

NG Road Racing... Race Report.

Castle Combe | 27th and 28th June | Rounds 6 and 7

Words : Russ Gardner
Images : EDP Photo News



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Cooper crowned King of Combe for a second time.

Dan Cooper (20)

This Castle Combe Grand National meeting saw National championships for 250GP...F2 Sidecars and Lansdowne Classics, as well as the "Mr Blast" King of Combe.

Star of the meeting was newly crowned TT Privateers Cup winner, 28 year old Dan Cooper from Stroud, he returned victorious from the Isle of Man TT just a week prior to this Castle Combe meeting. Dan, a former NG and British 125GP champion proved again that whether it be on a big bike, little bike, short circuit or road race, he is a force to be reckoned with. Some riders struggle to get back into short-circuit-mode after the Island event, but Dan was on it all weekend. Consistently lapping just a tenth or two outside the outright circuit lap record.

Cooper took both Super Twins finals on the SB Tuning ER6 that he used to get 5th place on the Isle of Man as he headed home racing-journo Alistair Fagan both times....and set a new class lap record in the process. Another clean sweep came in the Powerbikes, now on his Space Centre Racing CBR1000 Honda. This time heading home defending champ Phil Bevan on both occasions.....again, setting a new class lap record. Forrest Dunn and Darren Rumley each made their first visit to the podium in 2015 in the Powerbike here, whilst Roo Cotton lifted himself to third in the points table, despite a troubled weekend on his R1.

Cooper topped off his weekend in style by taking all three Phoenix Open finals and the "Mr Blast" King of Combe, again with Phil Bevan doing the chasing, with three stunning third step of the podium rides by Dale Thomas on his 600 Kawasaki

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2015 "Mr Blast" King of Combe
Daniel Cooper

Dale Thomas (93)

All the hard work pays off for young Dale

Last season young Welsh charger Dale Thomas, was on the brink of getting the reputation on being a habitual crasher, even if to be fair to him it wasn't his own fault!! But the team sat down and had a re-group, they even considered sitting the rest of the year out, but Mark Skinner and Cardiff Motorcycle Centre stepped up with some well needed cash. They then sought the technical know-how of Colin and Diane Leeder of 100% Suspension. The team headed up by ex racer Phil Evans had now put Dale and his ZX6R back on track, and he repaid them in spades this weekend. Pole and three podiums in the Open races and two wins in the 600 Open, setting a new class lap record on the way to glory. Behind Dale, mayhem ensued, as Max Symonds and James Harrison had big bike and bone



busting crashes. Sam Thompson had his 675 on the podium twice, but Mark Hughes grabbed more good points to lead the title chase after two consistent outings on his MBM Photogenix R6. Sean Montgomery though was gaining from ear to ear with two fourth places that see his leap up the point's table into second, just two behind Hughes.... although he must be ruing the two early season dnf'sboth times crashing out of the lead at Brands and Cadwell.... Sorry to remind you Sean!!!

Atkinson bags the points in the 250GP National Series.

Philip Atkinson (2)

UK based South African Philip Atkinson took pole and both wins in dominant manner on the Declans Racing TZ250 Yamaha to cut the gap to series leader Ant Hodson. Hodson simply had no answer this weekend to Atkinson's pace. In turn though Hodson was well clear of the battle for the final step on the 250GP ACU National championship podium. Saturday had Bruce Dunn, Dan Jackson, Rich Grinling Dave Hampton and Darrell Higgins squabbling over it, with MCN test rider Dunn getting the nod. Higgins was right up behind Dunn when he ran onto the grass in the latter stages. Dunn and Higgins continued their rivalry in Sunday's race as again Atkinson headed Hodson, but all the action was for third. Going into the last lap Dunn and Higgins were neck and neck. At Quarry Dunn's bike coughed and ground to a halt. Higgins unaware that he now had a certain podium continued at 100%, the local support for the Melksham man gasped as he fell off his DTR TZ250 on the penultimate corner. A gutted Higgins watched Gary Vines take the final step on the podium



Ben Birchall / Tom Birchall (3)



TT champs take ACU/FSRA F2 top spot at Combe.

Fresh from their stunning TT victories Ben and Tom Birchall on the Mitchell's of Mansfield LCR Honda took both ACU/FSRA F2 Sidecar rounds. Saturday's race over John Holden and Dan Sayle with Alan Founds and Tom Peters third. It was a great race, but nothing to what we saw on Sunday as the first five outfits were never more than a second or so apart until the last lap of the 12 lapper. Pole-man Holden ran onto the grass on lap one but clawed his way back up into contention. Peter Founds and Ashley Hawes led for much of the race with The Birchall's, The Bells, Ian and Carl, as well as Founds/Peters and Holden/Sayle were often three abreast in what the crews themselves dubbed ".....one of the best sidecar races ever". But in the end The

Birchall pairing came to the fore with Founds/Hawes next and Ian and Carl Bell third. The 72 crew of Founds and Hawes had to take comfort from setting a new F2 sidecar lap record.

