

## Guards Trophy Race Report – Croft (11 August 2024)



Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the belated race report for the unplanned Croft race on 11 August – was it really over two weeks ago?

Sadly, we were without an official photographer so the only images I can find are courtesy of Motorsports Classic Media, so I hope they don't mind that I have borrowed a few for the race report.

We were few in number, but nonetheless had a great mix of cars, and the very welcome addition of Jamie Boot in his mighty TVR Griffith, apparently mostly sideways!

After a late request to allow Andy Wilson to join the Guards Trophy grid in his “DAF 55 V8”, we had 10 cars in qualifying and yours truly had a real tussle with the DAF trading places on almost every lap – almost as much fun as a race!

Qualifying order saw Ted Pearson and Callum Grant (in Ted's famous B8) leading the way by nearly 2.5s over the lightweight Lenham P69 Spider of Robert and Ben Tusting – the two cars and driver pairings having had a great battle all season so far. Sean McClurg stuck our B6 on P3, 1.3s behind the B8, followed very closely by Colin Elstrop (P4) driving solo in David Beatty's B8 – only Colin's second run out in the car since it was acquired. Mind, as a race instructor at Croft, David clearly had the home advantage!



*As ever, a close race between the B8 piloted by Ted Pearson and the Lenham piloted by Robert and Ben Tusting would ensue. The order would be reversed (again) during the race.*

Benn Tilley in the bright red family Lotus 23B was only 0.7s behind Colin's B8 in P5, with Ashley Hudson's Kermit green (and yellow) just 0.4s behind Benn in P6, ahead of the outrageous DAF by less than a second. The father and son team of Neil and George Daws were next up (P8) in their Merlyn Mk6A, closely followed by the only other father and son team racing with us this weekend, Peter and Sam Hamilton, in

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P9, and who are still getting to grips with their Lenham P70. Sole GT driver Jamie Boot finished the grid line up in P10 – perhaps missing some other GT competition to even things up.



*The pole sitting B8 of Ted and Callum is already out of shot, but the remaining eight cars of the race proper seen leaving the starting grid on their rolling start. The Tusting's Lenham looks to be leading the pack....Perhaps the photographer predicted the final result!*

The race got off with just the nine genuine Guards Trophy cars taking the start; the gremlins that had affected the DAF earlier in the weekend had struck again during qualifying.

The pole sitting B8 of Ted Pearson didn't make the most of the start and was passed by Robert Tusting before the end of the first lap, a lead Robert would only hold until lap 4 when Ted managed to retake for the lead. P11 shows the two cars swapping back, but I suspect this was the anomaly of the lap system as Robert pitted the car on lap 11, leaving Ted to run at the front until lap 15 and his pit stop and driver change. Another poor starter was yours truly, getting caught out by Benn Tilley and Colin Elstrop on the run to the first corner – boy do I miss standing starts! Benn's start also caught Colin out so the three cars ran P3 – P5 (Benn, Colin and then Nick) for the next 8 laps before Nick managed to finally get up the inside of Colin exiting the hairpin at the end of lap 9 (at his fourth attempt!) – thanks to Colin for not squeezing back across and making my life more challenging!

The remaining cars were led by Ashley Hudson, until he pitted on lap 10, with Neil Daws running a little further back, and the Hamilton's Lenham and Jamie's TVR having a very close initial race (until the pit stops around lap 12) – their positions changing several times over the opening laps.

The mid-race 'confusion' triggered by the pit stops means the race order is always mixed up, but once the final stops were taken (around lap 19) the running order became clear.

Another disaster struck the B6 of Nick Thompson 6 laps after Sean McClurg took over, an oil connector split open and sprayed oil into the engine bay, over the rear tyres and of course, over the track. Sean was a passenger just after Sunny In, spinning off the circuit. Fortunately, the engine survived the drama, and Sean was also out of the car safely but understandably 'not happy'!

Our apologies to everyone else as the track was pretty slippery, giving several of you a 'heart-in-mouth' moment through the fast Sunny In/Sunny Out complex.

Regardless of our drama, Ben Tusting had taken over the family Lenham early (lap 11) and quickly made his way to lead to the race (by lap 16), a lead Ben would take to the chequered flag (again!). Callum Grant, taking over from Ted in the #27 car, also settled into second place but was almost always a few tenths off Ben meaning the gap at the chequered flag was significant 30 seconds (eat your heart out Lando Norris!).

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*Ashley Hudson's immaculate 23B leads the eventual P2 finisher, Ted Pearson in his B8. I suspect this was close to the B8 lapping the 23B on lap 20.*

Benn Tilley (23B) did a fantastic job of gapping Colin Elstrop in the B8, and although ending up a lap behind the leaders, he was 41 seconds clear of the B8 behind, completing the podium in P3, and being the fastest SRA car. Colin held station and brought David Beatty's car home in P4, ahead of Ashley Hudson in the other 23B who finished a fine race in P5 (look at the best speeds to see how quick that car is!). A late last lap overtake saw the Hamilton car just best the Daws car (2.3s at the flag) with the former finishing P6 and latter finishing P7.

After Jamie Boot's early challenge to the Hamilton car, Jamie had to settle for P8 at the flag but did manage 3 races over the weekend so certainly had fun in the sunshine!

So, with just one race left to run (the **Silverstone Finals on 13<sup>th</sup> October**) we already have our **SR Champion(s) decided – Robert & Ben Tusting** are now 9 points clear of Neil & George Daws and can't be beaten. Congratulations to them both. However, it's still mathematically possible for Benn Tilley to catch the Daws for second place. Hopefully both cars will be out to play in October.



Reflecting back on the season so far, we have certainly seen our fair share of mechanical issues as a championship, with a number of our regular drivers being forced to sit out much (all) of the season so far. Hopefully everyone waiting for their cars to be sorted (or finished) will have them out at the Finals, if only to give them a thorough shake-down before the end of the year. We've seen 28 individual SRs this year and just 10 GTs (plus 18 dual drivers – so 56 drivers in total) but our grids have only ranged between 9 and 25 cars (20, 25, 13, 16 & 9 respectively). We really are going to have to find a way of boosting them in 2025.

As is traditional at the end of the last race meeting, we will hold our Drivers' Meeting at Silverstone to discuss (briefly) this season, especially what went well and what we want to change for next year. But I'm most keen we focus on suggestions for how we bolster our grids! I am discussing the introduction of a class for the smaller engine sports racers, likely up to 1,150cc which was the class limit used at 1964 Goodwood meeting. There appears to be some interest in getting these cars out on track with a dedicated class. If you know of such a car (and driver) then please talk to them to judge their interest and let me know.

We also need to elect the championship chairman for next year. I am happy to stand again, but also welcome any interest from others if you fancy giving it a go! If we have multiple candidates, I will ask the club to set up a voting system to allow everyone to vote.

Hopefully see as many of you as possible at Silverstone, racing or not! We only have 8 cars entered just now – just saying!

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