

Britsports – Brands Hatch, April 16

The blossoming Britsports and Gold Arts series arrived at Brands Hatch for the second of this season's EERC meetings. The bright sunny weather coincided with the 60th birthday of Jade stalwart Doug Setters, who told us that he hadn't raced at the Kent circuit since 1965! It was to be quite a different proposition for Doug forty years on, as he teamed up with son Chris.

A new addition to the Britsports field was the Honda-powered Norma M20, the Lourdes-built car to be piloted by Simon Phillips and Liz Halliday, who impressed last time out at Brands in a Radical.

Qualifying saw some of the series more established competitors assert themselves, and it was the black Juno SSV6 of Dominic Lesniewski and Adrian Holey that took pole position, with the sister car of Andreas Halkiopoulos and Dave Mountain in third. Splitting them was the fastest Radical of the session – the SR8 of Tim Greaves and Stuart Moseley. The father and son Setters pairing lined up fourth, exiling Michael Christopher and Ian Flux to row three in their Prosport LM3000.

Quickest in class two were Gary Ward and Bryce Wilson, claiming eighth overall, whilst the Westfield of Tony Michael saw off a class full of Caterhams to take the Gold Arts pole, in 20th spot.

A long day for Britcar campaigners Rupert Laslett and Alan Wilshire began eventfully when, caught out by Paddock Hill's undulations, they caused two Safety Car periods in the session, but were able to line up in 22nd place.

The beginning of race one took place without Andy Demetriou's Radical SR8, which he had qualified in sixth place. Having filled his car with gravel on Paddock Hill during the qualifying session, Demetriou failed to take up his grid slot, giving himself a steep hill to climb. Liz Halliday found herself needing a hand as the battery on the Norma failed on the grid, also putting her at a disadvantage.



The rest of the field were more successful at getting off the grid, most of all Radical expert Nick Padmore, who sliced down the inside of Paddock Hill Bend, catching out both Holey and Moseley. Dave Mountain sneaked into second place, and Chris Setters took third. Adrian Holey found himself

battling for seventh place with Bryce Wilson, who was leading class two, and Tony Michael immediately had two Caterhams to deal with, namely the Team Parker Racing car piloted by Philip Derby, and Gold Arts boss Doug Newman, fresh from his class win at Silverstone.



The race began to settle, with Padmore and Mountain (#4) on top form, the former struggling to maintain a two-second gap. Andy Demetriou rejoined the pack, as did Liz Halliday, and they set about pushing themselves up the order, although Demetriou was to echo his Silverstone performance, by interspersing impressive bursts of speed with frequent and costly visits to the pit lane.



As the minutes passed, Padmore was able to begin to pull away slightly from Mountain, and Adrian Holey managed to shake off Wilson, instead engaging in an entertaining dogfight with Tim Greaves. These developments were curtailed somewhat when Duncan Williams and Philip Derby found themselves on the grass on the outside of Clearways, after a “misunderstanding” about lapping. The incident was investigated by the stewards, and a sheepish Williams was anticipating a license endorsement as DSC left Brands Hatch, but EERC boss James Tucker was clear in his outlook: “We’ve had a few mutterings about speed differentials, but they’re part of endurance racing. Closing speeds are a lot higher at places like the Nurburgring and Le Mans, and it’s up to the faster driver to make sure there isn’t an accident.”

This caused the first appearance of the Safety Car, and Adrian Holey was the first to respond, by pitting immediately to allow Dom Lesniewski into the Juno.

The rest of the field piled into the pits, but the stops seemed unlucky for the Juno team. Lesniewski’s car temporarily stopped at Clearways, and Andreas Halkiopoulos, having jumped into the silver car previously occupied by Dave Mountain, returned to the pit lane, gesturing frantically at the back of the car as Lesniewski rumbled in to join him. Both cars were deemed to have suffered from the same problem – failing alternators, and both pulled into their garages so the team could attempt to cobble them together.

