

Back with an old friend

Anthony Reid tasted success overseas with the Vauxhall Cavalier in the 1990s and jumped at the chance of a reunion at Donington. KEVIN TURNER was there

Chances are, if you think of Anthony Reid in Super Touring, you picture him in a white Nissan Primera or a yellow-and-blue Ford Mondeo.

Certainly, all nine of his British Touring Car wins in that era came in those two cars, but he was also successful in a third tin-top.

Reid's first experiences of Super Touring, or Class 2 as it was widely known outside the UK, came in the All-Japan Touring Car Championship in a Vauxhall Cavalier. He took four wins and fourth in the 1994 standings and followed that up with three more and another fourth place overall the following year.



Veteran Reid was keen to drive the Cavalier again

Anthony Reid

'It feels exactly the same. I felt familiar with it and pressed on'

"I did a test at Pembrey in 1993 and they seemed to like what I did so I had a contract for 1994 and '95 in Japan," recalls Reid. "It was my introduction to Super Touring."

He thus takes little persuading when an opportunity to drive an example of the front-wheel-drive machine at Donington Park for AUTOSPORT comes up.

REID REUNITED

The car Reid is set to pedal is the RML-built Cavalier raced by Jeff Allam on his way to 10th in the points in the 1994 BTCC. It then went to Australia and ended up competing at Bathurst and Macau before going into hibernation for over a decade.

Bob and Mark Jones bought it for the 2012 season, as Super Touring returned as a historic category (see page 96). Mark, who started in grass-track racing and now races in historics with the Cavalier and a Lotus Cortina, reckons it didn't need a lot of work. "We've not really had to do anything with it, just a bit of TLC, and we've put it back in its original livery," he says.

Although the Cavalier now has the wings the car sprouted in 1995, it is still on its original engine. At the time the four-cylinder unit was quoted as having 290bhp but Bob admits it "doesn't give that now".

Reid reacquaints himself with the sparse cockpit of the Cavalier before heading out on a cold morning at Donington. It doesn't take him long to get up to speed

The Jones's Cavalier is the ex-Jeff Allam machine that raced in the 1994 British Touring Car championship



and the Cavalier soon passes the pits making that familiar scream.

Despite lots of traffic, the Cavalier's lap times come down and down as the session progresses. Reid is clearly enjoying himself out there.

"That was really good fun. Absolutely as I remember," are his first words as he climbs out, before immediately making set-up suggestions to Mark Jones.

"I was really concerned because

the unusual thing with that car was that, to change up, you pushed the gearstick forward," continues Reid. "Normally you pull. I thought, 'oh my god I'm going to blow the engine up', but actually, when I got into it, I only had to think about it a bit because I drove the car like that in period.

"It feels exactly the same and I felt familiar with it and was able to press on."

One thing that has changed



**CAVALIER WINNERS
IN THE BTCC**

John Cleland.....	15
Jeff Allam.....	2
David Leslie.....	1
James Thompson.....	1

since the 1990s is the tyres. Reid is running on a hard trackday Dunlop, as opposed to the myriad number of different compounds major teams ended up running back in the day.

"I had to do a few laps to get heat into the tyres, they felt hard," confirms the 54-year-old. "In the old days you could get heat into the rears in one lap. Sometimes we used to have three compounds and run different ones at each corner!"

CAVALIER CLASS

The Cavalier had a long life, first appearing in GSi form in 1990 and going through RSi iterations that ended with the bewinged machine of 1995 in which John Cleland took the BTCC crown.

Reid is in little doubt about what made the car successful, both in Britain and Japan. "It just feels like a great bit of kit," he says. "Nothing complicated, but everything does what it should do.

"I think that was the benchmark of the period. It did not feel like a front-wheel-drive car. It almost behaved like a rear-wheel-drive car because with fresh tyres you hardly got any understeer; oversteer was the issue, even under power."

Reid also remembers the impact that the splitters and wings, pioneered by Alfa Romeo and its 155s in 1994, had on the cars.

"In 1994 we had no aero kit and

the racing was fantastic with lots of overtaking and slipstreaming," he enthuses.

"But a year later, with the wings on, the car felt even better but the racing was more processional. It was harder to overtake. Even at Fuji, with the very long pit straight, for some reason when you got behind another car I think the wings threw the air up so there wasn't so much of a hole behind." ▶▶



Ex-Allam Cavalier from 1994 now wears the splitter and wings introduced for '95. Reid reckons they improved the car but created less exciting racing thanks to increased difficulty in overtaking



Reid gave Mark Cross a few set-up pointers after his re-aquaintance run at Donington Park

GOING TO THE EXTREME

Having raced in Japan, Reid headed to Germany with Nissan in 1996 before arriving in the BTCC the following season. He would almost win the title with the RML Primera in 1998 and narrowly missed out again with a Prodrive Ford in 2000.