Mike Edwards (121)/Duncan Fitchett (7)



Lansdowne triple glory for Mike Edwards

If there is one thing we can be sure of it is that Mike "Spike" Edwards can ride any bike he is given, from 400 Supersport day, through BSB and World Endurance, Mike has got the best out of any machinery. Currently his focus is the Bonhams backed Lansdowne National series. Mike rides the immaculate Ripley Land G50 Matchless. He looked comfortable here with the wins over Duncan Fitchett, Alex Sinclair, Chris Firmin and Mike Russell. They all took turns out front, but when Edwards wanted to take control of the races he seemed to find another level from his rivals to take a maximum points haul to extend his series lead. Ex BSB and GP rider, now TV pundit/presenter James Haydon had a ride out on Saturday and took an impressive fourth

placing.....It won't take him long to get to grips with the Classic bikes, then the rest will have to watch out !!!

Mixed fortunes for the locals.

With many local riders to Combe looking to impress, it ended up being a mixed weekend for the home grown talent. Stroud's Dan Cooper was all winning, but the Wiltshire men Darrell Higgins from Melksham and Scott Pitchers from Lower Compton just failed to make the headlines in the 250 National.... although Higgins gave it his all.

Chippenham's Nigel Manning-Morton (Pictured right) was all smiles in the Castle Combe sunshine. The 5 time NG Road Racing champion back in the late 1990's was having rare outing on his Dataline Express VTR Honda.

Melksham's Russell Hynes went well in Sunday morning wet conditions on his 675 Triumph, but didn't have the pace when things dried out. However going a little further out Keynsham contingent of Nigel Reed and Murray McConnachie had race wins, Reed in the Mini Twins and McConnachie in the Streetstock.

Chippenham's Nigel Manning-Morton



The pick of the NG action.

The big Streetstock riders again gave us some of the best action in what was a thrilling weekends racing. It seems fitting that Potchy Williams on his BMW S1000 and Martin Lowe with his ZX10 shared the honours as there was barely more that a few bike lengths between them all weekend. Defending champ Richard Hughes made his first outing of the year after the NW200 but had to settle for two third placings. The smaller 700 street class had wins for Murray McConnachie and Thomas Williams.

Father and son DCI refrigeration team riders Mike Hobbs and Chris Hobbs both took double wins in their respective classes in defence of their 2014 titles. Keeping with the double winners Sam Thompson grabbed both on his 675R in the Sound of Thunder class, as he fended off Chris Richardson on the ex Xerox works 1098, Ben Broadway, Peter Carr and Max Symonds.

Liam Delves continues his steep leaning curve on the Moto Engineering GP125 RS Honda that he uses in BSB, Liam took two more ins in the 125 class to head the club series. He also podiumed twice to put the little himself at the top of the Open 500 points table too. That 500 class saw wins for Dave Hampton and William Caines. Hampton was confident of the double but the little Tigcraft 500 single built by Dave Pearce in his back shed (...!!) expired in Sundays final, just as Dave was shaping up to take the lead on the road.

Caleb Smith and Max Cook took a win each in the F125 whilst Nigel Reed and Alex Sinclair did the same in the Mini Twins. Keeping up the points sharing trend Tim Bradley and Ben Harrison had a win apiece in the F400's, with Karl Horton and William Caines each shared the 25 point's earning position in the GP45's

Paul "Pothcy" Williams (38) / Martin Lowe (5)



Performance gets rewarded.

Riding the wheels off his ZX6R Kawasaki young Welshman Dale Thomas was an easy pick for the Clive and Pam Flood backed performance of the meeting. Dale took podiums in all three Open races including the Mr Blast King of Combe, and was victorious in both 600 open finals setting a new class lap record to boot..... well done.

.....and finally



The podium for the 2015 "Mr Blast King of Combe

1 st	Dan Cooper	Space Centre CBR1000 Honda
2 nd	Phil Bevan	Bevan Track Days ZX10 Kawasaki
3 rd	Dale Thomas	Cardiff Motorcycle Centre ZX6R Kawasaki

Not sure why but this reminds me of the classic " I know my place " comedy sketch with John Cleese, Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett !!!!!



Nothing misses the lens of the EDP Photo News snappers.... Former British champion and 500cc GP rider, now TV presenter and pundit James Haydon seen here getting to grips with his Ian Garbutt G50 Matchless in practice..... sorry James.

He learnt quickly and finished the Bonhams backed Lansdowne Classic race in 4th position, just missing out on a podium by 0.2 of a second.

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