

**500 Owners Association Circuit Racing Championship - Round 8**  
**VSCC Meeting, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**Silverstone, Northamptonshire**

Round eight of the championship was, for the third time this year, held with the VSCC. Rather than their normal Spring Start meeting at Silverstone in April, for reasons unknown the club had taken the traditional Grand Prix weekend of mid-July. As normal for that date, the weather was superb, in the high 20s, but to the relief of competitors and their cars, just beating the imminent heatwave.

Talk of the Paddock was the thinness of said Paddock – both the 500s (nine entries, bolstered by a late appearance by Nigel Challis) but all races. Whether it was the timing or the tightening of belts, it was noticeable how much open space there was, and this was a one-day event unlike normal.

The entry comprised the expected core group for 2022, less a couple on holiday. Michael Brough had the pretty BJR out for a third time since purchase. Stuart Wright had come to suspect that his poor performances recently were likely due to his Norton not delivering the horses, so had reverted to his trusty (-ish) JAP. That would confirm his suspicions, but have unintended consequences.

**Qualifying:**

Track temperatures were rising rapidly as the cars left pit lane, promising a lot more grip we normally see on an early April morning, Sure enough, Alex Wilson quickly got into a groove with a string of laps in the 1 minute 16s, and his pole time of 1' 16.10 actually shaded Steve Jones' lap record from 2013. On the downside, he rolled into pit lane just before the end of the session with the car locked in gear. The problem was fairly simple to diagnose – the shift linkage had snapped away from the stick, but rather harder to repair in the field.

Simon Dedman started slower, but gradually eased down to within 2 seconds of Alex. Things looked much closer in the mid-pack. Albeit some 5 seconds slower than Alex on pole, dad Simon headed the second row by just one hundredth from Richard Fuller, while Jonathan Morris hustled the Wayne round at an indecently fast pace to be just a couple of tenths off the pair. Both Nigel Challis and his car were still shaking off the cobwebs, but got down to within a second off the group. Richard Kelly was running well and was only another half-second back.

Stuart's decision to revert to the JAP came back to bite him, as he pulled up after just three laps, but in those few laps he had confirmed his suspicions of the Norton. However, he had inadvertently fitted a long-nose spark plug for the Norton, which lightly tapped the piston. This closed the gap and killed ignition. The workaround for the race was a couple of washers, and a small prayer that there wasn't more damage on the mechanical side of the motor...

Bringing up the tail were Michael Brough with the BJR, and Douglas Mclay in the Gerard Cooper Mk VIII. The latter was reluctant to fire up, but got up to a decent speed. Credit though to Michael at only his third race (and having completely failed to run in one of those). He worked down to comfortably under ninety seconds for the lap, and less than five seconds from the mid-pack. When passed on the pit straight by Nigel Challis, Michael was smart enough to observe and try to follow, but was caught out at the Maggotts hairpin and spun to a standstill. Still, it was a creditable run, and he got quite a few more laps under his belt.

All ten cars would be fit and ready for the race.

**Race:**

Alex Wilson got the best of the rolling start to lead the pack, although for a couple of laps Simon Dedman in the similar car held the gap at around 2 seconds. Simon had a relatively poor start, dropping to fourth before moving back into second over the first lap, Thereafter, though, Alex knuckled down, lowering his lap times as Simon saw the white car ease away and he settled into a slower pace, some 2.5 seconds a lap slower. Alex eventually took the flag nearly 30 seconds ahead. Simon in turn had a quiet race, at this time edging third-placed Richard Fuller by a second or more a lap.

Richard had other things to worry about. With Simon's slow getaway he was in third, chasing Chris Wilson in the Mackson. before Simon's silver Cooper cut past at the Maggotts hairpin. With that car gone, Richard tucked onto the Mackson's tail, but an opportunistic Nigel Challis was right on his tail as they completed the first lap. On the return half of Lap 2 Richard (sitting incongruously low in the Swedish Cooper, after all previous occupants had sat high) was past Chris for third place, and looked to cement that position. Chris had other ideas, holding the gap at under a second for a couple of laps and making his move on Lap 6. The pair crossed the line side-by-side to begin the lap, but Richard eased back ahead on the run to Copse. Chris got the better run through the corner and was able to dive ahead braking for Maggotts, But again, Richard got the power down earlier for the long run down the Wellington Straight and asserted the position. Fighting back, Chris had a small moment at Copse on Lap 9. The effect on the gap was minimal, barely reaching a second, but Chris admitted being a bit spooked and was unable to get close enough to have another attempt. A great, fair, battle that both can take pride in.

