

CLASSICAL GAS

July & August 2006 About Classic Trials and Falcon Motor Club Events and Personalities

Neil's Racing



Neil leading last years champion Stephen Primett around the hairpin at Lydden in June before descending Hairy Hill. This months Classical Gas concentrates on bringing you up-to-date with Neil's season so far.

THE SEASON SO FAR

After nine rounds Neil is second in the Classic Touring Car Racing Club's Post Historic Championship, two points behind last years champion Stephen Primett from Bedford, in his RS2000.

Its pretty close though, as David Howard (Jaguar XJ12) and James Christie (Avenger) are only a few points behind.

There are only three rounds left and Neil will miss one of them as he will be on holiday.

However, only the best 10 from the 12 races count so its still anyone's championship.

Everything went well during the early races (full reports at www.classictrials.co.uk) and Neil was in the lead by nine points when we set sail for France, but then it all started to go wrong. Read on.



Lost in France! - The Croix de Tornois circuit where Neil contested two rounds of the championship. Read more on pages 2 and 3.

Another Race Report. This time from Oulton Park on page 4.

Croix de Tornois - A Tough Weekend

A very full weekend, with testing on Friday and races Saturday and Sunday. It was a lot of fun but Neil had a lot of technical problems, retiring in the first race and coming second in class to Ian Clark in the second. All this means Neil has slipped to second place in the championship behind Stephen Primett.

Race 1 – Saturday 1st July 2006

Stephen Primett got away well from pole position but, by the first corner, David Howard had used the grunt of his Jaguar XJ12 to gain a lead he didn't relinquish. Steve had a moment in the complex, allowing Jason Christie to get by in his similar Escort RS2000. Steve fought back. Re-took second place and set off in pursuit of David. However, there would be no catching him. Not only was the Jaguar faster down the long straight but David was driving it round the corners like it was on rails, despite all the oil that was making the circuit very slippery. Jason had a lonely race chasing Steve, dropping back to finish eight seconds behind the leading duo.

The real excitement was the race long battle for fourth place. Neil had a good start, holding onto his grid position for the first lap. Next time round a hard charging Ian Clark slipped by. The two were really on the limit, hanging their tails out on the sharp hairpins. They were pretty much together until lap five when Neil had a moment and dropped back. Neil fought back until by lap eleven he was on Ian's boot lid again.

Ian had been getting increasingly ragged, running wide almost every corner. Neil chose his moment and slipped by. Ian fought back and they were side by side down the pit straight. At the end Neil was braver, braked later and maintained his lead. Then Ian had a mega-moment, spinning off round the back of the circuit, performing a donut to regain the black stuff which upset the

marshals. This put Neil more than ten seconds ahead as he crossed the line on his 13th lap, but he was slowing as the engine had cut out and he pulled off.

Tony Crudgington came by, and then Ian who was shown the black and white diagonal flag as the Clerk of the Course wasn't happy with his driving. Initially Ian thought the race had finished and he pulled off the circuit behind Neil. Mark Aistrup (Escort RS2000), James Christie (Avenger) and Keith Calver (Mini) all went by before Ian regained the circuit a lap down.

“Neil touched Tony up the back causing him to spin and Neil hit the front of the car as well. For a moment, they were all in the gravel.... “

David Howard took the chequered flag, followed by Stephen Primett a few seconds later. Then Jason Christie with Tony Crudgington only two seconds behind, although Tony's engine was suffering and he pulled off immediately after crossing the line.

Race 2 – Sunday 2nd July 2006

The grid for the second race was determined by the results of the first, so Neil and Ian were at the back of the grid. Stephen Primett got the jump on David Howard at the start and this time he maintained his lead. Both Ian

and Neil passed James Christie and Keith Calver at the start and got by Mark Aistrup half way round the first lap, although Neil tapped Mark up the back in the process, breaking the rain light on the Escort.

There was chaos at the end of the first lap. Ian went round the outside of Tony Crudgington, who slowed in the process. Neil touched Tony up the back causing him to spin and Neil hit the front of the car as well. For a moment, they were all in the gravel. Ian and Neil got away, as did Keith Calver and Mark Aistrup but James Christie and Tony couldn't get going very quickly, for a few moments it looked like there might be a red flag. They got out of the kitty litter in time and Tony pulled into the pits for a quick check before continuing a lap and a bit down.

