch meeting for the historic (500 cars and motorcycles), modern (various modsaloons and prodsports), with Morgans bridging both camps, it actually made for a very pleasant day. Organisation was exceptional – not only keeping on schedule most of the day, but great work from the marshals in Assembly and the Clerk of the Course to get the cars on track promptly and efficiently.

Fully 22 cars were entered. Peter and Richard de la Roche would be sharing their rapid Cooper Mk V, but weren't the only Dad-&-The-Lad team in the Paddock. The Russells had been on the blag, with Gordon a welcome returnee borrowing the Parker Kieft, while Michael (son of, not brother) was making his four wheel debut in dad's old Mackson, kindly offered by new owner Chris Wilson. Chris was again in his Mk IX, and with Andy Raynor in his Vic Procter Kieft this was probably the first time these two Kiefts have ever competed together.

Simon and Angus Frost were both on spanner duties, as was Andy Turner, with dad John directing.

Another very welcome returnee was Richard Bishop-Miller with the Revis, while Martin Sheppard was back in the "Effyfer" Brynfan-Tyddyn Special. The grid was actually dominated by non-Coopers (14:8), and with all cars well-presented, we had a wonderfully varied and presentable "Goodwood" grid.

The day started rather chilly, with those chastened by the Silverstone debacle going to great lengths to turn engines over and get oil in all the right places before firing up. In Xavier Kingsland's case this showed up a complete failure of supply, and he would miss qualifying as they tried to trace the blockage (or pump failure).

Qualifying:

Despite the cool temperatures, the track was offering decent grip. Richard de la Roche ran close to the minute mark, before an indecently professional pitstop for Peter to take over. Peter promptly dipped under the minute, which is no mean feat, even more so with a relatively early car and a JAP motor.

From the off most cars looked to be running rather well. Malcolm Wishart's JAP still sounded like it had a piece of RSJ in the barrel, but still powered the Cooper down the straights at a healthy lick. The Whitfill also sounded unhealthy, but powered on at a decent pace. Richard's bigger concern was with the handling, amplified by the short wheelbase – it was notable that the Whitfill was the only car to bounce through a dip under the bridge almost unnoticed by any other car. The car was very slow through the corners, although it wasn't clear whether this was a limitation of the car, or an inability to transfer any confidence to the driver.

On the other side of the coin, Martin was having similar problems with the LWB Effyh special. He felt the car was jittery and has been struggling to find a direction for set up. Post-session he was packing the front springs/wishbones with extra leaves.

Chris Wilson was looking very good in his Cooper Mk IX, finishing second fastest and just over the minute mark – handy performance for a sophomore. Gradually reliability began to take its usual toll. John Chisholm's Arnott began smoking and spluttering, Andy Raynor had a small spin, and lost his gear change, while Simon Evans suffered a sticking throttle and Mike Fowler had a spoke on his steering wheel snap. More seriously, Simon Dedman's steering wheel came completely off the Waye at the Esses. With no grip on the wet grass the car crunched into the tyre wall. Simon was fine, and damage was surprisingly light, but the tubular left upright was bent and he would scratch.

Roy Hunt would join him, finding a post-session fuel tank leak and no way of sealing it. Håkan could not get his Triumph working and after an abortive attempt to qualify out of session would be the third out. Xavier was not able to qualify either but was comfortable that he had solved the oil supply problem.

Race 1:

One benefit of the C&MM Festival is that 500s are not bottom of the card, so had a surprisingly early call of 11:00 for our first race. Despite forecasts, the weather held and the sun cut through just in time for race start.

A couple of cars were reluctant to get going, the Effyh being one, and Duncan Rabagliati's Comet was held at pit exit. But a decently organised grid rolled round the Devil's Elbow before chaos reigned. About eight cars decided to challenge Chris for the lead. Mike Fowler had a decent shout but was on the outside. Gordon Russell looked to have a really good run to the inside, but some "Not My Car" syndrome meant caution and heavy braking (losing him some places around Gerards). No such concerns for Stuart Wright who stormed for an early apex and control of the first phase of the corner – only for Richard de la Roche to (legitimately) move from an inside to an even more inside line. With two wheels on the very wet grass, and two more barely touching black, his priorities quickly changed to "how not to spear across the track and take four cars with me".

