

Guards Trophy Championship

Round 1 – Snetterton 26th & 27th April

Saturday 26th April – the GT-only race!

The Guards Trophy Championship is offering 3 races this season specifically for their GT and GT Prototype cars (classes GTA – GTI) at Snetterton, Donington and the Silverstone Finals. Run to the normal Guards Trophy regulations, the first if these races was held in the unseasonably warm conditions experienced last weekend at Snetterton.

Taking the initial advantage of these new standalone races was Peter Thompson in his TVR Griffith, ahead of his co-driver Charlie Allison in his Cobra, though to confuse matters both drivers were sharing each other's cars, meaning a well-coordinated pit stop would be crucial. Behind the V8s was ex-McLaren GT ace Mia Flewitt in her 26R Shapecraft Elan, one of just three built, with Jamie Boot in his flame spitting Griffith just behind.



The start of lap 2 and a very close contest at this stage. Sadly Jamie Boot's TVR would be sidelined later on this very lap.

The four would become three, as Boot pulled into the pit lane with a distributor issue causing him to retire. The top three were followed by Ian McDonald in a replica Costin-bodied Elan, with Mia's husband Mike Flewitt in another Elan being shadowed by Colin Elstrop's TVR Grantura, with Nick Thompson & Dan Pickett running nose to tail behind in their MGBs.



Pickett Jnr and Thompson Snr ran half the race nose to tail – Thompson heading off track to let Dan through briefly!

As the pit stops cycled round, ex-Marcos racers Thompson and Allison coordinated their pit stops, each swapping from one V8 to their codrivers cars, Thompson hopping in the Cobra, and Allison losing a bit of time getting into the Cobra, allowing Mia Flewitt who had a much more straightforward pit stop through.



Experienced McLaren GT racer Mia Flewitt drove the Shapecraft Elan to a superb third place on her maiden race with the car. Just 1.3 seconds off 2nd.

It wouldn't take long for Thompson to adjust to the Cobra, as he thundered past Mia Flewitt's Elan on the Bentley straight to slot back into second place. McLaren factory pro Michael O'Brien was now in Mike Flewitt's Elan, and setting good pace after an earlier unscheduled pit stop. Michael got the car back up to fourth, albeit two laps down on the leading trio.

The MGB father-son duel split as Chris Thompson edged away from Dennis Pickett, and Ian McDonald, despite valiant pit work, was forced to retire the Costin Elan.



A picture is worth a thousand words... Ian McDonald desperately trying to sort the Costin Elan but sadly to no avail, retiring the car on lap 23.

The order remained unchanged to the flag, with the TVR Griffith romping off into the distance in the final stages to take victory by 41 seconds. Peter Thompson brought the Cobra home in second, though ironically, as both he and Charlie Allison had driven each other's cars, he was also the winning dual driver. How often does the driver who finishes second also win the race? And vice versa? However, Mia Flewitt kept the Cobra ahead honest throughout, staying close enough to apply pressure but never quite within striking distance, settling for a well-earned third after an enjoyable race.



*Outright winners
Peter
Thompson
and
Charlie
Allison –
dual driving
the TVR to
first and
the Shelby
American
Cobra to
second!*

Michael O'Brien brought the Mike Flewitt Elan home in fourth, while the earlier MGB duel resolved with Chris Thompson ahead of Dennis Pickett. David Beatty, who'd taken over from Colin Elstrop in the Grantura, closed the gap late on but ultimately slotted in behind the MGB pair by the finish.



*McLaren
connections
for both Mia
Flewitt and
Michael
O'Brien.
Micky dual
drove with
Mike Flewitt
in the early
Elan, against
Mia!*

Sunday 27th April – the mixed grid race (but ultimately all Sports Racers!)



The rolling start with the B16 of Dan Pickett narrowly out dragging the ultimate winning Lenham of Robert Tusting to first corner.

Following the rolling start format, and on the run down to the first corner, Dan Pickett's Chevron B16 got the jump on Robert Tusting (Lenham P69 Spyder), diving around the outside into Riches to take the lead. The advantage, however, wouldn't last long, with last year's event winner Dan Balfour (Chevron B8) moving into the lead. Behind him, Ted Pearson (B8) slotted into second before catching Balfour and making a superb move around the outside at Riches to take over P1.



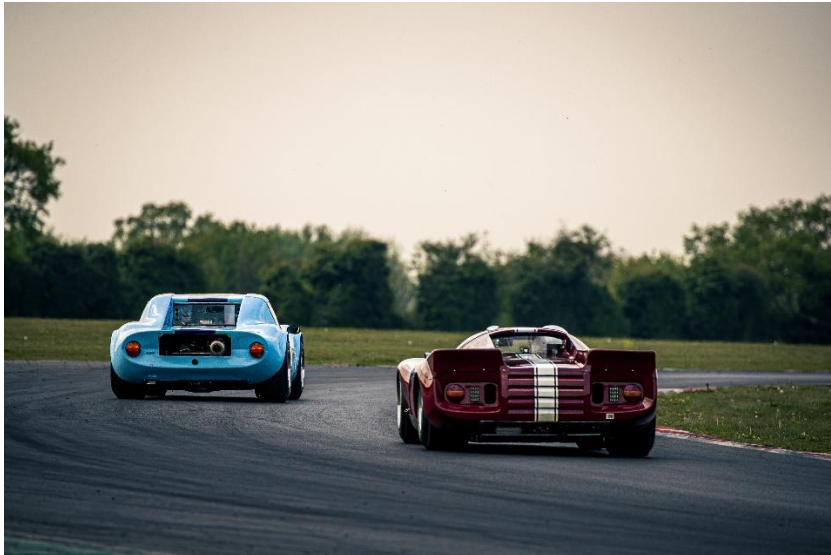
Last year's race winner, Dan Balfour enjoying a fast start until an engine issue stopped play. Sorry Dan!

