

John Aston
Ramblings On.....
The CSCC Brands Hatch Bonanza,
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SPORTS CAR CLUB



Because I live in North Yorkshire, my typical day's motor sport at home often involves finding the best place to shelter from the scything easterly wind, or trying to escape a drenching from another heavy shower sliding off the Pennines. That's at the summer events obviously, because in the winter even the hardest Geordie lads don't sport their trademark big biceps and T-shirt look at Croft. But things are different at Brands Hatch, and just like at last year's CSCC weekend on the Indy circuit, this year we had a baking sun from a cloudless blue sky, with temperatures up to 32 degrees. That was great for those of us enjoying a 99 ice cream under the shade of the big oaks at Druids, but for those strapped into the stifling cockpit of a TVR, Elan or Cortina for 40 minutes of intense driving? Not so much. Never have I seen more empty water bottles in the pit garages.

The first car I ever saw at Brands was Jackie Ickx's screaming Ferrari 312B and I fell in love with the place on that similarly hot day in 1972, tired as I was after an overnight coach trip from Wakefield, a doze on a bench at Victoria and a

Green Line bus to Wrotham.

I loved Brands so much that I didn't miss a Formula 1 race there for the next 14 years, and while 312Bs are in short supply at CSCC weekends, there was still a huge range of cars to savour, Camaro to Cortina, Cadillac to Civic, Cooper to CRX – and that's just the Cs. Best of all, unlike a certain other circuit a couple of hours north of here, Brands has hardly changed

at all, apart from the odd nip and tuck, and ...err... hotel.

I had arrived on Saturday afternoon, during the VSCC event, when boys and girls of all ages got to play with their wild and wacky machines dating from the days when all a chap needed was a Herbert Johnson shellac helmet, a Players Navy Cut fag and a cravat – none of those girlie HANS devices and energy drinks. But if old racing cars have one trademark, it is their tendency to leak vital fluids, Castrol R especially, and that contributed to a track which was slipperier than your average Formula E street circuit.



Arriving at 7.30am on Sunday, I adopted my usual strategy of buttonholing the first driver who looked awake.

And **John Milbank** looked very much awake as he tended to his 1975 Morgan 4/4, which was to contest the **Cartek Motorsports Modern Classics** race that afternoon. John and his wife Marjorie are from Halesworth, near Southwold, and John tells me that he used to be in civil engineering - 'concrete products - floors and stairs, stadiums like the Oval.' The Morgan is a 1975 version (although, Morgans being Morgans, that is almost academic) and John took it on track for the first time in 1977. 'It was a 1600 Crossflow, we couldn't keep up with the Plus 8s so several of us changed over to Lotus Twin Cams, but now it's got a '90s Zetec. I used to race with the Combined One Make Car Club, then we got sponsorship from Garelli motor bikes, why I don't know, and then Top Gear did a race series for British Sports cars where we raced against TRs and similar; Tiff Needell was in that. The firm I owned then, Milbank Trucks, then sponsored a Morgan race series for a few years, then I fell out with the Club and started racing in Denmark, and carried on doing that for ten years - I was the only non-Dane racing and I used to leave my cars (now including a Lotus

Cortina -jpa) in southern Sweden. I've owned it a long time - it doesn't have Mog on the front, it's the only one that doesn't. We're not Morgan only club people, we do other stuff.'

John tells me his car is 'well sorted out now' and that his dry sumped, Dunnell-prepared Zetec has 248bhp. And what about Marjorie's role? She's a retired primary school teacher ('but I still do voluntary every Wednesday'), and amongst things, is 'helping with pit stops and generally supporting. Oh, and washing kit when we get home ...' Women in Motorsport is a subject much in the news recently, and the coverage is long overdue, and I am interested in Marjorie's take - 'Well, I've only been doing this for twelve years, and it seems to me that women drive, women do everything really now and I think it's much more of an equal thing than perhaps it was...' You can say that again Marjorie - I know of one race series where wives and partners used to be actively discouraged from coming to race meetings because they were considered to be 'a distraction'. I'll return to equality later in this report but it's safe to exercise my inner Bob Dylan to say that 'The times, they are a-changin'.