Gordon came out of all this in second place, but Chris Wilson and Stuart close on his tail and storming past as they completed the first lap. Mike Fowler was a second adrift in fifth. However almost simultaneously the Kieft threw its gearchange while Chris's Cooper lost its drive sprocket. Soon the Revis was slowing with a terminal misfire (presumed magento, later diagnosed as the fuel pump coming adrift, leaving Richard confused as to how it had both continued running and yet not blown up with an ultra-lean mixture). Having better luck were Brian Joliffe – at the back of the grid after being late out of Assembly – who was already up to eighth place after just a single lap, and passing Finlay Mackintosh for fourth as they crossed the line to start the third lap, and Xavier (starting from the back with zero track time) getting into a groove and moving up to ninth.

With a clear track Richard was quickly in his stride and pulling away from everyone else, for what would be an easy win. But let's not forget this is in quite an early chassis and with a JAP engine. Mike got the jump on Stuart for 2nd place on the third lap but he was already looking for a way back past. This was a treat for Brian in fourth, only three seconds off the squabbling pair. Three more seconds behind Finn was doing a decent job once again (still in his first season of circuit racing), Michael Russell in his slipstream but not quite close enough for a decisive attack (nor reckless enough for a bland dive, in a loan car, on his 4-wheel racing debut). He would have to shadow Finn for the rest of the race, rarely more than a second adrift to the flag.

Xavier was next past, in seventh and no man's land, trailing by three, and leading Roy Wright by a similar margin. The Staride is certainly capable of being further up the lap charts, and slowly Xavier reeled in the pair ahead. On the sixth lap he passed the Mackson, only to start slowing, a little at first, then a lot, and then parking up. Big end done, meaning a non-start in the second race. How much this was related to the earlier oil feed problems he really couldn't care, and there was an awful lot of sympathy as his miserable season stutters along. If there's a crumb of comfort, he can take pride that, on the lap that he passed the Mackson, he briefly stole fastest lap from Richard, with a fine 61.086").

Plaudits are also due further down the field, as all the cars seemed to be running well. Although John Chisholm's Arnott died with fuel problems quite early, Martin had the Effyh-Cooper working a bit better, passing Andy Raynor's Kieft, but finishing well adrift of the Flash Special. Kerry's Trenberth was running cleanly, chasing Malcolm Wishart's Cooper (still sounding like a bag of nails), until Malcolm eased off and Kerry took the position. Even sick, Malcolm was still running laps just outside the high 60's, Kerry faster, much faster than in qualifying and quite respectable for the driver's experience and car's capability respectively. Simon Evan's JP also seemed to be developing well, but a sticking throttle finally convinced him to retire. Duncan had the Comet out, but

was struggling with gear selection. Even the Whitfill dealt with the straights competently, although it was desperately slow around the corners.

Whilst an easy win for Richard, the battle for second place was where it was at. Stuart was edging down the gap below a second, not quite able to make a move, but enough to make Mike be a bit more defensive. Having tried the (wet) grass on the opening lap, Stuart clearly felt it was dry enough six tries later. A great run from the hairpin got a wheel alongside the silver Cooper as Mike turned in to Gerards. Unfortunately his other wheel was a good couple of feet inside the kerb before Mike realised. It had crash written all over it, but somehow not only did they not touch, but Stuart came out ahead. However in re-establishing control he was unable to get the power back on and Mike crept back past along Stebbe Straight.

Stuart resorted to Plan B for the next lap. It turns out the outside was even less effective than the inside and he tucked back behind to regroup. Except Brain was now within a second of him. Stuart's JAP was also starting to show signs of running lean again, and a nervous run through Gerards on lap 10 was enough. Brian got the exit right, and had just enough to be clear as they lifted for the Esses. Running cleanly again Stuart returned the favour at the hairpin, but pensioner Brian was fired up and showed Stuart how to make a pass around the outside at Gerards!