So at the end of the second lap it was Primett – Howard – Jason Christie – Clark – Bray – Calver – Aistrup – James Christie with Tony Crudgington a lap behind. Stephen Primett started to pull away from David Howard for the first few laps before David started to close the gap and got by into the lead on lap eight. Steve hung on in his slipstream and finished a second behind..

Meanwhile Keith Calver pulled off with mechanical problems a few laps from the end. The Mini had been very fast down the straights but didn't handle to well in the complex. Try as he may Neil couldn't get by Ian Clark's Capri which got wider and wider as the race went on and Ian took his second class win of the weekend.



The Croix circuit is about 60 miles from Calais. Built on farmland it packs in a 1.2 mile track and good facilities in a small area.



The outfit at Neil's Café on the way down to Dover where P&O weren't impressed by the Truck, Car and Caravan



The White Cliffs of Dover recede into the background as Team 76 go International



Neil and Mike fixing the Water and Oil leaks discovered in testing.



The Opposition - Ian Clark and Nick Dann discuss strategy.



First lap Chaos Keith Calver tucks in behind Neil, followed by Mark Aistrup but James Christie and Tony Crudginton haven't regained the circuit.



John Surtees enjoying his lunch in the sunshine. John was at the circuit with his son Henry who was racing a Ginetta Junior.

FRENCH FROLICS

What a super time. OK we didn't get the results we wanted but apart from that it was great. We went on the Thursday to be there in good time for testing on the Friday. The journey was eventful. Neil had managed to book the recovery truck and caravan on a tourist rate, but when we got to Dover P&O weren't having that and wanted more than £600 to travel as a commercial vehicle. It took a while, and we missed our booked ferry, but Neil got them to back down!

Shopping in Calais for booze took a while and we got to the circuit about 8 in the evening. Neil had booked for testing and you could use the track as much as you wanted between 14.00 and 16.00. Good job we signed up for that as we discovered water and oil leaks that we managed to fix.

Towards the end of the first race Mike and I were signalling Neil to slow down as he was well ahead of Ian Clark when the engine cut out. It took quite a while to get the car back to our place in the paddock as the b****y French recovery driver would only tow him off the circuit. We started by changing everything electrical before discovering that a connection between the distributor and Lumination box hadn't been made properly when playing musical engines the week before.

Needless to say we went over everything very thoroughly, even repositioning the Lumination box in front of the radiator so it would stay cool. Neil and Alistair went off to the town with a big group to watch the football in a bar, the one when England lost! As good football haters Mike and I stayed back at base having a barbeque and drinking beer.

The second race was just as dramatic with Neil making contact on the first lap and we came away with very few points from the weekend, losing the championship lead. Most people made a dash for the ferry immediately after the race but not us. We had a proper meal and left around 22.30 because as we had a truck we weren't allowed on the French roads until 23.00.

We made the 1 am ferry OK and had no trouble with P&O this time. However, on the way home from Dover the lights in the truck became dimmer and dimmer until we had none at all. Fortunately the sun had just about come up by this time.

What a fantastic weekend, shame about the results!

Michael's Musings

Well after producing 136 editions of *Classical Gas* I finally missed one last month. It was all down to personal issues. I have been living in a rented house on my own for nearly two years. Then last month everything happened at once. I had to move, I became formally single again and a lot of other things as well. So no printed edition.

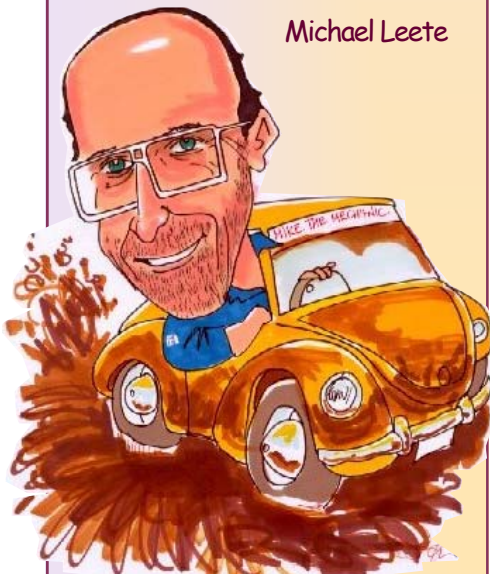
I kept up with the Internet site so many of you will not have missed anything. I think it will only be a matter of time before that becomes the primary media.

