

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Silverstone Classic - July 2007



As the name implies, last weekend saw Silverstone circuit bursting at the seams with classics, not only racing but on the infield, and all around the outside of the track. The whole venue was full of classic cars.

Silverstone's classic weekend has picked up from where the Coys-sponsored meeting left off some years ago now re-establishing itself as one of the top historic meetings of the year.

Fortunately these days, historic and classic car racing enthusiasts are spoilt for choice, so it was up to the Silverstone organisers to carve their own niche in the market, this they have done by dedicating the Silverstone Classic weekend to the enthusiast, not only of historic racing but classic road cars as well.

Over the weekend 44 specialist car clubs attended, each with a dedicated area and between them displaying - according to the organiser's numbers - over 2800 cars ranging from **Ferrari Enzos** to **frog-eyed Sprites**.



Several anniversaries were celebrated at the weekend, the main one being 25 years of the **Porsche 956** with over two dozen 956/962s on display and a good number of them took part in the Group C races as well.

Gary Pearson upset things by taking victory in Saturday's Group C/GTP race driving a **Jaguar XJR11** but Andy Purdie managed to uphold the German manufacturer's honours by winning on Sunday in the **"Porsche Centre"** sponsored **962C**. **Group C** racing is celebrating its own Silver Jubilee this year and on Friday afternoon 65 cars from the series assembled on Silverstone's National Straight to mark the anniversary, with all six **Jaguar XJR9s** in attendance.



Lola Cars will be 50 years old next year and their display featured cars from the first **1958 MK1** through to **2002 MG-Lola EX257**. On Saturday and Sunday they staged a fascinating Question & Answer session featuring company owner **Martin Birrane**.

On the track action consisted of 22 races, two for motorcycles with the rest dedicated to cars from **pre-War** to **Group C/GTP**. Grids for all the events were full and spectators were treated to some great action, three past Le Mans-winners were in attendance; **Derek Bell**, **Andy Wallace** and **Jackie Oliver**, all of them racing during the weekend.



Perhaps the most unusual race was the twilight running of the **Denny Hulme Silverstone Endurance Trophy**. As a round of the Masters sports car series it attracted a first class field of cars from the 60s and 70s. Sadly, the weather forecast proved to be accurate and, as predicted, rain and the race started together at 19.30. Both continued until the flag fell on winner **Martin Birrane** driving one of his own **Lola T70s** 90 minutes later. What had been planned to be a great race with cars running into the evening, lights blazing, turned into a difficult drive leaving the contestants to splash along through the gathering gloom.

This however was the only blot on the landscape the rest of the weekend was bathed in sunshine, and with Silverstone at its classic best.

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