

## Guards Trophy Race Report – Donington (8 June 2024)



Hi everyone,

We were blessed with dry conditions, cloudy overhead, but certainly a lot warmer than our last race at Snetterton!

We started with 25 entries, including 17 dual driver cars – I think a record for dual drivers in the Guards Trophy championship. Of the 17 dual driver cars, 6 were being driven by father/son combinations – fantastic to see!

Sadly, we lost the Chevron B8 of Rupert Clevley before the day started and wish Rupert a full recovery from a nasty virus.

Qualification was a busy affair with many of the cars visiting the pits for driver changes inside the 30 minutes of track time. Well done to everyone for ensuring that went smoothly and, apart from some mechanical issues, nearly everyone managed to complete the 3 laps required for each driver.



*Dan Balfour's very yellow B8 leading the stunning B16 (Pickett & Eagling), the immaculate 23B (Fennell & O'Brien) with the McLaren, Lenham, more B8s, a 23B and Merlyn further back. Six different manufacturers in one photo!*

The qualifying order saw Robert & Ben Tusting on pole, Steve Nuttall sharing the front row and Ted Pearson & Callum Grant a few tenths back in third. Outside of the SRB class, the SRA pack was headed by Nick Fennell & Michael O'Brien (P6 overall), Nic Carlton-Smith & Sam Wilson (P11 overall) and single driver Benn Tilley (P12 overall). Fastest of the invitation

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cars was Andrew Wareing & Adam Sykes (P8 overall), from Will Schryver & James Hadfield (P15 overall) and in the sole GT car, Jon Payne (P18 overall).

The first 6 positions were separated by less than one second, and the entire grid was only separated by 12 seconds – likely another first for Guards.

Qualifying sorted, disaster struck Chevron drivers Westie and Sam Mitchell when a fire broke out under the rear clam of the car. Thanks to the swift action of many of the crew and drivers of nearby cars, the blaze was brought under control but not before extensive damage to the rear clam and the subsequent corrosive effects of the multiple fire extinguishers used to quell the flames. On behalf of Westie and Sam a huge thank you to everyone who helped put the fire out, and the generosity of Charlie Allison who offered a consolation dual drive to Sam.

The race started at 16:39, a few minutes ahead of schedule, with poor Benn Tilley barely making the start line with a mechanical failure that severed his brake pipe (well done to Benn for keeping to the pit wall and getting the car safely off track) and then a very early near miss down the Craner Curves as Charlie Allison spun in front of yours truly and the Lotus 47 of James Hadfield and Will Schryver, forcing both cars to take to the grass to avoid contact! But, after that, the racing was fast and furious. Steve Nutall (Chevron B8) got the jump on the Tusting's Lenham, leading for almost the entire race until a poor pit stop saw Ben Tusting in front much to Steve's surprise! The B16 of Dan Eagling & Dan Pickett made an excellent start and jumped from P9 to P2 within 6 laps, before pitting on lap 16 and then fighting back to P4 by lap 27 before disaster struck on lap 31 – a loose oil pipe sending much of the oil reserves around the track. Dan P sent out his heart-felt apologies after the race as this led to the inevitable red flag and given the race was beyond 75% complete, the effective chequered flag.

Leading at the time of the red flag, Ben Tusting brought the family Lenham home to take top-step honours, Steve Nuttall (last year's SR champion) having to settle for second overall, and a fine drive by David Forsbrey (B8), gaining one place from his qualifying position, to take third overall.



*The mighty TVR Griffith (owned by Peter Thompson but driven to an excellent P10 by Jon Payne) being chased by the ever rapid B8 of family pairing Hugh and Mark Colman.*

The battles further down the field saw the leading SRA Lotus 23B of Nick Fennell & Michael O'Brien initially drop back to P10 before pitting in P9 on lap13, and then rising swiftly through the field to finish P4 overall after the countback following the red flag. The rapid Lenham of Mark Dwyer and Matthew Wrigley (fresh from a rebuild after the Mondello accident last year)

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also ran a fine race, rising from P13 in qualification to an impressive P5 at the flag. Great to see the ex-Jon Waggitt Lenham back with us.

Second placed SRA family pairing George & Neil Daws (starting P19 in their rapid Merlyn Mk6A) had an excellent start getting to P12 after the first lap, then to P10 on lap 17, followed by their pit stop (lap 18) and settling in to finish P13 on track, later amended to P11 after the final results eliminated the Chevron B16 (the cause of the oil slick!) and the unfortunate drivers of the mighty McLaren, both deemed to be out of the race at the red flag. Darren Wilson (Lotus 23B, starting P21) also drove an excellent race, finishing P13 after the amended results, again with a fantastic opening lap jumping to P15 before dropping back to P18 (lap 13) and recovering to P15 on track at the red flag.

A fine recovery by the Lotus 47 (after the first lap detour) saw the Schryver/Hadfield car get as high as P4 (lap 20, from P15 in qualifying, although partly due to the pit stop variations) and finish in a strong P9 overall, with the mighty TVR Griffith piloted by Jon Payne (from P18 in qualifying) finishing just 13 seconds behind the Lotus, in P10 overall. Let's hope we see more of these fine cars throughout the season.



*The McLaren of Andrew Wareing, co-driven by Adam Sykes, sounding glorious but being hounded by the B8 of David Forsbrey, with the Lotus 47 (Schryver & Hadfield) in the background.*

A special mention to the many drivers who joined us for their first race in the Guards Trophy championship, some in borrowed cars and some literally out for their first race in newly acquired cars. Thank you for your support and I hope you enjoyed the experience.

Commiserations to the six driver/cars that either 'Did Not Finish' or where 'Not Classified', please don't let that put you off coming back. Westie and Sam - clearly wishing you a speedy rebuild and hope to see you out well before the end of the season as well.

Finally, an apology for the awards ceremony as several class awards were missed by me, although I think we made good at the end; I will do my best to make sure I have everything together for the next race!

Next up – **Thruxton on Saturday 22 June** – we need as many drivers as possible to join us at “the UK's fastest circuit” – please sign up if you haven't done so already!

*PS – I am reliant on the official photographer for photos of the race – please don't be offended if your car isn't featured!*

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