

Brands Hatch 12th & 13th May

At last some decent weather. The sun shone more often than not although the temperature was kept down by a north westerly wind cutting across the paddock on Saturday. Conditions on Friday had been similar for those testing on the busy Kent track. Such was the traffic that not many laps were available due to red flags but nonetheless there was enough time to sort out some problems. Steve Everson proto car was still being finished, in true Clubmans spirit, at midnight on Thursday and lack of static set up time manifested itself in a ride height problem, which required fairly major surgery to correct. Marcus Bicknell found his splitter running on the ground but was able to sort that out, while a welcome sight was the well presented Gem of Adrian Langridge out on track and going well until he threw it at the gravel trap at Paddock. A place he was to become more familiar with over the weekend.

Also a welcome sight in the paddock on Saturday were so many visiting Clubmans drivers coming to see how things are going and even more pleasing that of them, Brendan Herd and Howard Payne are expecting to be out at the next round at Silverstone.

Qualifying race 1 Saturday

13 cars including Spencer McCarthy running his A class Classic in Proto and Rod Player in Clive Woods B Sport car running in the invitation class set out to qualify. First casualty was Steve Everson when the rear suspension failed and the car was retired for the weekend. Paul Gibson was fastest as expected but even he was not without drama. On his first lap a front tyre deflated due to a valve failure and his team had to rush back to the paddock to fetch a spare wheel which at Brands is no short distance. However once this was fitted he was able to get a further 8 laps in and record a 46.377, fastest official recorded time for a Clubmans car. Ian Crombie was second quickest with a 48.204 which considering he is somewhat down on power to the other Protos was a good effort. Spencer McCarthy put in a solid run to a 48.479 while the first of the Cup cars, Dan Gibson, was next with 49.276. Alex Champkin stopped early as he ran hard over a kerb and thought he had a brake problem but was still second fastest cup closely followed by Adrian Langridge, Barry Webb and Michelle Hayward who had never driven at Brands before. Despite having oil and water mixing in the engine Jason Money was fast getting to grips with the Mk26 Mallock and was just outside the 49s with a 50.037 while the car's owner, Marcus Bicknell, was struggling with a collapsed floor in his Honda powered Proto was next up. Peter Richings was slightly off the pace at what he admits is his bogey track and Rod Player, who is still learning the car brought up the rear.

Race 1 Saturday

Rod Player was late to the start following wheel bearing problems and started from the pit lane quite some time after the pack had left but nonetheless got a good cheer from the knowledgeable crowd for his effort. Paul Gibson took off in the lead that was not to be lost and eventually won by 26 seconds and a fastest lap of 47.125. Spencer McCarthy was a solid second but could not relax with Ian Crombie ever present in his mirrors. A slow starting Marcus Bicknell started to move up the field from his lowly grid position on lap four to finish fifth. Battle of the race though was for seventh, eighth and ninth. Adrian Langridge was followed closely by Barry Webb and Michelle Hayward with just a couple of seconds separating them for lap after lap. Hayward got along side Webb at Clearways on lap five but Barry held on to the position this time. As Michelle became more and more confident on this twisting circuit she gradually closed in on Barry again. Getting alongside on the outside of Clearways and holding station all the way down the straight she out braked Webb to go through to eighth at Paddock on lap nine. She was then able to close on Langridge but was slowed at Graham Hill bend when being lapped by Paul Gibson and was not able to close in again before the flag. So Andy Langridge was able to finish sixth, despite earlier finding punctures in both brand new front tyres and had to resort to used ones resulting in understeer throughout the race. Alex Champkin who finished second in Cup, chased the class winner Dan Gibson all race but Dan eased out the gap and Alex finished some six seconds adrift. Paul Freeman had taken the cylinder head off Jason Money's car to fix the oil, water mix but a fast starting Peter Richings got the jump on Jason at the start and the two would have an entertaining race long battle albeit for 10th and eleventh. Rod Player took the last place having given the rest of the field half a lap start but was pleased to see his lap times improving through the race.

Rain Water Harvesting Driver of the Day, Marcus Bicknell

Qualifying Race 2 Sunday.

The chill wind that had been present on Saturday had eased and shifted to south westerly so it was almost like summer. Paul Gibson kept his session down to seven laps but still achieved pole with a slower time of 46.884. Spencer McCarthy was second quickest on 48.224 but this time Marcus Bicknell who stopped early with a misfire was still third less than a tenth behind Spencer and demoting Ian Crombie to fourth. Michelle Hayward, winner at Croft, pitted with a sticking throttle but went on to be the leading Cup car with 49.336 with Adrian Langridge just behind pipping Alex Champkin for sixth on the last lap. Daniel Gibson surprised everyone by only managing eighth having made set up changes which went the wrong way. Ever improving Jason Money was ninth on 49.716 with Barry Webb just over a tenth behind and a further tenth back again was Peter Richings. The whole Cup class was separated by 0.6 second! Rod Player again improved on his personal best time for last position on the grid.

Race 2 Sunday

The Honda Mallock of Marcus Bicknell is not easy to get off the line and a slow get away caused a big shuffle of the pack on the first lap at paddock which allowed Adrian Langridge and Dan Gibson to pass Michelle Hayward. This was to be the start of another titanic battle for the Cup class. While Paul Gibson went away chased by Spencer McCarthy the rest of the proto cars fell away. Ian Crombie went off into the gravel at paddock on lap 4 but did recover to finish an eventual seventh while Marcus Bicknell suffered a front suspension failure on lap 10 and retired. Even McCarthy was to be denied a finish when his engine ran a bearing on the last lap. But in Cup it was all getting very close indeed. Dan's Nemesis chased down Adrian's Gem who also had Michelle's Mallock snapping at his heels, On lap six The Nemesis lunged down the outside of the Gem at Paddock and held on to take the class lead. Alex Champkin now caught this group to join in the fun. As the group closed up Hayward was harrying Langridge but had to be careful of Champkin just behind. On lap nine Langridge ran slightly wide at paddock, clipping the gravel which was all Hayward needed to slip by on the run up to Druids and she set about closing on Gibson. On lap 12 Adrian Langridge put the Gem well into the gravel at Paddock but all credit to him he got out but a rear pushrod had broken so he was forced to retire. Visibly faster than Gibson through paddock Hayward gradually closed to within a second but could make no further progress and this was ensured when a slowing Paul Gibson held her up along Cooper Straight.

With all this going on elsewhere in the pack, on lap 12 Jason Money slipped past Barry Webb while being lapped by Paul Gibson at Clearways to finish fifth while Peter Richings was eighth and Rod Player was ninth.

Rain Water Harvesting Driver of the Day, Jason Money

All in all a great weekend racing and we are looking forward to the next round at Silverstone on June 10th. See you all there.