Any excuse to keep out of the sun, and I wander down the line of pit garages, slightly disappointed that, whilst the cars are here, many drivers are still outside getting a bacon roll, as there's none of that F1 personal nutritionist nonsense here. But here's **Charlie Jackson**, the pace of whose Escort Cosworth has been ping-ponging my radar all season. Charlie is a garage owner from Northampton, specialising in diesels, he has been racing since 2000 and is also a keen rally driver – 'Gravel and single venue, Ka championship...I built a 4WD Fiesta which I used for rallying, it sat around so I built it into a race car.'



He's been around, has Charlie, that much is already clear, so tell us about this car – '6 speed H pattern gearbox, Cosworth YB with about 450bhp, AVO suspension.' So, Charlie, we've taken the man out of rallying but what about the other way round? 'Oh, a lot of my rally driving shows in my racing, there's a lot of sideways sometimes. It's taken a lot of adapting, I had to back off from left foot braking a lot, I had to learn the apexes rather than taking them as they come. The car has had some reliability issues, there were two gears the wrong way round when the box was rebuilt last year – I was going down Hangar Straight, thought I was going from 4th to 5th but ended up in 3rd and buzzed the engine, then we snapped a camshaft at Oulton. This year we were flying at Silverstone, then lost second from fuel surge and overloaded the alternator at Oulton in the wet. So today, I'm hoping for the best.'



I'm not sure what the collective noun is for a bunch of marshals – I'd suggest an orangery- but let's talk to one of them, **Jim Rainford** from Tonbridge. Jim is a carer, his wife being disabled, and he has been marshalling for six years – 'I just love it, I love being part of it, helping with incidents, flagging, I love everything about it. I'm looking forward to seeing the old cars like Morgans and 911s. I've done about twenty meetings this year and today I'm on post 3, which is the top of Paddock Hill Bend. Yes, could be quite busy.' He was right about that. There's another group of the orange army down in the Lower Paddock and I zero in on **Caroline Owens**, from Horsham, who is a trainee marshal, as I can tell from her pristine overalls. 'I've done two meetings at Brands Hatch, and I also do things at Goodwood. We started a year ago and we're gradually working our way up. I like watching racing live, I saw the marshals' stand at Goodwood and thought I'd find out what it was all about. Today I think I'll be doing a bit of flagging, probably out with the broom and probably pushing things around, or picking up bits. My daughter, **Kiya**, is also a cadet marshal and as she's sixteen she can be with me on post 6, today is her first race event.' Helping others is obviously in Caroline's DNA as her day job is being part of a support team in the NHS.



We all know that, Diesel-gate notwithstanding, VAG remains a colossus in the car business and, Golf Mark 3 aside, its grip on the hot hatch sector has been vice-like since it invented the genre with the first Golf GTi. I'm wandering through the **RSV Graphics New Millennium** paddock area and looking at **Jamie Sturges' SEAT Leon**. It isn't hard to see why, as Leon's incorporate every styling cue in

their looks and tick a lot of boxes with their competition record. Jamie is from near Andover, and has raced with CSCC for five years - 'I first saw them at Castle Combe and thought there was a great vibe in the paddock' - and the day job is Ramair Filters, amongst other things. So the Leon then, Jamie, it looks like a World Touring Car to me? 'Yeah, it's very similar and the current spec ones are WTCC cars. This Eurocup is an early one, and it's what really started the TCR series in 2015. I run another car, a Golf TCR, which has a different gearbox, and I'm running that in other championships. The Leon's an amazing car, with so many standard components so it's relatively cost effective. This one has the VAG DSG gearbox - the standard road box with some upgraded parts - and the engine's straight out of the showroom and it runs the same turbo as a Cupra R or Golf R. It gives just a touch more than the 330bhp stock, but you're limited by the turbo. Using 1B road tyres has been the difficult bit but the new Yokohamas we get from Adams & Page are as close as we get to matching the set up for slicks ...' Jamie loves Brands Indy - 'Fantastic, the most amount of overtaking opportunities per distance of track of anywhere in the country. We won last time out with another club.' It's Thruxton next, Jamie's local, so how will the SEAT fare at home? 'Oh, it's a big car, nearly two metres wide and it makes a huge hole in the air, so I can be climbing all over the back of some of the faster cars through the sweeping bends, we'll fly through Church, but they'll creep away up the hill - the M3s have got 60-70 horsepower more than me ...' Time to ask the final question, which I reserve for some victims - what do you do apart from this stuff Jamie? Big grin - 'I'm a racing cyclist - some days I'm a racing cyclist who races a car and sometimes I'm a racing driver who cycles. I've got a car race tomorrow, a bike race the day after, a car race next Saturday.' Bet this guy can eat three Shredded Wheat too.

