The Old Order Changeth ...........

Being an account of various happenings at a place in the Midlands.

Donington was the scene of the latest two rounds of the Morgan Aero Challenge with a rather scanty entry lacking many of the usual suspects.

Ahlers was absent, of Bevan and Baileys we were bereft, a dearth of Dearnley, gone were the Goddards, Green not seen, we lacked Lees and Lindsay, while Sherry and Sumner joined Sebba in shunning affairs.

Nevertheless those who turned up faced a cold, windy day with constant threat of rain that happily failed to materialise until after Morgan involvement had finished.

Qualifying was as one might expect, given the entry, Russell Paterson’s Class ‘A’ on pole with Elliot Paterson alongside in his ARV6, an exuberant Tony Hirst on row two with Roger Whiteside. A whole load of Class ‘B’ cars filled Rows 3 to 5 with Tim Ayres leading Class ‘C’, and a lot of other people completing the grid, no doubt full details can be found somewhere on the internet if anyone should have sufficient interest to look.

From lights out Russell launched his V8 into an immediate lead with Junior’s ARV in hot pursuit, but unable to challenge. Tony Hirst was running a strong third with Dominic House and Andrew Thompson following on, while Roger Whiteside languished further back after a poor start. As the race progressed Roger made his way up to third place at the flag his recovery aided by the demise of Elliot Paterson who, on lap 9 had a half shaft break with the loss of a wheel, and of course – retirement. A lap earlier the two Tims had come together as Ayres and Parsons bumped into each other and ended up in a gravel bed somewhere in Derbyshire. Yet again Craig Hamilton-Smith drew the short straw in the UWR Morgan camp, forced to pull out with a split fuel tank.

Amid all of the excitement Russell went on his merry way to take a fine win 15 seconds ahead of Tony Hirst, with Roger a further 7 seconds back. Dominic House bagged fourth with a swiftly closing Simon Orebi Gann getting the better of Andrew Thompson for fifth after a fine drive in his shiny new ARV6. Simon Baines, Phil Thomas, and John Milbank completed the un-lapped runners, while another good performance from Alexander Laidlaw saw him in tenth place and first in Class ‘R’. Philip Tisdall was first of the lapped cars, winning Class ‘C’, Father Laidlaw next up took Class ‘H’ honours, stalked by Greg Parnell, Peter Cole, and Brett Syndercombe all managing 14 laps. Paul Bryan and Alan House rounded out the field, but Peter Rafter having dutifully ensured that this time his car did actually have petrol in the tank had something in the engine break as he fired up his Plus 8. The end of his day.
Once the dust had settled, the stewards wanted a word with the two Tims the upshot being that Mr Ayres was awarded two penalty points on his licence, while Mr Parsons was completely exonerated. Most unusual for Morgan drivers, I suppose.

Unfortunately the various shenanigans meant that Paterson E, Tim Ayres, Craig H-S, and Peter Rafter were unable to start race two, as indeed was our winner Russell Paterson. Russell was also running the Mog in another race during which the engine expired, apparently spreading a deal of oil on the circuit, so a much reduced field was left to start the second round of the day.

**Race the Second.**

A rolling start was used for this race (they might have used one for the first one, but I was too far away to see). Tony Hirst led the pack around with no Russell Paterson alongside. Dominic House headed row two with Roger “I’m no good at rolling starts” Whiteside, and the rest lining up in the order they finished the first round. Sure enough as the colourful string of Morgans streamed past on the first lap it was the Class ‘B’ cars of Tony and Dominic House fighting for the lead with the black ‘A’ some way back behind Andrew Thompson.

On lap six Roger used the power of the bigger car to surge past Dominic into the chicane to take second place before performing a similar manoeuvre two laps later to pass Tony’s garish ARV6 into the lead. Our celebrity actor was in no mood to succumb that easily and the UWR livered car chased the Techniques prepared V8 all the way to the flag finishing less the a third of a second in arrears, in fact Roger’s lead across the line was never greater the 0.9 seconds. Dominic held on well in his bright blue Lightweight taking third place less than 2.5 seconds adrift from Roger. Simon Orebi Gann overcame Andrew Thompson for fifth, both in ARV’s, while Simon Baines almost caught Andrew on the line with just a sheet of Bronco between them. John Milbank, Alex Laidlaw, and Phil Thomas filled the next few places. Tenth spot was taken by Greg Parnell, but only just as he was almost pipped to the post by a hard charging Tim Parsons. Following his contretemps in race one Tim, with sights set firmly on overall Championship honours, started at the back of the grid determined to make as much progress as possible, with Peter Cole as a main target. When apprised of this Peter sporting said he would not hinder Tim’s progress, appreciating his need for as many points as possible.
Tim was the last un-lapped runner with Peter leading the rest home followed by Bret Syndercombe, who took Class ‘D’, Phil Tisdall, sole Class ‘C’ entrant, Kelvin Laidlaw winner of Class ‘H’ (?), Paul Bryan, and Alan House acting as Lanterne Rouge. Happily all starters finished what they started.

A trip across the gravel at the Chicane was explained by Phil Thomas after the race;
“ I saw Greg with smoking tyres alongside me, and knew there was no way to avoid him so took a trip across the beach. I chased him down and Greg claimed that he gave me the place back! Yeah!”

Tim Parsons; “I gave it my best, I wished there had been ten minutes more.”
He is still hoping to get more points with an outside chance of winning the overall title.
Simon Orebi Gann; “I had a lonely race, but I enjoyed it, I would have liked it to rain.” This was only Simon third race in his ARV6.
Tony Hirst was well pleased with his brace of second places and was full of praise for the UWR team for getting the car sorted after many niggling problems. He was “Very proud of the team.”

Some may have wondered about Mr Hirst’s speed in qualifying, and the explanation is quite simple apparently, however to a mere journo it is not easy to adequately describe the phenomenon. It has something to do with ‘wedding tackle’ and a submarine belt being too tight, this it seems can be quite .... er .. uncomfortable in certain areas of the anatomy! The end result being one is glad to get the session over, hence the speed!!!
I am not sure that this would be a recommended method of improving one’s position on the grid, however, (I am grateful to Simon OG for help in understanding the problem)

There was the inevitable ceremony of prize giving to endure before making one’s way home, and it was the usual distribution of blue boxes to assorted drivers that delayed departure. I can’t be bothered to record each and every presentation of boxes, however, it should be mentioned that Simon Baines was awarded the bottle of plonk for Driver of the Race, Round 1, and Andrew Thompson that for Round 2. Now I have no knowledge of the state of marital bliss in the Thompson household, but I do wonder if this is just to give Andrew a chance to kiss his wife? Well everybody else seems to!!!

Last Round is at Snetterton on September 30th.

Do not forget to sort out your photos for the Gilbert Trophy, I should hate to see Dominic win again.