

MGCC Race Report – Round 6, Snetterton

With five rounds at five different circuits already behind us the stage was set for the MG Car Club season finale. Snetterton was the scene of the action, and with a number of championships still to be decided it was always going to be a thrilling adventure – and we were certainly not disappointed.

An eventful start to the day saw two of the MG Trophy boys sent into a whirl, when their cars rolled during qualifying at Murray's. With much work ahead of them, Dan Jones and Tom Butler had a race on their hands to repair their stricken machines in time for their first race. Jones needed a new roll cage in record time, and with Trophy regular Paul Luti unable to race at Snetterton, the Dreadnought Racing team were at a loss and decided to lend their skills to help Jones' cause.

The first race of the day was the Aero Racing Morgan Challenge, with the series set to culminate amidst the Norfolk countryside.

After a 15 minute qualifying session, it was Keith Ahlers who topped the times. A speedy getaway from pole position gave him the edge into turn one, and he was rarely challenged for the 30 minutes that followed, building up to a 36 second advantage as the chequered flag fell.

Behind, Matthew Wurr held onto his second place start, from where he tried to upset Ahlers rhythm. However, as the leader tightened his grasp, Wurr settled into a comfortable second place, ahead of Roger Whiteside in third.

The Porsche Club Championship enjoyed a thrilling end to their season, with two action packed races. Race one saw Craig Wilkins assert his dominance early on when he displaced pole sitter Tom Bradshaw for the lead. From here, Wilkins held onto control as Bradshaw and Peter Morris engaged in battle behind.

Before long, Morris was just 0.8 seconds adrift of Wilkins, with Bradshaw close behind in third. As the lead trio challenged one another for supremacy, drama found Morris when an engine blow out caused his Porsche 996 C2 to spill oil on the circuit. With the slippery surface playing havoc for other drivers, a red flag was thrown with less than four minutes to go. With the race stopped, the final positions were decided from the previous lap, crowning Wilkins as victor over Morris and Bradshaw.

Race two saw chaos find its way to Wilkins and Bradshaw, as both fell by the wayside during the final race of the season.

Wilkins again looked to have the upper hand, however as the end of the race came into sight all was not well when he dived into the pits. In his absence, it was Mark McAleer who inherited control to win the final race of the season. Marcus Carniel took second, whilst Richard Ellis completed the podium.

A disappearing act for title pretender Bradshaw in the final race ensured John McCullagh became the 2013 Porsche Club Championship with Pirelli Champion.

Saturday saw the Peter Best Insurance Challenge race combined with the M.A.G BCV8 Championship. An impressive grid for each series gave a tremendous field of different machinery and two very exciting races in one.

With the BCV8 machines stationed at the front end of the grid, it was Spencer McCarthy who got the jump on Russell McCarthy from the off. However, as the race unfolded the pair engaged in a gripping high speed chase, which saw them swap positions countless times. With virtually nothing between them, it was Russell who edged ahead when it counted, to steal victory from his namesake. Rob Spencer wrestled his way to third place, ahead of Ian Prior and early front runner Ollie Neaves.

Alan Brooke was the dominant force in the PBIC section of the race, finishing 19 seconds ahead of his nearest challenger James Walpole. The latter held off Shaun Holmes for second place, whilst Holmes had his hands full with the chasing James Darby, just over one second adrift in fourth place.

Racing on their own on day two, the PBIC boys again provided a thrilling end to their season, with Brooke crowned victor once more, chased home by Holmes.

With Darby soon up into third place and Peter Bramble settled in fourth, the scrap to watch was that between Nick Arden, Richard Wilson and James Walpole. Keen to enhance his title bid, Walpole made the most of a brave move to elevate himself above Arden and Wilson. With a fifth place finish to his name, Walpole became the 2013 PBIC Champion, despite later admitting to leaving his handbrake on during the race.

The season finale for the MG Trophy collective saw a smaller than normal entry for Class B, with many unable to make the journey to Norfolk. A commanding performance from Chris Bray saw him romp to victory from pole position in race one. After some hard work from their respective teams, and some assistance from the redundant Dreadnought Racing team, Dan Jones and Tom Butler managed to get their MG ZR's race ready after rolling during qualifying.

As the first race unfolded, Ross Makar launched an attack on Bray for honours. Behind, trouble arose for Doug Cole when he suddenly dropped from 3rd place to 10th after drama in the opening few laps; however after a hard charge through the field Cole fought his way back to 3rd just in time to sweep past the chequered flag.

Bray again dominated in race two, by taking the final race win of the season, but it was Andrew Ashton who secured the 2013 MG Trophy championship title.

Bray led the way into turn one on the opening tour, chased once again by Makar and Cole. Before long, Cole was again the man to watch when he dived past Makar for second. As he trailed Bray by just 0.8 seconds we were in for another thrilling Trophy finale, but Bray was soon able to break free, leaving Cole and Makar to battle amongst themselves.

With just two minutes to go, Makar saw his chance to retake second place, as he and Cole wrestled their way to the chequered flag. Alistair Rushforth romped to victory in Class C, ahead of Richard Marsh and Butler. Jones again succumbed to bad luck when his car suffered more damage ending his season abruptly.

An entertaining outing for the first Lackford Engineering MG Midget & Sprite Challenge saw David Weston crowned victorious, ahead of Edward Reeve and Martin Morris after 13 laps of full throttle, high speed action.

After a synchronised spin from Pippa Cow and Timothy Dallas-Cairns on lap one at Nelson, the race was immediately neutralised by appearance of the safety car. At the restart it was Reeve who leapt to the fore, soon followed by pole sitter Paul Sibley.