This battling had allowed Mike to get a 3-second gap, and with his fuelling problems getting worse, Stuart fell away, trying to retain the points position but not blow the JAP to smithereens. Brian wasn't done though, and set about a pop at second place. It didn't really look likely, but all the front runners have learned not to give Brian any hope. In the final laps the gap dropped – 2 seconds, three quarters, back out to a second. Then starting a fourteenth lap Mike came to lap Duncan's Comet at the first corner – just as Duncan looked to put a lap on the Whitfill. Three-wide around Gerards isn't recommended at the best of times, but especially not with such a speed differential. Sensible driving from all avoided problems, but Brian got a much cleaner path and was all over Mike down Stebbe Straight.

He didn't quite make it, but a do-or-die manoeuvre on what would be the final lap was much more successful. Right up until the point when the blue Cooper spun. Mike crossed the line alone for a second place and half a minute or so later Stuart was ecstatic to have lucked a podium with his stricken car. Even Brian was fine, history having shown us he's prefers the racing to the results.

P	Driver	Car	Time	Q	Time
1	Richard de la Roche	Cooper Mk V	15 laps 15' 22.827"	2	1' 01.107"
2	Mike Fowler	Cooper Mk V	+19.098	5	1' 02.268"
3	Stuart Wright	Cooper Mk XI	+35.212	4	1' 02.190"
4	Finlay Mackintosh	Cooper Mk XI	+55.160	9	1' 05.654"
5	Michael Russell	Mackson	+56.331	8	1' 04.456"
6	Roy Wright	Flash Special	14 laps	11	1' 06.586"
7	Martin Sheppard	Brynfan-Tyddyn Special	14 laps	17	1' 14.153"
8	Andy Raynor	Kieft CK54	14 laps	13	1' 08.702"
9	Kerry Horan	Trenberth	13 laps	15	1' 12.341"
10	Malcolm Wishart	Cooper Mk VIII	13 laps	16	1' 13.593"
11	Duncan Rabagliati	Comet	12 laps	19	1' 18.947"
R	Brian Joliffe	Cooper Mk IX	14 laps	7	1' 03.144"
NC	Richard Kelly	Whitfill Special	11 laps	20	1' 24.282"
R	Simon Evans	JP Mk 1b	10 laps	14	1. 11.864"
R	Xavier Kingsland	Staride Mk 3	8 laps	NT	
R	John Chisholm	Arnott	3 laps	18	1' 18.141"
R	Richard Bishop-Miller	Revis	2 laps	12	1' 07.356"
R	Gordon Russell	Kieft CK54	1 lap	3	1' 02.090"

R	Chris Wilson	Cooper Mk IX/X	1 lap	1	1' 00.594"
NS	Roy Hunt	Martin		10	1' 05.793"
NS	Simon Dedman	Waye		6	1' 02.922"
NS	Håkan Sandberg	JBS		NT	

Fastest Lap: Richard de la Roche, 1' 00.248" (80.66mph, 129.82kph)

Race Distance: 15 minutes

Eleven finishers (technically twelve with the Whitfill) was a reasonable return and to various degrees people set about revitalising their cars for the second race. Although Xavier and John Chisholm were scratching, most others had just minor issues to resolve. Richard Bishop-Miller's fuel pump, hanging by the pipes, was bodged back onto the chassis. Duncan chose to go home and offered John the Comet to replace the Arnott (props to Race Control as well for being suitably relaxed about the change). Having fixed the JP, Andrew Turner had a nose around Malcolm's rattly JAP and found the cylinder studs barely finger-tight. It was a fair guess that the rattling could be gasses escaping past the head gasket.