But that paled with what was happening behind. Despite still blowing away the cobwebs from car and pilot, Nigel had made a good start for fifth place, and hung onto the tails of Richard and Chris for a couple of laps before fading. But he had built up a decent cushion from Jonathan in the Waye. Behind them was Richard Kelly and a rejuvenated Stuart Wright. Now it as Richard with the asthmatic Norton, and he could offer no defence with barely 4,000rpm available. Stuart moved past early on Lap 3 for seventh place, and set off after the Waye, a couple of seconds up the road. Battle was joined a couple of laps. On the seventh tour, Stuart took the long way around Maggotts and drafted ahead down the long straight. Jonathan managed to get back ahead in the final complex, and the two now ran in tight formation.

But a benefit of this was that they were now on the tail of Nigel in fifth place. Jonathan made a move for position, going for the long way round Maggotts while Nigel charged for the inside. Slightly tripped up, this left Stuart with better options, and with a cleaner line he passed the Waye down the straight. This was repeated on the next lap. Realising Nigel would take the inside line he committed to the outside route. Pinched in, Nigel couldn't get on the power fast enough and Stuart was ahead down the straight – and just enough that, against normal form on the Wellington Straight, Nigel's Norton could not pull him back past. Oh, and Jonathan had tried to return the favour from the lap before, sniffing for a gap past either, but losing out.

Stuart cemented the position, but Nigel and Jonathan were still nose-to-tail. For the rest of the race, variations on a theme unfolded between Copse and round to the Wellington. Jonathan set up for a late turn-in at the hairpin, while Nigel took Route 1 for an early apex. Jonathan carried more speed through the corner and to a greater or lesser degree would draw alongside the green Cooper, only for the Norton to breathe harder and ease ahead on the run to Brooklands. And repeat. This went on to the flag, with Jonathan never quite able to seal the deal, finishing just a quarter of a second behind. But what a battle, and great experience for the still rookie Jonathan.

This battle would actually be for extra points, as on what would be the penultimate tour Stuart's JAP went bang. Suspecting the bottom end, this might have been a consequence of that spark plug problem in qualifying.

Completing the results, Richard Kelly dragged his Cooper to the finish, frustrated by and with the engine. Michael Brough to had a quiet race, but should take pride in his performance. Too far behind Richard to be able to compete, or even observe, he was still going well, taking good lines and committing well, despite this effectively being only his second actual race. Douglas too ran well and without trouble, and while the gap from the scratch/pole time may seem large, those of us who have been around the series longer have seen much larger spreads.

<b>P</b>	<b>Driver</b>	<b>Car</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Q</b>	<b>Time</b>
1	Alex Wilson	Cooper Mk X	12 laps 15' 45.72"	1	1' 16.10"
2	Simon Dedman	Cooper Mk X	+ 29.12"	2	1' 17.98"

3	Richard Fuller	Cooper Mk VIII	+ 38.53"	4	1' 21.37"
4	Chris Wilson	Mackson	+ 39.73"	3	1' 21.36"
5	Nigel Challis	Cooper Mk VIII	+ 1' 05.54"	6	1' 22.33"
6	Jonathan Morris	Waye	+ 1' 05.70"	5	1' 21.54"
7	Richard Kelly	Cooper Mk V	11 laps	7	1' 22.80"
8	Michael Brough	BJR	11 laps	9	1' 27.33"
9	Douglas Mclay	Cooper Mk VIII	11 laps	10	1' 32.74"
R	Stuart Wright	Cooper Mk XI	10 laps	8	1' 23.93"
FL	Alex Wilson	Cooper Mk X	1' 17.34"	-	-

Race Distance: 15 minutes