

Brands Hatch July 14th/15th/16th 2023.

The weather as predicated was showery, sunny and windy in equal proportions and probably not as bad as forecasted [it rarely is these days....] for the double header at Brands last Friday.

Practice was on a very wet track so everyone was driving very gingerly. Mike Folwer did a ballerina pirouette going into McLaren from Surtees and luckily no one else was involved so he would be starting from the back of the grid. Richard De la Roche had been doing rain dances behind his motorhome and took pole position nearly 2 seconds quicker than anyone else. The whole field was tip toing around the circuit in such slippery conditions.

Race 1 was in the early afternoon and the track had dried a little with the warm wind but was still unpredictable. Lap times had sped up by nearly 10mph. Richard took the lead from the start but was soon overtaken by George Shackleton through paddock bend and Alex Wilson following closely they spent the whole race dicing with each other and the lead must have changed 5 or 6 times making for a very exciting race. Richard hung on to 3rd place whilst James Wilson dropped out as his primary chain came off its sprockets but miraculously remained intact. A bit of a mystery as to how this happened.

Mike Fowlers car developed a mechanical problem reinforced when the drain plug was examined after the race and seen to contain metal particles...wisely it was laid up for further investigation. Xavier had his inlet manifold snap so was out of the race. The ebullient Mike Doodeman had a problem when his gear change lever snapped but he made it back into the paddock. Chris Wilson, Simon Dedman and Richard Fuller followed the leaders a few seconds behind. At the front the dicing between Alex and George continued with George taking the win in his Cooper Mk 11 only 1.6 seconds ahead of Alex in the Martin. Third place was Richard De la Roche. A close and exciting race made all the more challenging by the wet conditions.

Race 2 was later in the afternoon and initially the track was perfect however with a couple of rain showers during the race it soon became slippery and wet. George took off at a fast pace and soon overtook Richard with Alex hard on his heels picking their way through the slippery track using all the width and slowing carefully on the corners. Richard then did a spin at Surtees and regained the track only to continue to Clark Curve where there was a coming together of Richard Fuller, Iain Rowley driving the Comet and Richard in his Cooper. The Course Car was put out and everyone slowed for a couple of laps whilst the track was cleared all drivers were fine and then the race continued for 3 more laps with George managing to hold the lead and win by 3.3 seconds from Alex at the finishing line. Third place was James Wilson in his Cooper. Another close exciting race.

We were very privileged to have Steve Lewis Evans, Stuarts Lewis Evans son to present the glassware and the Lewis Evans Trophy to George.

On Saturday Xavier had organised a Lunchtime Parade driving the track anti clockwise ie the wrong way around as it was pre 1954. Other 500's joined in Mike Wood, John Potts driving David Baldocks Cooper T4, and his Monaco was in the paddock awaiting a new gearbox. Gilbert Lenoir in the Terigi, Stuart Barnes and Richard Robarts. George Shackleton was in the ex Kenneth McAlpine JBS fresh from a rebuild and the first time to turn a wheel since its last race in 1954..... Sadly the pace car was restricted to 25mph which is too slow for 500's and the time on track was reduced as well so despite Xavier's valiant efforts to get agreements from the organisers it was a little disappointing but this did not detract from a great weekends racing.