Behind, Graham Moss's Lola T70 Spyder was slicing through the field after a slow getaway, moving past Pickett into fifth and chasing down the two Lenhams of Mark Dwyer and Robert Tusting. On lap six, Balfour's race sadly came to an end as he retired from second place with a broken rocker in the valve train - especially frustrating given it had only just been rebuilt over winter. This promoted Tusting Snr into second, with Dwyer's Lenham close behind in third, and Moss's mighty T70 now up to fourth and quickly closing on the podium places.



*The Tusting
Lenham
leading the
similar car
of soloist
Mark
Dwyer.
Sadly, Mark
would pull-
up on lap
25 for a
DNF. Sorry
Mark!*

Trouble wasn't limited to Balfour, as Charlie Allison limped back to the pits on lap nine in a very smoky (actually steaming) Chevron, his race over. Championship coordinator Nick Thompson also found himself in strife, his B6 suffering from a stubborn plug lead issue that saw him and co-driver Sean McClurg make several unscheduled trips to the pits in a frustrating first round of the championship.



*The
Thompson/
McClurg
B6 limping
back to the
pits on 3
cylinders,
causing 2
lengthy pit
stops and a
caution to
Thompson
for an early
stop!*

As the laps ticked down, it would be Moss on a charge, first powering past the Lenham's of Mark Dwyer and Robert Tusting, before the driver known for his pace in a Cobra Daytona, caught Pearson on lap twelve and found himself in the lead just before the pit window opened.

As soon as the pit window opened, the two Lenhams were straight in, with Robert Tusting eager to hand over to son Ben, who had set pole by an impressive 1.2 seconds to put the family car at the head of the field. A slightly sluggish stop from the Tusting crew, however, allowed Mark Dwyer's similar Lenham to slip through and emerge ahead after the cycle.

Out front, Moss was next to pit, handing the lead back to Ted Pearson, who opted to run a longer first stint. Ben Tusting, meanwhile, had cleared the fading Mark Dwyer, who would sadly retire shortly after with gearbox issues, and was now reeling in Moss at a ferocious pace, setting purple sector after purple sector and closing the gap down to the length of the Senna Straight. Further down the overall order, Nick Adams brought his Lotus 23B into the pits with what sounded like a misfire, but after clearing its throat, the SRA class leader rejoined without issue and continued circulating.

The final third of the race saw Callum Grant take over from Ted Pearson in the ex-David Purley Chevron B8, Pearson's strong opening stint meaning Grant rejoined just ahead of Graham Moss. With Ben Tusting rapidly closing in, the lead trio of Grant, Moss and Tusting Jnr were now covered by just seven seconds. On lap 20, Moss made use of the T70's considerable grunt to blast past Grant on the Bentley Straight and into the lead.

In what felt like an inevitable change, Ben Tusting swept past Grant with a brave move around the outside at Brundle, before reeling in and catching Moss just a couple of laps later. He made the decisive pass at Coram, diving through to take the lead. Moss tried to respond, pushing hard to stay with the Lenham, but a wild slide at Nelson cost him crucial momentum, giving Tusting just enough breathing room to stay clear along the long straights and edge away.

This order would be how the race would end, with reigning Guards Trophy champions Ben and Robert Tusting adding yet another victory to their growing tally, in their Neil Fowler run Lenham. Graham Moss impressed on debut in the ex-John Surtees, Graham Hill, and David Hobbs driven Lola T70, bringing the big Can-Am machine home in second and showing plenty of promise for future outings. Callum Grant completed the podium in Ted Pearson's Chevron B8, keeping Moss firmly in his sights to the flag after a strong closing stint.



Ben Tusting takes another fantastic win, just over 7 seconds ahead of the thunderous Lola Mk2 Spider of Graham Moss.



The Lola with afterburners lit – look out for Graham at Silverstone where the Lola's speed is going to be a challenge for the smaller-engine cars!



Sliding the third place Chevron B8 through the tricky second corner – the drivers' least favourite part of the track.

Just outside the podium places, Dan Pickett brought his Chevron B16 home in fourth, staying on the lead lap until the very end. Robert Shaw followed in fifth in his Chevron B8, while the father son team of the Hamiltons (Peter & Sam) took sixth in their Lenham P70 - an encouraging debut with plenty of positives to build on. Neil Adams claimed SRA honours in seventh with his Lotus 23B, while Nick Thompson and Sean McClurg salvaged eighth after a troubled weekend hampered by recurring gremlins.



The 5th place Chevron B8 of Robert Shaw, a very welcome returnee to the Guards Trophy grid after several years absent.



The 6th place Lenham of Peter and Sam Hamilton being tracked down by the Chevron B8 of Pearson and Grant.



Nick Adams takes a wide line through the fast Corum curves to bring it home in 7th place.

Next up, **Silverstone** on the GP circuit on **1 June** – a mixed grid race so everyone is welcome and given its on the GP circuit there’s plenty of space for everyone!

And finally:



It’s a good job Peter Thompson had a successful outing on Saturday – seen here contemplating life with preparer Steve Mace – oh what might have been!



Guards’ debutant Joel Hopwood contemplating the start of the race in the Assembly area – sadly sidelined on lap 11. Better luck next time Joel!

“What do you mean, only 2 miles per gallon?!”