After a lengthy delay, racing resumed with Austin Reynolds (in the Padmore car) leading from Michael Christopher, yet to stop in the Prosport, and Tim Greaves, in the Bruichladdich SR8. Gary Ward led class two, ninth overall in the Bryce Wilson SR3, and thanks to a nicely-timed pitstop, Doug Newman found himself leading the Gold Arts class, though with Tony Michael hot on his heels.

With some of the cars now with differently paced drivers at the helm, a number of battles took place, and positions began to swap. Chris Setters, Chris Lake and James Richardson enjoyed a dogged scrap for sixth place, until Setters was forced to retire at Graham Hill Bend with a thrown rod in his Chrysler engine. That denied dad Doug a run out on his birthday. Richardson was to emerge the winner of this battle, as Lake, the victim of a handling problem, spun on two consecutive laps at Graham Hill Bend, allowing the #33 car a trouble-free run to sixth place.

Andy Demetriou wasn't letting his official position of 23rd place stop him from having fun, and set about dicing with the leaders, and having a stab at setting fastest lap, although this honour was to remain Dave Mountain's, long out of the running in the Juno.

Dom Lesniewski was back in the other Juno, however, although he didn't last long, coming to a halt on the Cooper Straight, before managing once again to crawl back to the pits.

This hold-up caused another brief Safety Car period, which enabled Michael Christopher to stop and hand over to Ian Flux, dropping the pair down to fifth, behind the SR8 of Radical co-founder Phil Abbott.



The restart saw a well-bunched field head into Paddock Hill Bend, through which everyone emerged safely. Unfortunately for him, Richard Fearn appeared to receive a nudge on the way down from Druids, and spun his blue SR8 onto the infield, losing five places in the process. Fearn wasn't blaming anyone later, however: "I flat-spotted the tyres earlier in the race, so I spun on my own!" he admitted. "My own car isn't ready yet, but this (SR8) is a fantastic machine – we were doing 49 second laps in the wet yesterday. It's stunning."

Up front, there were only ten minutes remaining, and the pressure was building on leader Austin Reynolds. Tim Greaves was the man on the move, and after a few tentative attempts, took the lead into Druids.

Another change at the front was the sudden disappearance from the leaderboard of Austin Kinsella, who, along with Richard Ince, had quietly pushed themselves up to third place. Gearbox problems with just eight minutes left saw them relegated to a 17th place finish.

This development promoted Phil Abbott to third, and he pushed hard to the end in an attempt to catch Reynolds for second, notably on the last lap, when he impressively reduced the gap from 3.1 to just 0.7s.



Greaves it was then, to take race one (in #76) , followed by Reynolds, Abbott, Ian Flux, and the class two winners, Tony and Simon Freeman, in the Pit Bull Racing Radical Prosport. Doug Newman was able to cling onto his Gold Arts lead, but was pressured to the finish by the trio of Tony Michael, Gary Furst, and Mike Jones.

Race two saw the addition to the field of the now-ready Radical SR3 of David Scott and Jonathan Coleman, who'd sat out race one after technical problems in practice caused them to qualify stone last. Also back, after some hard graft by the team, was the Holey / Lesniewski Juno, with the latter again at the wheel of car #66.

Fastest away from the start was polesitter Stuart Moseley, who led from Nick Dove and Tony Freeman, who'd both got the jump on Austin Reynolds into Paddock. David Scott had made a good start, but luck wasn't with him, and he was tapped into a spin at Druids, with it all to do again.

Reynolds seemed to struggle with the early running, and dropped down to sixth, passed on the way by a flying Lesniewski, desperate to make up time. He went on to pull the move of the race, bravely outbraking Dove into Paddock for second place.

Meanwhile, the Gold Arts gang were making steady progress upfield, with Doug Newman in 14th overall. Tony Michael had now emerged as his chief rival, two places behind but comfortably ahead of Mike Jones and Gary Furst, who were busy battling each other for 17th place, and swapping some praiseworthy overtaking moves.

