

500 Owners Association Circuit Racing Championship - Round 7
VSCC Meeting, August 21st, 2022
Mallory Park, Leicestershire

Once again, we were the VSCC for their traditional Summer meeting. This drew out a very healthy nineteen car entry. Unfortunately this was cut before even gates open, as Michael Brough was Absent Without Leave, while Chris "Pa" Wilson suffered a big end failure on final pre-event checks, so the BJR and Mackson were missing.

Chris still attended to assist Alex, who would be expecting to fight for the outright win with Tom Waterfield, back with the Mk IX Cooper. Stuart Wright chose to run Dad's Flash Special, while Andrew Turner elected to run his father's Mk IX. John did arrive later and hold court by Andrew's van – looking good and greeting a river of guests!

Also of note were a pair of big Twins to run in the Invitation class. Brian Jolliffe had the Cooper Mk VI (formerly one of Wally Cuff's Hells Hammers) for a run out, while Simon Frost was giving the CFS a test. The latter looks like a JP copy of an early Cooper, but has a very tidy twin-tube chassis for such an early car. It was perhaps a pity no one had warned Freddie Harper, who was in attendance with his Indy Roadster but not the Cooper.

The management at Mallory Park have been quietly improving the site for competitor and spectator alike. A new entrance to the Paddock at Pit Exit is most welcome, relieving a lot of the traffic jams early in the morning and through the afternoon, while new landscaping around the lakes made for pleasant areas to rest, eat and set up tents. Kerry Horan's team went fishing between sessions, and caught a 6-incher (despite watching Whitehouse & Mortimer, your correspondent isn't good enough to provide more detailed description). Outside, there were much taller spectating banks from Esses to Hairpin, and a new toilet block by the Bridge. Credit is due, and non-attendees should consider it a priority event for next season.

Qualifying:

The day would prove to be warm, but not crazy hot, although whenever the sun poked through passing cloud it felt like a sun-bed, and there was quite a lot of red skin by the end of the day. Slightly unfortunately, the VSCC team had put us in quite an early timed session, despite being the penultimate race, so it was going to be a long day. Beyond the 500s, the Paddock was once again rather quiet – enough so that there was space for Andrew Turner to do a solo "push-&-go" start down the slope. Most impressive when you jump into a moving car and bump-start it, less so if the back wheel catches your ankle...

Worryingly, just fourteen cars appeared for qualifying. For some reason the Assembly marshals lined the cars up rather than spread around the side fence, and Simon Dedman sent one apoplectic as she tried to herd drivers into their cars. We all assumed he had disappeared for a natural break, but in fact the steering wheel was wobbly and he had gone for a spare.

With some heat in the tarmac, the temperamental Mallory track was for once offering good grip, and Alex and Tom dipped comfortably below the minute mark that on another day can be totally beyond reach. In fact, at least as long as they lasted, the other dozen cars all performed well, most running in the low 60s. From the pit wall it was instructive to hear a dozen or so strong engine notes rush past, each a different pitch depending on engine type, vehicle performance, and gearing.

One not going too well was Richard Kelly. His Norton engine had been "off" at the previous round at Silverstone, and he had pitched to finish the season here and then ship the motor off for a rebuild. But in practice at least, it really wasn't happy and occasionally misfired. Simon Hewes, remarkably having his first run in a 500 at Mallory, was also taking it carefully, and subsequently also a little off the back, while Duncan Rabagliati, in the Comet again was struggling with a dicky ankle and while the car looked good it wasn't troubling the timekeepers.

The CFS took a while to get on track, but soon returned to the pits with a vicious backfire, post-session traced to a pushrod having slipped off the valvetrain. Much later, Kerry appeared with the Trenberth, trouble with the electric starter delaying arrival, while dirt in the fuel brought the session to an early end. Brian lost the clutch before even getting going and fished out a right rusty set of plates to replace. A strong barbecue smell signalled the demise of Jonathan Morris' Wayne mid-session, also with terminal clutch problems. Xavier also disappeared, drive chain having come off. On inspection this turned out to be more problematic, as the chain tensioning stud on the upper gearbox mount had sheared off (allowing the chain to come loose). This could well have been game-ending as the brazed-in part was still in the mounting, but Xavier was able to fashion a repair and would be able to take the start.

And so began a long wait for the tea-time start.

Race:

Fifteen cars would present for the race start. Kerry was unable to get the Trenberth running, and while Brian had a new(ish) clutch and the CoC's permission, the JAP just refused to fire when the time came. The remainder were all away in timely order, and with a slow lead out by the course car the grid was actually pretty much in order by the end of Stebbe Straight. Alex and Tom lead the field to the line, almost crawling as the green light appeared very late.