I don't know about **Richard Wos'** choice of breakfast cereal but like everyone in the CSCC community I do know that he is a CSCC stalwart and that his **Adams & Page** tyre business helps to keep the show on the road. 'I've been doing this for thirty years and Les, one of the other guys involved, has been doing it for fifty years; he used to race a Healey 3000.' Richard tells me that business varies from meeting to meeting - 'today we're unbelievably busy but tomorrow we'll be very quiet.' Tell me, Richard, buying new tyres is surely not an impulse thing so why do people wait until a race meeting to buy their tyres? 'They know we're here and we'll fit and balance them for free and I'll always look after them. So what's the hot brand in 2019, Richard? 'Oh, the best tyre out there is the Yokohama 52, it's a 1B tyre but it's quicker than most of the 1C tyres and it's an A rated wet tyre as well.' Adams and Page sponsor the Swinging Sixties races - 'Basically I started the series sixteen years ago; as the original co-ordinator I'm very fond of it. We're



loyal to the CSCC and have been since 2003.' It's an insight into yet another cog, and a very important one too, in the complex machinery that makes a race weekend like this one work so well.

I decide to watch some cars dive into the hold your breath drama of Paddock Hill from the grandstand. I can't help sinking into a reverie as it was from this precise spot I watched the then very hi-tech digital readout during qualifying for the 1983 European Grand Prix. Nigel Mansell's turbo-charged Lotus Renault pushed the numbers to 177mph and I still wonder what they were in 1986, with another 300bhp to play with. Those numbers aren't going to be reached again today – or ever – but any car has the capacity to challenge and enthrall through Paddock. Today proves how true this is, as a succession of cars brake late, later still and then, ouch - too late. If we had public access to in-car radio, F1 style, there'd be some sharp intakes of breath and more bleeps than you could shake a ****ing stick at.

Somebody having fun in qualifying for the **Cartek Motorsport Modern Classics** race are **Andre and Jake Severs** in the Samsboyz Motorsport VW Beetle RSi. I will confess to not knowing much about the RSi, apart from the fact that the sonorous howl can only come from a V6 and not the flat sounding turbo four which is standard issue for so many VAG cars. I quickly learn that whoever is at the wheel is having a whale of a time as the Bauhaus-styled Beetle slips sideways every lap as it scuttles downhill in a haze of tyre smoke, which might be good news for Mr Wos. Later on, during its race, the Beetle decides it's really a beach buggy after all and it scuttles off to explore the sand dunes of Paddock Hill. And there's more drama in qualifying for the **CSCC Motorsports School Turbo Tin Tops with Smart 4Two Cup and Cartek Motorsport Puma Cup**, and just about every session which follows on Sunday. Even if you were queuing for another cold Coke, you knew there'd been yet another 'unpleasantness' at Paddock when a big cloud of dust appeared and spectator heads would be craned to watch.



Prompted by the rowdy sound-track of the **RSV Graphics New Millennium** posse let's talk noise for a moment. Gradient always gives race engines some heavy lifting to do and the harder the workout the better the sound. Watching cars exit Paddock and spear up to Druids and then back down again a few seconds later gives a real insight into how dull most fours



sound compared to a six, whether flat, vee or straight, and how a flat plane V8 sounds nothing like a cross plane one. And it's uncanny how much the whine of the **Fulbrook/Chatt Cooper S** supercharger resembles the noise from its pre-war MG forebears in VSCC racing. Yeah, it's all real anorak stuff, but y'know, it takes one to know one, right? So you too might notice the soul



stirring howl from the rear of **Chris Griffin's Exige V6** and you might wonder whether it sounds as good inside as it does outside. And you might notice why no BMW M3 ever sounds as good from behind as it does from in front, because that hard edged, metallic induction scream is impossibly sexy, or at least it is if you are as afflicted as I am with what the late commentator Henry Hope-Frost