Their reliability contrasted starkly with that of some of the faster cars, and as Andy Demetriou made yet another trip to the pit lane, this time gesturing at the rear of the car before being pushed into the garage, Andreas Halkiopoulos, in the silver Juno, got his first taste of action, with fifteen minutes elapsed. Unfortunately for the charismatic Greek driver, his steed was only to last for five laps, and he was forced to retire, greeting the news that the alternator problem was terminal with a dismissive shrug. Unfortunately, the car chose to stop just off-line at Clearways, so some interesting battles were put on hold. This was good news for Tony Michael, who'd finally managed to find a way past Doug Newman, but not so great for Dom Lesniewski, still struggling to overtake Stuart Moseley for the lead,

a friendly nudge not quite doing the trick.



As with race one, the Safety Car prompted a flood of pitstops, with Doug Newman (above) and Nick Dove among the first to react. Nick Padmore eagerly jumped into the Austin Reynolds SR8, only to jump out again as the team noticed a terminal oil leak, and Andy Demetriou decided to re-enter the fray, still doing his best to get his money's worth, although the Cypriot would visit the gravel before eventually ending the race in the pit lane.

With racing resumed, superior pit stops had enabled both Doug Newman to retake his Gold Arts lead, and Adrian Holey, to pass Moseley's car, which was now piloted by Tim Greaves. Moseley was confident, as the Juno's reliability problems all but ruled them out of overall victory: "The car's behaving itself very well, and we're in with a good chance", he said.



Ian Flux (above) was now the man to watch, and he began to catch Phil Abbott in second place, applying pressure on the Brabham straight, before taking the inside line into Paddock on the next lap. Flux was aided in his escape by contact between Abbott and the unlucky Richard Ince at Graham Hill Bend, which ended the race of the latter, and allowed Tim Greaves to pass the former for third.

Another stroke of luck for Flux and Christopher was the retirement of Adrian Holey, those alternator problems recurring for a final time, with just twelve minutes to go. This allowed Flux to cruise to the flag, followed home by Tim Greaves, Phil Abbott, and Martin Pluck, just beating the Freeman and Freeman duo to class two victory. Doug Newman retained his lead in Gold Arts, and also won his class on aggregate. Overall aggregate winners were Stuart Moseley and Tim Greaves. Having spent some time attempting to aggregate the times themselves, Michael Christopher and Ian Flux were not too disappointed with third in class one, behind the consistent Dove / Abbott pairing.

“Oh well, at least we won one of ‘em”, remarked the laconic Fluxie.

Aggregate class two honours went to Tony and Simon Freeman, in a close result. Had it not been for those battery problems, the Norma M20 of Liz Halliday and Simon Philips could have been much further up than fifth in class, but the pair enjoyed themselves, Halliday commenting, “I wish I could have had some more time in the car, I was just beginning to settle in”.

Liz Halliday, along with the rest of the Britsports and Gold Arts 100 field, will have plenty more time to compete at the next EERC meeting, at Snetterton on May 21

Mark Dishman

RESULTS:

BRITSPORTS 1:

- 1) Moseley/Greaves – Radical SR8 – 101 laps
- 2) Dove/Abbott – Radical SR8 – 101 laps
- 3) Christopher/Flux – Prosport LM3000 – 100 laps

BRITSPORTS 2:

- 1) Freeman/Freeman – Radical Prosport – 99 laps
- 2) Ward/Wilson – Radical SR3 – 98 laps
- 3) Hodges/Hodges – Radical Prosport – 98 laps

GOLD ARTS 100:

- 1) Doug Newman – Caterham Hayabusa – 95 laps
- 2) Tony Michael – Westfield SE – 94 laps
- 3) Gary Furst – Caterham Blackbird – 91 laps

FASTEST LAPS:

- B1: Dave Mountain – Juno SS3 – 44.530
B2: Bryce Wilson – Radical SR3 – 45.604
GA: Philip Derby – Caterham CSR260 – 49.878