Alex led from pole into Gerard's, with Tom trying to hang on around the outside. This failed, but exiting with more speed he got another chance and completed the pass into the Hairpin. Behind, Simon Dedman made a poor start, letting Andrew Turner take third place, and Richard Fuller was set for a decent run side-by-side through Gerard's. That was until a demon-starting Xavier steamed inside both of them. Simon was able to drop in behind Xavier just as they reached the apex, but poor Richard was already left out on the marbles, and tottered around the very outside being passed repeatedly. Xavier carried the speed down Stebbe Straight and passed Andrew for third before the Esses, leaving a space for Simon to get past as well before the hairpin. Watching all of this was Harry Painter in the Cooper Mk VII JAP, in his third race in a 500. He had a sniff at Simon down the back straight, but settled (for now) into fifth behind Andrew. Harry also had a camera on the front suspension, and you are highly recommended to search out the footage on YouTube (search for "F3 500 Race at Mallory Park 2022") of what would be a very special race.

So completing the first lap, Tom led from Alex by a fraction, already with a gap to Xavier, with Simon in tow, another gap to Andrew and Harry. Already a significant gap had opened to Roy Hunt chased by another demon-starting Stuart Wright and a recovering Richard Fuller, and Andy Raynor in the Kieft. Another second gap and Simon Hewes, Richard Kelly (running a bit better) and Jonathan Morris were in line. Duncan was a bit slower away, and had been passed by Simon Frost's CFS, but that was soon running rough and pitted. A float bowl was coming adrift, so it was shoved back on, and Frosty went out for another go. But it was still rough and not worth the risk, so he retired the car for today.

To the front again, and inevitably Tom and Alex were pulling away. For four laps Alex held on or held station behind Tom, within a second. Tom was consistently hitting 59s laps (very good times) but Alex was just hanging on until a mistake on Lap 5 broke the elastic. Tom had the advantage, but it lasted just one more lap. Braking for the hairpin, nothing happened. Tom managed to get the car slowed down enough and coming back to the line pumped the pedal in the hope of getting something usable back. But it was to no avail, presumably a pipe or seal burst, and he rolled back into the Paddock. This left Alex with a clear run to victory, already well over ten seconds ahead of Xavier and Simon Dedman.

Perhaps thrown by the fluffed start, it actually took Simon a while to settle in, only passing Xavier on the third lap, but he immediately began stretching an advantage. Xavier had a safe 2.5" lead over Andrew and Harry was hanging in. The performance of the John Turner Mk IX is well known so even with Harry's experience in other cars this was a good drive and a good advertisement for Richard de la Roche's JAP work. But also Harry had tweaked his ratios after practice, while Andrew had not and he was a bit over-gear. The earlier car was pulling harder at the end of the two main

straights. Third time through Gerard's Harry had a run and passed Andrew early on the back straight. As much to get away from Andrew as reach Xavier, Harry put in some clean "tempo" laps and the gap did indeed start to close, down to about three-quarters of a second completing Lap 7.

Battle was on, but first let us look at the rest of the field. After his first lap fumble, Richard Fuller started a recovery drive. He passed Stuart just after completing the first lap, and disposed of Roy before ending the second. The Top 6 (at that point) were already some 6 seconds up the road, but more importantly Roy wasn't done for the day. He began drawing the Swedish Cooper back in, and close behind him (though not close enough for an attack) was Andy Raynor. Although making no excuses, Richard wasn't quite on song, and Roy was able to pass him Lap 5. Andy was close. Stuart in the Flash was unable to maintain this pace, but close behind him was Jonathan Morris in the Waye, another impressive run, with 64" laps pretty handy for such an inexperienced driver. Sadly though this was short-lived, all power was lost and he coasted in. This was unfortunate, as there was at least a good battle with Richard awaiting him. So on Lap 6 Roy was in sixth, chased by Richard and Andy, with Stuart drifting off. Andy passed Richard into Gerard's only for Roy to have a problem and be passed by both of them. Roy could not stay with the pair, but re-energised Richard re-passed the Kieft, and in fact edged clear, to take what was now and would be at the end of the race, sixth place.

Behind this group Simon Hewes had made a good start, completing the first lap in eleventh place. Richard Kelly was now running a reasonable pace (although still hamstrung by the Norton motor). He passed Simon, but could not even hold the pace of Stuart Wright ahead, who was also struggling for pace. It all came to an end anyway when the chain popped off on the fifth lap. Just like his dad used to, Simon kept plugging on happily. In fact towards the end of the race, as he was lapped and perhaps had something to follow, his times dropped to some very respectable 1'06"s and 1'07"s (and remember he is a rookie on this circuit). Lanterne Rouge was Duncan who was struggling alone, but would have one more part to play in this spectacle.

So back once again to the battle for what was now a podium place. Harry had been edging closer and closer to Xavier, and reaching the Hairpin for the sixth time was pretty much in contact, and a great run through Gerard's got him really close. It is very noticeable from the video footage how his JAP motor was certainly a match for the mighty Norton even at the end of the straights, and should be an object lesson for any JAP drivers who don't consider tweaking ratios for each circuit and conditions on the day.