termed 'Fever'. I can be a terrible snob when it comes to motor sport, believing twelve cylinders are always better than 8, let alone a mere four, and that front wheel drive is fine for original Minis but beyond the pale for pukka race cars. And, as so often is the case, I don't know my arse from my elbow because, at every CSCC event I've been to, the **Co-ordSport Tin Tops** have been a highlight, with the stunning Anglesey race being not only the best of my season but commentator Dave Goddard's too. Even in qualifying there's half a dozen cars fighting for the best line through Druids and it is very noticeable just what a moveable feast the apex is to this most famous corner - some cars don't even take a conventional one at all, others turn in too early and pay



the price with a compromised exit, writing new chapters for the Big Book of Understeer, whilst that man **Martin Addison** in his Peugeot 106 GTi is staying on the brakes deeper than anyone and taking an apex 15 yards later than some. I talk to Martin briefly, he's from the North East – Stockton - and his dad Bill has long been a fixture in series such as the Northern Saloons and Sports Car series in his Caterham. Martin works in the family firm, Addison Plant, and I mention that I had seen him in one of his early track outings at Croft – there was no doubt, even then, that he had what it takes. Was Anglesey as good inside the car as it was to watch? Of course it was even better, and I reckon Martin won't forget that day for a very long time.



The car that made Blackpool famous is out in force today with a pair of Chevy powered TVR Sagarises competing in the **Verum Builders Open Series** looking like nightclub bouncers with a steroid habit - they've got muscles on their muscles and bulges on their bulges. They're gleaming and shining too, and look as though they only need the tiniest excuse for a fight. I say a quick hello to one of the TVR drivers, and he has one of those names you half know from the back pages of Autosport. The driver in question is **Darren Dowling**, he's raced at Le Mans, competed in the BTCC and now, once he's finished polishing the brutal TVR, he's out in the Verum Builders Open Series race - and he does rather well too. I must say a quick hello to the **Plant team** too because who could walk by this Frankenstein of an Austin Healey on its CSCC debut? Later, in qualifying, the old warhorse (the car, not the driver of course ...) growls and bellows its way around Brands to the manor born, despite no Healey having left Abingdon packing quite so much heat under the bonnet, because instead of a BMC straight six, this hybrid has a 6.8 litre V8.



'Guess who was at Brands?' I ask Joanne when I get home – 'Ted Kravitz'. No, not the Fly Away and Are You Gonna Go My Way guy - that's Lenny - but the Sky F1 reporter and pundit. Ted is shadowing **Natalie McGloin** this weekend and after finishing his interview with her he is happy to chat to this amateur hack with his steampunk Dictaphone. 'Natalie's racing her Porsche Cayman and she is president of the FIA's Disability and Accessibility Commission. Unlike most sports administrators who sit in offices and don't actually do it, I was taken with the idea that she races as well – she walks the walk and talks the talk. I wanted not only to cover the FIA's efforts in this area but to follow Natalie for the day and we're making a feature for Sky F1.' Ted isn't quite sure if he's been to a CSSC race meeting before but he tells me he's very impressed with the event organisation and with driving standards on track – 'There's no nonsense. Some other series are badly organised and it's chaos for everybody – there's no need for that, people are spending their own money. From what I've seen, and talking to Hugo (Holder), I've been very impressed.' I'm going off piste a bit but as I recently interviewed W Series victor Jamie Chadwick (for another club – sorry) I wanted to get Ted's take on how much the tide was turning for women in the sport. 'W Series is all about opportunity, they're not seeking to segregate women ... they just want to give women and girls an opportunity to get into the highest levels or to go back to where they were before - you've got people like Marta Garcia, Megan Gilkes, they're 18, 19 – and they're on the ladder coming up. But you've got Alice Powell, who's 29 now and had a four year break. Jamie is a very high level racer ... she's got a great career ahead of her.' I tell Ted that just behind where we stand, thirty odd years ago, I watched 1000bhp F1 cars scream up to Druids ('Wow, lucky man...') and I wonder if Ted mourns the loss of 'real' circuits like this one from Formula 1. It turns out that Ted's been thinking about this already today and, to my surprise, he reckons it is still possible for Brands to upgrade the facilities to the point where a Grand Prix could return. Interesting, but if half of me relishes the prospect, the other half worries about the price the place would pay for the privilege. It's not just the cash, we all know what happened to Donington after its F1 ambition crashed and burned ...





