

Round 2, MG Classic, Manfeild, Nov. 2020

Three weeks after a very successful season opener we were back at Manfeild for round two at the 35th MG Classic. This has been such a great event in the past and with over 350 cars, 4 races and a qualifying session, we had a busy weekend ahead of us.

For this round we were joined by the Formula Open (FONZ) and Clubman cars. As a result, we enjoyed a strong entry of 22 cars.

The race and starting format were changed so that the fastest FONZ cars were first across the starting line, followed by Sports Cars which were 200 meters behind in a second grid. All races for the weekend were only 6 laps as opposed to our usual 8-10, so it was going to be sprint racing with a capital S!

Fortunately, the weather turned out to be fine after an earlier long forecast had predicted rain, although in typical Manfeild fashion the dark clouds looming on Saturday did keep us guessing for a while.

Mark Galvin had put in a massive effort to have his car running again with further modifications that would hopefully help overcome his mechanical issues.

Peter Zivkovic had worked tirelessly to have Dean McCarroll's and Richard Kelly's Junos repaired at Atomise HQ. Richard had to make do with a non-preferred 3rd gear ratio due to shipping delays.

Nick Barker was quietly optimistic that his oil surge problems had been resolved on his Reynard.

Leo Francis had repaired his gearbox and Jeff Sharp had resolved his fueling problems.

Tim Sillay also joined us for this round in his very smart looking Mallock.

Tim O'Connor made a huge effort to bring 4 cars to the circuit, 2 TRS cars, the Caterham SP300R and his Ferrari which ran in The Allcomers class.

Grant Rivers made a welcome return with his Swift and Clubman's drivers Kevin Hunt, Craig Sawyer, James Coup and Alister Chalmers also joined us on the grid.

All said and done, a lot of people had put in massive amounts of time and effort to get their cars ready for racing and it was shaping up to be a fun meeting.

Qualifying

Due to the large number of cars on track with varying degrees of pace it made it difficult for drivers to get a clear qualifying lap. Dean set the benchmark at 1m 5.5s on a track which appeared to be slower than the previous meetings times.

Josh Donohue and Sam McNeill were next, approximately 1 second behind.

Mark had a very disappointing run and stopped without completing a lap when he heard some ominous noises coming from his gearbox and decided to err on the side of caution, withdrawing his car for the weekend.

Robert Hulme headed up the next group which included Nick, Richard, Gary Rush, Geoff Harriman and Guy Griffiths.

Pete De Joux and Tim Sillay had a good run and were only separated by a small margin.

Jeff was fastest of the next group, ahead of an in-form Leo, Steve Sharp, and a rapidly improving Mike Greenfield and Grant.

James was the fastest of the clubman's cars followed by Alister whose Caterham R400 was faster down the straight than most of the sports cars. Kevin Hunt and Craig Sawyer posted similar times.

Race 1

As later races were to prove, the race to the first corner was to have a significant impact on the finishing positions.

Dean made a clean start to then catch and split the finishing positions of the two leading FONZ cars.

Grant Dalton started from the back of the field as he missed qualifying on Friday and did very well moving quickly through the field to finish 5th overall.

Robert did well to hold out a fast-starting Pete into the first corner, and then set off to round up the slower FONZ cars.

Much of the action centered around Pete, Nick and Richard. Pete held out Nick for all of the race while Richard managed to slip past Nick on the 4th lap going into Higgins. They maintained this order until the final corner where Nick made a run on Richard to pass and pull ahead. Richard then pushed hard only to be beaten across the finish line by the slimmest of margins.

Steve held off Leo by a very small margin with Mike Greenfield a short distance further back.

James Coup was the first of the clubman's, ahead of Jeff.

Race 2

Grant was first into turn 1 and lead to the finish, despite Dean's best efforts to regain the lead.

At the start Nick positioned himself close to Robert so that Pete did not have a shortcut ahead. He was able to hold off a challenge from Robert into Splash and was able to maintain a small buffer until the finish line. Richard in his pursuit of Robert set his best time of the meeting, and even a PB if I'm correct?

Tim Sillay made a great start only to let Mike, Steve, Leo and Grant through on lap 3. James finished ahead of Alister to again be the first clubman's.

Race 3

The TRS cars of Geoff and Guy had an unfortunate incident in the first corner which brought out the safety car. On the restart Grant was able to take the lead from Dean, who then fought hard to regain the lead, but in an attempt to pass on the outside of Higgins ran wide off the circuit and onto the grass.

In the meanwhile, Robert eased off concerned about the re-entry of Dean onto the track. This brief pause was enough to allow Nick through.

On the next lap coming out of the Hairpin, Dean slowed as his car had gone into limp mode due to overheating from grass in the radiator inlet. Robert eased off the throttle allowing Richard to pass.

Tim Sillay finished just ahead of the dueling Sharps, followed closely by Leo and Mike. James spun which enabled Kevin to be the first clubman's across the finish.

It was a busy race indeed.

Race 4

Grant made an excellent start to lead a very determined Dean. On lap3, Dean made a bold move around the outside of Grant in turn 2 to take the lead.

Nick had made a great start to lead Robert only for the engine to cut out across the finish line.

Richard unfortunately retired before the start with a flat battery.

The next group was headed by Jeff, then Steve and Leo.

The Clubman's finishing order was James, Kevin followed by Craig.

Summary

While the track conditions ensured that there would be no lap records, there was some great racing and spirited driving by many.

While Grant had better straight-line speed, Dean enjoyed better braking and cornering making for good close racing between the two.

Robert, Richard and Nick were locked in a three-way tussle for the next positions with very little difference between them.

Pete was a consistent finisher and had a great first race.

Tim, after a long break from racing, showed that he has the potential to push further up the field.

Steve, Leo, Jeff and Mike all enjoyed some good racing with finishing positions being shared around.

It was great to have the clubman's cars joining us.

Many thanks to Elspeth and Steve for organizing dinner on Saturday night where there was much merriment and the odd tale was spun.

The 3rd round is the HRC Tasman Revival 27th– 28th February 2021 at Pukekohe. Unless you are going to the South Island, in which case Sports Cars will be running at the Christchurch Skope meeting on the 5th February 2021 and at Timaru a week later. Richard Kelly is the front and centre on the poster for the Timaru meeting.

Have a wonderful relaxing, enjoyable and safe festive season and we will see you all in the New Year!