Race 2:

Seventeen cars (from an original twenty two) were ready for the second race. Between sessions a ferocious little squall had soaked everything (still, less than the promised thunderstorms), and although the sun was out and breeze up, the track was still lightly damp all over, with no dry line.

Unfortunately John only made it to pit exit: "Duncan said he was having gear selection problems; he didn't say there weren't any to select." Before that the Whitfill's clutch cable decides to retire, and Richard also did not take the start.

With the grid reset, Gordon Russell and Chris Wilson were back again in the front group, and they, plus Peter de la Roche and Stuart Wright were the four to bomb into the first corner. Stuart got hung out to dry this time, and falling to the back of the premier group. It turned out he hadn't solved his fuel starvation problems anyway, and after a cautious two laps chose discretion and retired. Later he reported that the problem seemed to be a magneto anyway, which at least suggests a solution and no damage to the motor.

Peter de la Roche, like Dad in the previous race, knuckled down and was soon taking a couple of seconds from the rest, drawing out a very comfortable win. If Peter hadn't been there, Chris Wilson would have looked even more impressive, securing second place and also extending the gap for a comfortable podium. After that it started to get a bit more interesting. Gordon was in third in the Parker-Kieft, with Brian (this time starting from his correct position) still hepped up and looking for a way past. Mike hovered around a second back, then with Stuart faltering Finn led the rest, developing well but again a bit on his lonesome. At least he got one moment of excitement passing Michael Russell finishing the first lap. Michael would try to get back in touch but then faded in the second half of the race, safe in position, but also running alone. The rest of the field also spread out – Richard Bishop-Miller, then Roy, then Andy Raynor, Kerry, Martin, Malcolm and Simon, each just a bit slower than the man in front. Martin was a bit happier with the Brynfan-Tyddyn Special and caught and passed Kerry for eleventh place.

So the excitement was once again with Brian and Mike, with Gordon guest starring. Completing lap 4 Gordon was mobbed by the other two and fell to fifth place. Next time through Mike attacks Brian into Gerards. Brian has it, but gets boxed as they catch and lap Simon's JP and Mike edges ahead along Stebbe Straight. Brian replies in kind on the next lap, but gets that odd Gerards baulk on the exit – where you catch the chap in front too quickly, can't tighten or open the line, are forced to lift and offence suddenly becomes defence. Gordon comes back into play the first time, and then pinches 4th place the second time.

As Brian fights straight back past the Kieft, Mike is the beneficiary, suddenly opening a 5-second gap. Brian leads Gordon over the line completing lap 7, but Gordon gets Gerards just right, avoids

the baulk, and passes under braking for the Esses. Gordon seems to have this under control, but then falls back on lap 10. Exiting the Hairpin, Gordon misses a gear, Brian clatters the back and jumps in the air. The Kieft seems OK, but (unbeknownst to Brian) the Cooper has snapped the left steering link. It must run some impressive castor, because the keeps running straight.

The next corner is the left hand Devil's Elbow kink, and with the right hand side loaded the Cooper turns in fine and Brian is looking at the five second gap ahead, pressing on again. The right hand Gerards, though is a different matter. Brian turns in, and the car keeps going in the direction of Hinckley. On wet grass. Even stranger, in the moment where you are trying to work out whether Brian had made a small error or was headed all the way to the barrier, the car started to slow and turn. Brian rejoined the track and drove on, eventually realising the problem and pulling into pit exit. Now read that again. How? How does that work?

As a race, though, that was effectively it. Everyone was now well –spaced, running at their own pace. Malcolm, again reluctant to leave Assembly caught and passed the JP. In the latter laps his JAP started to sound more normal – perhaps as it heated up the head gasket gap was compressed, or perhaps it was tightening up ready to go bang. For the conclusion to that story, you'll need to tune in to the next race report.

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Fastest Lap: Peter de la Roche, 1' 01.909" (78.50mph, 126.33kph)

Race Distance: 15 minutes

Qualifying based on the best times from the single qualifying session (not 2nd best times or any other formula), positions revised based on different drivers and cars, as advised to race control.