A Spitfire growling overhead was a lovely counterpoint to the afternoon, even if sometimes I do wonder if we can ever move far enough away from our past. Maybe we have because, when we choose which Eighties and Nineties cars to race, it seems that as often as not they're made in Stuttgart or Dingolfing. Apart from cars like Charlie's Escort Cosworth, which is flying the flag for Essex as it leads the **Cartek**

Motorsports Modern Classics race on Sunday afternoon until a water leak means he trickles by at pedestrian pace, leaving **Paul Livesey's** Porsche 968 to win. I stay out of the sun under the trees at Druids to watch the **RSV Graphics New Millennium** crew and what a spectacle the opening laps offer, lots of noise, lots of ducking and diving opportunism, and if you had been paying enough attention, you'd have noticed how the understated and softly spoken Lotus Europa of **Andrew Rath** was scything through the field from the back, overtaking cars which the casual observer might assume were way above the tiny Lotus's pay grade. Its big brother, the Griffin Exige, was quick but seemed to enjoy snacking on the grass now and again, other cars were slipping away into the gravel and let's just leave it by saying it was an eventful 40 minutes.



Monday, and even at 8.30 it feels furnace hot. But this guy looks as cool as his car – it's **Clive Anderson** from Cheshunt, and his car is the stunningly well-presented yellow BMW E30 whose pace had been so apparent in qualifying for the **Special Saloons and Modsports** races. And this was despite having to short shift below 5000rpm, I was soon to learn. Clive claims to be 53 (I don't believe him as he looks at least 15 years younger) and his firm, Team Prism Motorsport, builds race cars, including successful cars at Goodwood and the Silverstone Classic. 'Yeah, I do a bit of racing myself too ... not much, once or twice a year. I've had this car for about twenty years and it's just developed over time. It's the first time out with it set up properly, as I would do for other people. The car was a 320 road car, it's spaceframe now-ish, but the silhouette's still there and it runs a Rover 5 litre V8. My reason for that was Rover and BMW merged for a bit so I thought I'd be the first to put a Rover engine in a BMW. It's got two turbos, I specialise in turbo induction systems anyway, and it produces about 520 brake.' Despite being based up the road, Clive prefers Donington Park. 'I find Brands really difficult, but I seem to be settling down with it.' He can say that again, as later he goes on to take a commanding win and two second place finishes on Monday.

I must speak to **Andy Wilson** soon, as his Alan Mann liveried 1964 Ford Falcon looks like an émigré from Santa Pod and epitomises the sheer brute force of the American V8 muscle car. The typical Brit back in '64 was stuck with buying a limp wristed Hillman Minx or Triumph Herald on what we used to call the never-never (hire purchase younger readers, like PCP, except you could only afford rubbish, not a Mercedes). And talking of underwhelming looking cars, consider the Peugeot 309, the pretty 205's ugly sister, but then you look at the **Ricky Parker-Morris 309GTi Special Saloon** and wonder if you were wrong. I talked to Ricky at Chateau Impney last year (but this time I'm sober) so tell us all Ricky? 'Originally we had a 205, we converted it to rear wheel drive, and we had oversteer problems so we thought adding more on the back end would cure it. It did work but it didn't work, so this one's very different, it's half space frame and still rear wheel drive. It's built to original Thunder Saloon rules, so the original bulkhead couldn't be impeded by any of the block so, being front wheel drive originally, it's a funny shape. It runs a Cosworth YB, 560bhp, but you have to use a Borg Warner turbo to get that power and on a hot day like this, it just heats up and up.' Was that why you were doing a fast lap then a slow one in qualifying? 'Yeah, we were trying to look like a Formula 1 team yesterday ...' Finally Ricky, what's with the new stealth grey paint job? 'We spent 150 hours rubbing the paint down over the winter and thought it's time for a change (from its previous black- jpa) and we thought we'd replicate the Peugeot 905 Le Mans winner. So it's Porsche Grey now, with the decals from a 905. Bit of a bad story really as first we went for Porsche Fashion, slightly more brown, and it looked terrible! Spent 600 quid instead of 300 ... wanna buy some Porsche paint?' What a nice guy – his day job is as project manager for Ensigna Construction and if he was managing my project, I reckon it'd be on time and on budget. Later on, his scrap with the legendary Baby Bertha, today in **Joe Ward's** hands, was a butterfly's kiss away from ending in tears, but to the credit of both drivers, they played nicely, so there was no BTCC-style ruck in the gravel trap for them.