As you can read here I have been supporting Neil during his racing season and we have the possibility to win the championship.

The evenings are drawing in now and the trials season approaches. I am really looking forward to trialling again. Hopefully behind the wheel of a car again sometime in the new year.

As usual news, pictures etc, always welcome - mleete24@hotmail.com

Michael Leete



Back on Form at Oulton Park

Neil had a good race, winning his class, after a slow qualifying run in the wet saw him way down the grid. A superb start saw him move into a class lead by the first corner. Ian Clark mounted a late challenge but Neil held onto his gain. David Howard was the overall winner in his Jaguar XJ12, ahead of Dave Nixon (Mazda RX3) who beat Steve Primett in Class C. However, Steve maintains his championship lead.

The recent spell of glorious weather had broken for qualifying at Oulton Park on Saturday 5th August. There had been early morning rain and there was low cloud and a damp track when an excellent entry of 19 Post Historics hit the track. There should have been 20 but William Jenkins non-started his BMW 3.0 CSL/3153. This saved the club from dealing with the thorny problem of the cars eligibility (see <http://www.classictouringcars.com/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=170>).

Qualifying was delayed because of off-track excursions during the previous sessions. When their time came there was drama for the Post Historics. Ian Clark had an excursion. Then Neil Bray went straight on at Island and had to take to the escape road. The worst incident involved Jason Christie who was tucked up behind series sponsor Peter Halford when he lost his Escort RS2000, kissed the Armco with the front of the car, causing him to pirouette and come back in to the barrier very hard, pushing the rear quarter panel into the boot.

David Howard was fastest, followed by Dave Nixon who had rebuilt the rotary engine of his Mazda RX3 after its Thruxton blow up. Championship leader Stephen Primett could only manage fourth fastest behind Mark Lucock in his similar Escort RS2000. Neil was back in 15th place, two seconds behind Ian Clark with James Christie and Len Allgood in-between.

The weather brightened up for the race. All the qualifiers made the grid, including Jason who had straightened out the rear and masked the worst of

the damage with tape.

David Howard powered away into a lead he would retain for the whole race. Dave Nixon had a slow start and so did Mark Osborne who found himself with a box full of neutrals. This helped Neil who had a fantastic get-away, shooting straight up the middle, passing Len Allgood, both Christie brothers and Ian Clark amongst others. Neil lost a few places as the lap went on but had a comfortable buffer over Ian with Andrew Clarksons Firenza in between. Up at the front the order was Howard - Halford - Primett - Lucock - Jason Christie - Dave Nixon.

The field soon started to spread out, but there were major developments during lap two when Mark Lucocks Escort RS2000 started to misfire at high revs and he pulled into the pits. Dave Nixon was recovering from his slow start, got past Jason and set off in pursuit of Steve Primett who was around three seconds in front. He got closer and closer until two laps from the end when he pulled alongside as they crossed the start-finish line and out-braked Steve into Old Hall.

Meanwhile both the Dolomites of Ken Selfe and Mark Osborne had retired. Neil had established a lead of nearly four seconds over Ian Clark but this came down before the end when Neil was right up behind Andrew Clarkson but didn't want to risk mixing it to get by. Andrew had been between Neil and Ian until lap six when he overtook Neil but slowed towards the end. Ian closed to within less than a second at the end, setting fastest lap and coming close to breaking Nick Dannels lap record. However, Neil hung on to take the all-important class win.

Roger Stanford drove an impressive, but lonely, race in his Lotus Cortina to finish sixth, only to pull off as he crossed the finish line. Simon Kinsley was just behind in a very standard looking Escort RS2000. Phil Rhodes made up quite a few places from a low grid position but was lucky to finish when a fan belt slipped off during the last lap.