Xavier knew Harry was coming, but was still able to take the line for the first Esses apex. Harry dutifully accepted, planning a move at the Hairpin. Andrew had no such reserve and steamed round the pair of them, exiting the Esses side-by-side with Xavier. Oh, and now all over Duncan in the Comet. Andrew went left, Duncan kept it straight down the middle, and Xavier had the inside. Harry put his chips on yellow, and followed Andrew the long way round. This proved a good bet they both maintained speed and were past Xavier even before cornering, extending their lead further as Xavier had to build up momentum out of the Hairpin and to the Devil's Elbow. Harry had a small sniff at Goddard's and a proper bite at the Esses, only for Andrew to firmly command the line – now wagging the front right wheel in the air!

Xavier wasn't having any of this, and knuckled down to recover lost ground. They completed Lap 8 covered by just seven tenths, and in that strange way we see at Mallory splaying across the track as they approached the finish line. Harry got a clean run through Gerard's and was alongside Andrew, but Andrew had just enough space to turn in, and a good line through the Esses restored his advantage, only to lock up at the Hairpin. Harry though was more concerned with his mirrors as Xavier got the cleanest run and moved past crossing the line. Once again, Harry gathered speed through Gerard's (several drivers should be watching the video for tips), but Xavier this time had just enough space to claim the line at the Esses. Despite clear road, Andrew had not been able to make a break, and another good end to the lap brought Xavier back onto his tail, and a better run through Gerard's gave him a clear lead for the Esses. Harry had a good stab at following through as well, but Andrew braked later. Indeed, too late as he had to avoid Xavier's tail and jinked to the high line. The two Coopers surged to the line side-by-side, Andrew having lost time, but carrying more speed

on exit from the Hairpin, so he was able to turn in to the first corner in the lead. And that was just Lap 10!

Once again, Harry had a good line through Gerard's, carrying a speed around the outside, but able to dip inside Andrew as the latter drifted to the kerb. Andrew held on, though, and the trio were once again nose to tail and now catching Simon Hewes. He was very careful to make space for the two regulars before turning in to the hairpin, but missed the rookie and baulked him on the apex – that's not to criticise Simon, as all drivers know that mirrors are of limited use on a 500, and he could hardly have expected three cars to come by in such close company. The upshot, though was Harry crossed the line 1.5 seconds back.

With the two older hands still battling, Harry knuckled down for two clean, fast laps, just about back on the train as they started Lap 14. Andrew, realising his over-gearred JAP could not overwhelm Xavier's Staride was trying alternative lines in search of higher exit speeds at most turns, but never quite gaining enough. Completing the lap the three came across Duncan once again, this time through the Devil's Elbow ending the lap. This time it was Andrew slightly caught out, a slight lift and jink back to the left gave Harry his opportunity. Despite having to take a wide line around Gerard's to not clash with Andrew, he completed that move and carried great speed down the back straight to pass Xavier. Xavier got the power down better and pulled back alongside exiting the Elbow. Harry must have been mighty relieved to see the chequered flag out (or perhaps he would have preferred continuing until they ran out of fuel!) and took the final podium place by half a car length. Andrew too would perhaps have preferred one more lap, as he also had a great final corner and was partly alongside Xavier, all three covered by just 0.44 seconds.

Unsurprisingly, all three were cock-a-hoop at such a great battle which as well as being so close was scrupulously clean by all three drivers. All were heartily congratulated by all the supporters who had been transfixed by one of the finest battles we have seen in many a year. Roll on the final round at Castle Combe!

P	Driver	Car	Time	Q	Time
1	Alex Wilson	Cooper Mk X	15 laps 15' 14.81"	1	59.06"
2	Simon Dedman	Cooper Mk X	+ 19.54"	3	1' 00.66"
3	Harry Painter	Cooper Mk VII	+ 30.10"	8	1' 03.66"
4	Xavier Kingsland	Staride Mk 3	+ 30.28"	7	1' 03.62"
5	Andrew Turner	Cooper Mk IX	+30.55"	4	1' 01.27"
6	Richard Fuller	Cooper Mk VIII	+ 51.22"	6	1' 02.87"
7	Andy Raynor	Kieft CK54	+55.90"	9	1' 03.78"
8	Roy Hunt	Martin	14 laps	5	1' 02.31"
9	Stuart Wright	Flash Special	14 laps	10	1' 05.60"
10	Simon Hewes	Cooper Mk VIII	14 laps	12	1' 08.60"
11	Duncan Rabagliati	Comet	13 laps	14	1' 11.78"
R	Tom Waterfield	Cooper Mk IX	6 laps	2	59.21"
R	Richard Kelly	Cooper Mk V	4 laps	13	1' 09.93"
R	Jonathan Morris	Waye	3 laps	11	1' 06.17"
R	Simon Frost	CFS*	2 laps	15	1' 18.12"
NS	Kerry Horan	Trenberth	-	NT	-
NS	Brian Jolliffe	Cooper Mk VI*	-	NT	-
NA	Chris Wilson	Mackson	-	-	-
NA	Michael Brough	BJR	-	-	-
FL	Tom Waterfield	Cooper Mk IX	59.29s	-	

Race Distance: 15 minutes

*Simon Frost and Brian Jolliffe were in the Invitation Class, running JAP Twins.