But one car above all others attracts attention, just like it did at Silverstone a few weeks before, when it was upstaging million pound Ferraris and Aston Martins at the Silverstone Classic. It is the enormous, aircraft carrier-proportioned, Cadillac *Le Monstre*, built and driven by **Derek Drinkwater** from Chiddingfold. Today it hasn't actually been driven on the road to Brands, but Derek and his wife had driven the Caddy to Silverstone from Surrey last month, triggering mass camera phone usage every single mile of the way, if not as much as when he parked it outside his mate's restaurant. Which is in Knightsbridge.



Le Monstre is racing in the **Mintex Classic K** race and although it's not the fastest car on track, it was the most sideways and was almost certainly the only car being raced anywhere in the UK with a 'three on the tree' column gearshift. Derek built the car in the same way as the original, 1950 car, even to the extent of replicating the build period - 'I'm a bit of romantic more than anything else. It took five months work, day and night, I gave up work (Derek has a catering business -jpa) to build it. It is exactly the same spec as the original; 160bhp, 3 speed manual, drum brakes, and the only thing different is the roll hoop, its two inches higher and two inches wider to meet modern regulations.' Derek, it's a V8, and it's got five carburettors, so how's that work? 'The centre one is the primary, the other four are the secondary's.' And around Brands Indy, which lacks a Mulsanne Straight and is about seven miles shorter than La Sarthe? 'It doesn't like the corners so much ... and you need to be very aware of little cars coming up alongside.' Quite a car, and quite an owner too. Derek came away with a Class win after the Caddy continued to pound round and round when others succumbed to the heat.



I can't think of any elegant way to segue from a 1950 Caddy to a 1989 Reliant Scimitar SS1 (can you?) so let's just talk to **Ben Gough**, who is contesting the **Special Saloons and Modsports** race. 'I'm an automotive engineer and work for JLR; I've got a long history with Scimitars, I had a road car years ago then started hill climbing – that was a GTE – and then I competed in a supercharged GTE. A friend had an SS1 and I've been racing in Swinging Sixties since 2008. I've raced the Marcos 3 Litre with Ilian Daniels and I fancied doing something a bit extra, and a bit different. This car was hill climbed for a year or two, then raced in fairly standard road form. In period this was an 8 valve but this is a 16 valve out of Nissan 200SX and it's 265bhp at the moment, and weighs 830 kilos. It wasn't quick yesterday, it was too hot and I had an oil pressure issue too. I'm down the back of the grid so I'll see how it goes.'



Last time I'd seen the CSCC at Brands I'd been very taken with **Ray Barrow's** Camaro, as not only is the '69 Camaro one of the best looking cars ever to come out of America, but Ray's example was being driven with commitment and verve. Today the Chevy is in the **Adams & Page Swinging Sixties Group 2** race and it's a good time to chat to the laid back man from Brighton. I take to Ray immediately, and I'll admit to basking in a warm glow as I find out that he enjoys reading my ramblings on the CSCC website. Better do him justice then - 'I build racing engines for Julian Godfrey Engineering, we do a lot of rallycross engines, 2 litre turbocharged stuff, not (pointing at Chevy -jpa) this kind of thing at all really. I've always liked American cars, before I was circuit racing I was drag racing for 15 years. I started racing with a Mark 1 Escort, drove a friend's Camaro and eventually managed to get my own.' Only a Camaro would do, Ray didn't want a 'Stang or a 'Cuda, just the Chevy - 'When I was drag racing I had a Chevrolet Vega, I'd raced the Camaro with John, he owned it and I'd built the engine, and it had to be a Chevy. It took a while to find the right one; as far as I know this one was built in America as a race car. I'd guess as a circle type car – it had a NASCAR type roll cage. It came here, as best as I can fathom out in the late 70s and it's always been a race car here but hasn't actually been raced very much.' Ray has owned the white Camaro for ten years now, and tells me, 'It's small block, this was originally a Z28 homologation special with a



