Competition News – September 2026

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In this edition…..

- VSCC Cadwell – Morgan Sweeps the Board
- Buckland B3 at Harewood hillclimb
- Dijon – Darbyshire keen as mustard
- 12/13 September weekend – busy, busy
- Reflections
- Photos at the end

Intro

The season is coming to an end with lots of activity. Over the weekend of 12 & 13 September we had Morgans racing at four different tracks both here in UK and abroad in la belle France.

I hope you have enjoyed the reports over the past few months. It wouldn't be possible without our contributors – Fin Cameron, Tony Pearson, Danny Hodgson, James Surridge, Phil Yarnall, Alistair Rew, Sue Darbyshire and probably others whom I have omitted to mention.

VSCC Cadwell Park Spero and Voiturette Trophies Race – 20 June

From Fin Cameron

The Spero Cup is a historic trophy awarded at Cadwell Park to the first pre-war car up to 750cc supercharged or 1100cc unsupercharged in the race for Vintage & PVT Cars up to 1100cc.

Back in the day, this race used to be full of all kinds of Vintage Specials, like Salome, the Morgan-based four-wheeler, which has won the trophy several times. Nowadays, the grid is swamped with Austin 7s and apparently… (correct me if I'm wrong!) a Morgan had never competed in

this race. So, as COV fell into the “Up to 1100cc” class, I thought I’d give it a whirl.

The grid had some pretty tough competition that could give me a serious run for my money, including Christian Pederson (a fellow Morgan owner who competed in his first Morgan circuit race in his Mk2 JAP-powered racer earlier on in the day!) in his rapid, supercharged, methanol-burning Austin 7 single-seater, nicknamed Miss Green, and Archie Waterfield in a very similar car.

I qualified 1st on the grid, alongside Archie in 2nd place, who had been battling reliability problems with his car for a while. For some reason, we were held on the line for a long time, which eventually played into my hands as all of these water-cooled cars started to get a bit warm…

The lights eventually went out and I was swallowed by a swarm of screaming Austin 7s as I covered the rest of the pack in smoke. The Morgan Gods must have been looking over me because, out of sheer luck (for me, unfortunately not for Christian!), Miss Green slowly came to a halt alongside me.

After this, the stars must have *really* aligned because Archie’s single-seater was suffering from a severe loss of power due to boiling over on the start line!

I had a brief dice with a few cars but saw them off before coming over the Mountain for the first time. The Morgan Gods must have been having a right laugh at this point because after this, the bolt holding my battery’s earth lead on started to slowly unwind itself.

I coughed round for the remainder of the race, occasionally having the luxury of two firing cylinders. I somehow managed a lap time of 1:58 and made a 14-second gap between me and 2nd place.

I distinctly remember someone telling me that the commentator described COV as “sounding like a bag of badgers”, and he was

absolutely right. I miraculously popped and banged my way to the finish line as the first-ever Morgan to win the Spero Cup. Much to the dismay of many an Austin 7 owner…

Jokes aside, I highly encourage everyone who can enter this historic race to get stuck in, as it used to be full of all sorts of interesting cars, not just Austins!

It's a cracking race, there's a battle at every point in the grid, and you never know, everyone in front of you might break down…

NHCA Harewood Hillclimb – 23 August

From Danny Hodgson

This story starts around four weeks ago, with my wife Sandra roaring down the road to work in the Buckland. Five minutes later, she called to tell me that the front wheel felt "a bit strange." I replied with what every loving husband would say: "It'll be fine—I drove it yesterday and there was no problem."

Another five minutes passed before my phone rang again. This time, Sandra told me in no uncertain terms to get my backside down the road because there really was a problem! To cut a long story short, the front wheel bearing had collapsed. That was one three-wheeler out of action.

That weekend, we were racing the F2 Morgan at Darley Moor. The car was running brilliantly, but I noticed a small oil leak coming from the rear of the engine. I suspected it was from one of the core plugs, which I had probably fitted badly, so there was only one option: the engine had to come out.

My deadline was one week. The F2 absolutely had to be ready for Bronte and Jack's wedding, and then prepared for Anglesey two weeks later—with a family holiday inconveniently placed in the middle!

Mission accomplished: we got the Morgan to the wedding and then headed off on holiday. On our return, on the Friday before we were due to leave for Anglesey, I carried out some final checks.

While checking the gearbox oil with a screwdriver, I pulled out a washer. That didn't seem promising. I removed the gearbox lid and, after a spot of magnet fishing, retrieved half of a worm-wheel bolt. We were now two three-wheelers down and definitely not going to Anglesey.