As Reeve, Sibley and Weston toured the circuit it was Sibley's turn for some bad luck, when he suddenly slowed before diving into the pits. With a potential recurring throttle problem the cause of his woes, Sibley was forced out of the running, leaving Reeve and Weston to battle it out.

With the final few minutes soon upon us, Reeve and Weston swapped places numerous times on route to the chequered flag. However, as the flag fell it was Weston who had edged ahead, just in time to taste victory.

With Sibley unable to take the start in race two, it was down to Reeve, Weston and Neat to decipher honours.

Early leader Reeve was soon forced to relinquish his throne when Weston charged past into the lead. This left Reeve in a thrilling tussle for second place with Martin Morris and Tom Neat. Reeve's position soon came under threat once again, when Morris elevated himself to second place, before retiring shortly afterwards on lap five.

Before long, the rhythm began to settle down, as Weston again romped to victory. Reeve held onto a somewhat solitary second, whilst newly crowned 2013 Champion Neat completed his season with a third place.

Richard Bridge led home Cow and Phil Attwood, whilst Richard Perry overcame his intermittent fuel gremlin from Saturday to finish seventh. Nicolas Maduz completed Class E, while John Bridge scored Class D honours. A close battle in Class C saw Edward Easton sneak past when Carl Chadwick endured a bounce across the grass at Murrays in the closing stages.

Tom Smith found his way to victory in the first Ecurie GTS race. A fierce launch towards the first corner saw Smith immediately steal the edge, which he held until the chequered flag came into sight, 30 minutes later.

As Smith disappeared into the distance, the tussle for second was the one to watch. Malcolm Gammons and Rod Begbie were the soldiers in question, as they battled their way around the Snetterton circuit. Before long, Gammons' quest was eased when Begbie took to the pits with six minutes to go.

With his former challenger out of the running, Gammons found himself wrestling with Peter Barnard. As the pair sampled one another's positions the scrap concluded with Gammons ahead, Barnard third and Pete Foster fourth.

Race two was very much focused on Gammons and Barnard, with the pair spending much of the race side by side in battle once again.

Separated at most by 0.2 seconds, the duo managed to swap places a number of times, but it was Gammons who led the way past the flag, a mere 0.109 seconds ahead of the chasing Barnard. Foster held on for third place, ahead of John Yea and David Russell-Wilks, who elevated himself to fifth in the final stages as Robi Bernberg slipped into retirement.

The sole Motoring Classics Thoroughbred Sports Car Championship outing was an eventful one, with minimal racing laps due to a safety car appearance.

Spencer McCarthy and Russell McCarthy again engaged in combat, as Spencer led the way. As the McCarthy boys circled drama hit when Spencer's MGB GT V8 was engulfed in flames. As he pulled off just before Nelson, the marshals and circuit staff extinguished his car, before a quick release of the safety car saw conditions neutralised. With nothing more than a two lap dash to the flag left, Russell was crowned the winner, ahead of Ollie Neaves and Rob Spencer.

Tom Sanderson was the dominant force in the sole Drayton Manor Park MG Metro Cup race. After stealing pole position on Sunday morning, the Rover Metro GTi pilot exploded to a 17 second lead in just 14 laps.

Second place was up for grabs in the early stages, as Mike Williams and Dick Trevett challenged one another for the privilege. As the second half of the race came into sight, Williams had found his way back ahead of Trevett, where he stayed until that familiar flag ended their fun.

Thomas Grainger battled to a fourth place finish, ahead of Jack Ashton who had made his way up from seventh on the grid.

As the mid afternoon sunshine blanketed the Snetterton circuit, the final race of the 2013 MGCC season got underway. The prestigious British Motor Heritage 4 Hour Relay Race ended the season in the finest of fashions, with an impressive 23 team grid in charge of providing the action.

After the qualifying sessions, each team nominated their first driver, with the grid formed on those drivers' fastest times. This led to Richard's Racers, a team consisting of Morgans, starting on pole courtesy of Richard Thorne.

The early stages were very much a battle between Richard's Racers and the Morgan Magic team, with the latter eventually gaining control. However, as the lead Morgan 4/4 of Tim Harrison led the way, his pace was halted when the safety car was released after the ZR of John Brown hit the barrier at Coram. With officials on the scene to repair the barrier, conditions were kept steady for 18 minutes, before racing resumed.

As the relay portion of the race came into play, the pitlane became a hive of activity, with other drivers thrown into the mix. Untouched by their rivals for many laps, the Morgan Magic team stretched their advantage to 58 seconds, until another safety car appearance dampened their hopes once more. The shared Trophy Guys car of Malcolm Gammons and John Brown suffered more bad luck when it lost a wheel, bringing out the pace car.

As the safety car returned to the pits Morgan Magic followed for yet another stop, relinquishing the lead with just one hour to go. With free reign, the V8 Wide Boys happily took control, ahead of Morgan Magic. After developing a gap it was the V8 Wide Boys' turn to have their pace hampered, when the safety car appeared for the third time. Despite the hurdles, the V8 Wide Boys held onto their superior position on track courtesy of their drivers Ollie Neaves, Paul White, Simon Cripps and Rob Spencer.

Morgan Magic closed the gap to the leaders in the final five minutes, but settled for second as time ran out. M Sport Racing finished third, ahead of The Trophy Guys in fourth place.

With the handicap results taken into consideration, it was Team CMC's David Coulthard, Julia Penfold, Helen Waddington, David Williams and Dan Surridge who came out on top, ahead of Stuart's Muscateers and M Sport Racing.

The chequered flag has now fallen on the 2013 MG Car Club season. It seems like only yesterday we all arrived at Donington Park with new machinery ready for a brand new season. Well done to all of our 2013 Champions, and a big thank you to all drivers, teams and family members who have made our season fantastic yet again. We look forward to seeing you all in 2014 for even more fun.

Leanne Fahy.