5 litre/302 cubic inch, and it's now a 350 cubic inch, 4 speed manual. I raced it on the full GP circuit with the Dutch Youngtimer series and it was really good fun.' And finally, I just had to ask him about the neat signage - 'Baldwin Chevrolet, Baldwin, Long Island, NY' - was it the original? Cue a low and dirty chuckle from Ray - 'Nah, that's a bit of period bull****, it was never sponsored by them, but Baldwin Chevrolet were a real dealership, and they sponsored all sorts of drag and circuit cars so it was just to give a period feel, it's just a bit of nonsense.' I could have talked to the Barrows all day, especially as it turns out that their

mate (whose name I stupidly forgot to note) had worked in NASCAR for a decade and was a fund of stories from the land of moonshine and pit lane fisticuffs. Later on, Ray makes a spectacular exit from Graham Hill bend and the Camaro was last seen heading across the grass in the general direction of Orpington. Which was a real shame, but I am sure he found his way back home to Brighton eventually.

Maybe it's Brexit - what isn't? - but, like every club this year, the CSCC grids are a little slimmer than last year, but in relative terms they are still full, and both quality and diversity are rock solid. I should have learned to expect the unexpected by now, but even so I was gobsmacked to see an ex-works Audi DTM machine bellow up to Druids in qualifying for the **Advantage Motorsport Future Classics** race. Dunno about the 'Future' tag, CSCC, as along with the Aston V8 Vantage and the Mustang Mach One, the Quattro's classic status is already assured. Driver **Martin Johnson**, sharing with **Andy Wood Dean** today, tells me about the Vorsprung durch Technik Quattro - 'We've raced this with CSCC before, November 2017, and won in the damp, four wheel drive ... We haven't done much with it since, but we tested a couple of months ago. It's a V8 Evo, basically the Belgian version of the DTM cars but we run 17inch wheels, not 18s or 19s. It is an ex-works car, it's very quick and has about 400bhp with the 3.6 litre V8 and slide throttles, and it has a carbon airbox so it sounds really nice. Originally, but not now though, it revved to 9600rpm. It's got a 6 speed manual dog box and weighs 1200 kilos, and it's got all the best bits. But we need to drive the car more, because every time we do we go quicker.' Martin obviously likes his touring cars, having previously owned and raced a Mercedes 190E DTM and he still has an original RS500 - 'I just like unusual cars.' Martin's day job is 'Security - locks, keys and cameras and Andy runs a marine company.'



Monday afternoon is spent in sweltering heat, and I reckon a lot of race overalls are going to be damper than an otter's pocket after 40 minutes in a hot race car. Ever the slacker, I find any excuse to escape the sun in the shade of the pit garages but there's always plenty to absorb, often those little vignettes which make up the tapestry of the day. Such as watching the splendidly be-whiskered **Pete Reeve** roll to a standstill in front of me in his stunningly presented Make it So Racing TVR



Vixen. The little 1700 TVR might pack muscle from Dagenham, rather than Detroit, but this near fifty year old gem positively glows in its yellow livery. It says something about British industry that nearly every car in the **Group 1 Adams & Page Swinging Sixties** race has a BMC A or B Series engine, or a Ford crossflow like the TVR but, in 2019, our biggest entirely British firm is probably a minnow like Ariel now that even Morgan is owned by Italian investors. And TVR? After crashing and burning with a young Russian at the wheel in 2006 we're promised a Gordon Murray-designed reboot. I'm not going all White Cliffs of Dover here but oh my, how times have changed since I first came here.

But enough reflection already – it was a brilliant weekend, and if it was far from incident free, with safety car and recovery team deployment punctuating the day, that is maybe just a testament to how hard everyone was pushing, and how much fun they were having. A hot sun, a big crowd, an endless supply of ice cream and cold drinks, close racing and a wonderful circuit. It was so good I even forgot all about Brexit, but now I'm stuck with it until Thruxton. I can't wait - can you?

John Aston
CSCC Correspondent