Fortunately, while we had been on holiday—and while Sandra wasn't watching—I had ordered the parts needed to repair the Buckland. The decision was therefore easy: we would fix it and enter Harewood Hill Climb the following weekend in the Buckland.

Living only 30 minutes from Harewood, our closest hill climb, it is surprising that I had never raced there before and had only visited once as a spectator. Frankly, that is criminal.

Set within the Harewood Estate and overlooking the Yorkshire Dales, it is a fantastic venue. The first half of the course is relatively flat but very technical. It then climbs through the farmyard before heading farther up the hill and back towards the paddock.

The Buckland ran fantastically all weekend, and the weather was equally good. It was great to visit a new venue and face the challenge of learning a completely unfamiliar course. I still have a lot to learn, so we will definitely be back at Harewood next year.

The Morgan gearbox is now almost finished and should be ready for Cadwell Park on 12 and 13 September. A big thank you to Tony Pearson for all his help and to Charles Smith at MOGspares for getting the replacement parts to me so quickly.

Photographs courtesy of Neil Kirby, whom I had not seen for some time—it was great to catch up with him again.

As for the photograph of the Buckland in my trailer, you will notice that it doesn't actually fit with the wheels on. But after the previous few weeks, that felt like a relatively minor problem.

Motor Racing Legends Races at Dijon – 12 & 13 September

From Sue Darbyshire

It was the pre war sports car race. We qualified 2nd but disaster struck in race 1 when we had engine failure whilst leading. We spent about 12 hrs changing the engine for race 2 and got it running on Sunday morning, but felt that our chances of success were slightly less than 50:50.

We had to start back of the field but had a great race to finish 2nd after 30 minutes. We had lost some straight line speed but the twisty part of the track helped us.
Overall amazing finish to the season. Now enjoying a holiday at Angouleme.
Sue.

BHRC Cadwell Park – 12 & 13 September

From Tony Pearson

Five Morgans competed at BHRC for the last round of our MTWC Challenge Series held at Cadwell. Two F types of Danny Hodgson and Tony Pearson, the 5-speeder of Keith Cook while the twins were Hamish Bibby in Bill Tuer's racer and Richard Simmonite in his Darmont.

All had some small technical issues over the weekend apart from Keith, but all managed to get a fair few laps in on the Saturday. On Sunday Tony had battery issues with it failing in the holding area just before the first race while Richard had a push rod end fail half way through.

Lots of spanner work to come over the winter.

Castle Combe Autumn Classic Festival – 12 & 13 September

From Fin Cameron

I was quite excited to get the opportunity to thrash COV around Castle Combe for my final circuit race of the season with the VSCC this year. It's a tight track with a couple of long, extremely quick sections and, after seeing the entry list, I figured most of the cars on the grid would have the legs on me around there — until I was woken up in the middle of the night by some pretty heavy rain…

We started the day with a super-wet qualifying session, where I quickly found out how effective Morgans really are in the wet as I chopped through a gaggle of Bentleys and Frazer Nashes. I qualified 3rd behind Patrick Blakeney-Edwards in his rapid Nash and Oliver Llewellyn in the absolutely monstrous 8-litre Bentley.

The rain appeared to subside after that, but luckily the heavens reopened just before we arrived in the assembly area. This led to me getting swamped off the start line in true Morgan fashion, dropping back to around 8th position but managing to fight my way back to 3rd before the second chicane.

I then found myself avoiding the enormous wheels of Oliver Llewellyn's Bentley 3/8, who was hot on the heels of Patrick Blakeney-Edwards for a few laps, until I just managed to have him on the brakes and sneak it up the inside of him going around Quarry.

I held him off for a lap and managed to stay in Patrick's mirrors for a bit, until the Bentley roared past me down the straight. Frustratingly, an underlying electrical gremlin caused the power to drop off after a few laps and I just couldn't quite keep up with them. A great race nonetheless!

I managed a comfortable 3rd place, with mine, Oliver's and Patrick's best lap times all within a second of each other. A great way to finish the racing season. We'll get 'em next year!

NHCA Wiscombe Park hillclimb – 13 Septmber

From Tony Quinn

It's stupid o'clock on Sunday morning. The alarm has just gone off. 5:15am in fact, so it's get out of bed, quick wash and shave, go downstairs for a mug of tea and a slice of toast on the hoof whilst the kettle boils again for a flask of hot water.