Reid's memories of the Mondeo, arguably the most sophisticated Super Tourer, demonstrate just how far things went after the Cavalier's heyday.

"Everything became extreme, right down to having water-cooled brake callipers – and remember that the engine on the Ford Mondeo was set so far back and so low they could actually run the

driveshafts through the V in the V6," says Reid. "You almost had a 50-50 weight balance.

"The aerodynamics improved dramatically – that was the difference. You can feel some downforce in the Cavalier but not a great deal, whereas the Mondeo just had a tremendous amount of grip. It really was an aero car."

With more downforce being produced by the front splitter than the rear wing, the Mondeo was nevertheless not an easy car to hussle compared with the more benign Cavalier.

"The Ford was a bit more tricky to drive, especially in quick corners, because you had an aero imbalance," adds Reid, who reckons Prodrive's 1999 car was particularly challenging.

"It didn't have power steering and there was torque steer, all sorts of issues you expect with a completely new car."

With Vauxhall well into its Vectra programme and Nissan ruling the roost with the Primera, Prodrive took the engine build programme in-house for 2000

Anthony Reid

'The Cavalier is just beautifully engineered – nothing trick'



Original Swindon-built two-litre doesn't produce the 290bhp it used to, according to the car's owners



Reid familiarises himself again with the sparse cockpit of the Cavalier, a car he raced in the mid-'90s

and, with Reid partnering Alain Menu and Rickard Rydell, no expense was spared securing the title in the BTCC's final Super Touring season.

"Prodrive did a phenomenal job and built the most advanced Super Touring car I've ever driven, and it had more power than any of the others," reckons Reid. "But I never felt that car talked to me the same way as the Nissan Primera did, understandably because you had three big names with all their own ideas. Alain and Rickard seemed to like the car more the way it was than I did. I have to have a rear end that is very compliant and predictable."

THE MOVE TO BTC REGS

The cost of Super Touring had, by 2000, become unsustainable. New BTC regulations were introduced for 2001 to reduce costs.

Reid would taste success with MG, winning six races in 2001-'04, but the cars were something of a come down. "I could see the writing on the wall," he remembers. "In 2000 it became

like Formula 1 on a smaller scale. The Ford budget for that season was in excess of £10million.

"The BTC cars were like production club-level, so unsophisticated by comparison. You weren't allowed to move the engine so there was much more weight on the front wheels and there was no downforce to speak of. You had less grip and the engine power was a lot less. It was a culture shock!"

You can't help get the feeling that the cars of the mid-1990s, of which the Cavalier remains a fine example, slot sensibly between the less spectacular cars of the 2000s and the exotic money pits of the late Super Touring era.

"There's nothing very trick and fancy about the Cavalier but it's just beautifully built and engineered," says Reid. "If you were running one as a privateer it was a great car, and not too expensive to run.

"That's what Ray Mallock and his team have always been very good at doing. He set the benchmark with the Cavalier." ❧



Reid went on a charge at Fuji, taking second from the back in race one and winning race two

REID: THE BRAVE CAVALIER IN JAPAN

It may not have got much coverage in the UK, but the All-Japan Touring Car Championship was competitive. And big.

One of Reid's best racing memories comes from the 1994 season finale double-header, at Fuji, while driving the Vauxhall.

"It was a big race, Japan's Tourist Trophy," says Reid.

"I won from the back of the grid because we'd had a problem in qualifying. I overtook 30-odd cars by slipstreaming in one of Ray Mallock's Cavaliers. It was a huge slipstreaming battle. I've got the Lord Mayor's trophy on my cabinet."

Reid charged from 31st to second in the first part, before comfortably winning the second encounter from Jo Winkelhock.

Behind raged a tight battle for the title between the Toyota Carinas of Masanori Sekiya and Tom Kristensen and the BMW of Steve Soper in a field that AUTOSPORT's Adam Cooper described as "a marvellous tribute to the strength the JTCC has

attained in a highly competitive first year of Class 2 racing".

Soper charged from the back in both races, but was forced out of the first with fuel-pump failure. Kristensen clashed with Aguri Suzuki in race two and Soper's second charge looked set to bring him the title. But the effort had taken too much from his tyres and he fell back. Despite spinning on a warm-up lap and non-starting race one, Sekiya's third place in the finale was enough for the crown.

But Reid was well down the road. "It was a class field of all the major Japanese manufacturers, BMW and some great drivers: Winkelhock, Soper, Hoshino, Hasemi," he adds.

"We had enough power to slipstream and pass people down the straight – at that time the Cavalier really was a very competitive package.

"Ray Mallock used to make the trip over for the Japanese races – they were very important and it was a big championship."



Prodrive-built Ford Mondeo was the most spectacular Super Tourer. Reid recalls it was "tricky to drive"