I clamber into my leathers – it's easier than changing in the paddock – and set off just after 6:00. Wiscombe is only one and a half hours away, an easy run down the M5 to Taunton and then over the Blackdown Hills to Honiton where I stop to buy a newspaper. The assistant in the petrol station shop sees nothing unusual in a car driver wearing full leathers, or at least manages to hide their surprise. Then it's on for the last few miles to the top paddock where unloading takes place.

We have five Morgan entries for which the NHCA created a separate class for us. The line up was Phil Yarnall/Nico Panigada in Phil's 5-speeder, Dave Pitt in the Clockwork Orange, a double drive with Steve Wickers and Brett Gregson in Steve's MX4 SS and my green 1100cc MX2SS.

With a stunning performance at the July NHCA Curborough it seemed likely that Phil would claim Morgan honours. Dave admitted that the Clockwork Orange was seriously over-geared for hillclimbing, Steve had removed the standard valenced wings so that he could better position the front wheels. His Matchless engine is standard capacity and specification, awaiting a hot MX4 being prepared by Cameron Engineering for next season.

The event ran smoothly, as NHCA meetings usually do, and our two practice runs were completed in time for an early lunch break. There was a little drizzle in the afternoon, thankfully insufficient to affect track conditions. We got our two timed runs in prior to more persistent drizzle just in time for the top 10 run off which was pretty hairy for the quick folk on two wheels.

Phil was half a second adrift on our first timed run and improved by 1.27 seconds, but not quite enough as it turned out. Despite over-gearing, the Clockwork Orange remembered its way up Wiscombe from the time that Dave Winbow first drove it there in 1970. The Wickers:Gregson dual ended in Brett's favour with the ex-Phil Kennedy SS running better that it had been at the May Wiscombe, but it still sounded fluffy off the line.

As in our previous encounters Wiscombe's tight, twisty track made it tricky for Phil to use his better grip and the overall footprint of the 5-speeder. There's less choice of 'line' through the corners. In contrast, the pre-'53 Morgans can take better lines through the bends and the higher geared steering makes the two hairpins much less hard work.

NHCA chairman Paul Jeffery presented class winners and 2nd places with Wiscombe tea/coffee mugs. The supplier had over-delivered the 2nd place mugs, so Phil and Nico went away with two mugs each! All in all, a great day out.

Driver & Passenger	**Morgan & Class**	**Best Time**
Tony Quinn & ballast	SS MX2	56.97
Phil Yarnall & Nico Panigada	5-speeder S&S	57.06
Dave Pitt & ballast	Super Aero LTOWZ 'Clockwork Orange'	66.18
Brett Gregson & ballast	SS MX4	70.50
Steve Wickers & ballast	SS MX4	72.07

<u>Coming up</u>

The Sporting AGM is on Saturday 7 November at the Woodland Grange Hotel, Royal Leamington Spa. We've been offered a really good B&B rate of £100 for a double/twin, but this **must be booked by 10 October** to get the discounted rate. Fuller details were in the Competition Snippets email and will be repeated with the meal booking choices in the October Bulletin.

Reflections

We've had a pretty active competition year with several highlights and just one big disappointment – the cancellation of the Morgans Sweep The Board weekend.

However, just like The Terminator, "We'll be back!" at Curborough in June 2027 for Morgans Sweep The Board with a bigger and better event, not just for the competitors and exhibitors of famous competition Morgans, but also to make it enjoyable and memorable for all club members.

Photos

Catch me if you can – Fin Cameron in the Morgan Super Special keeps the supercharged Austin 7s at bay

Oh dear! Danny Hodgson’s broken worm wheel bolt. How tight are yours?

Danny Hodgson in the Buckland clips the rumble strips at Harewood

George Darbyshire at work fettling before Sue gets behind the heel at Dijon

Big track, small Morgan. Sue tackles an interesting set of bends

BHRC Cadwell photos – OC's Photography

A gaggle of sidecars, Morgans and the Darmont at BHRC Cadwell

Tony Pearson’s F2 cornering hard at BHRC Cadwell

Keith Cook in his new acquisition, the ex-Rob Pike, ex-John Scruton 5-speeder at BHRC Cadwell

Hamish Bibby leads in Bill Tuer's racer at BHRC Cadwell

Fin Cameron closing on the big Bentley at Castle Combe

Look out, he's getting closer!

Brett Gregson smiles as he waits for the first practice run at Wiscombe Park. Photo: Tony Quinn

Phil Yarnall and Nico Panigada have smiles too. Photo: Tony Quinn

Morgan tailpiece – Clockwork Orange at Wiscombe. Photo: Tony Quinn