

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Masters Historic Festival Brands Hatch 23-25 May 2009



Brands Hatch and Bank Holidays go together like gin and tonic, or strawberries and cream. It's a tradition going back several decades that great race meetings take place at this wonderful Kent circuit when most of the UK has an extra day off.

Fortunately, this fact is not lost on the organisers of the **Masters Series**. As a consequence, with last weekend being the Spring Bank Holiday in the UK, it held its **Masters Historic Festival** at Brands.

Following on from those memorable meetings of the past, the organisers presented race fans with a weekend full of nostalgia and exciting racing. So much so that **Sir Stirling Moss** decided to leave motor racing's glitterati in **Monaco** and spend the weekend racing at the Festival, behind the wheel of his gorgeous **1956 Osca FS 372** (a proper little racing car, below).



Saturday was a mini-meeting in its own right, being staged on the **Brands Hatch Indy** circuit with both qualifying and races held in the one day. Featured classes were the **Cloth Cap & XK Challenge** with a whole host of **Jaguar XKs** competing, while **Alfa TZ1s**, **Triumph TRs**, **Morgans** and **MGBs** battled it out for **Cloth Cap** honours at the same time. **Oldies but Goldies** then took to the track in a fantastic scrap for pre-60s saloons.



Next it was part one of the **Masters Pre-66 Saloons**, with race two being held on the Monday; both races provided grids full of classic 1960s tin-tops ranging from a **Mercury Cyclone** and a host of **Ford Falcons** and **Mustangs**, through **Alfa GTAs** and **Lotus Cortinas**, to a bunch of swarming **Minis** that kept darting up the inside of these USA leviathans when they were least expected. Proceedings on Saturday were brought to a close with a grid full of **Morgans** racing for the **Morgan Tucker Trophy**.





On **Sunday** and **Monday** the meeting expanded onto the full **Brands Hatch Grand Prix** circuit. Many 'Historic' meetings are held at tracks with names that go back into the history of motor racing, but it has to be said that most of these have been modernised out of all recognition; not so with Brands.



How good it is to see these cars racing at this taxing circuit that winds its way through the lush and wooded, undulating Kent countryside, just as many of them did 40-plus years ago - truly Historic racing in a historic setting. There followed two days of varied competition with races for **1970s Grand Prix cars**, **pre-66 rear-engined Grand Prix cars**, **1950s front-engined Grand Prix cars** and two sportscar races that were full of ground-shaking **Lola T70s**. If the credit crunch has left you untouched, **Coys** was on hand with an auction of very tempting machinery and collectables on Sunday afternoon.

But as far as **Classic Driver** was concerned, they had saved the best till last: the **Gentleman Drivers GT and Sports Endurance** race. This was a two-hour extravaganza of **Cobras**, **E-types**, **Healeys**, **Porsche 911s**, **Astons**, **Mustangs** and **Corvettes** racing head-to-head for victory. A fitting way to round off the weekend.



Unfortunately, the race was red-flagged half-way through when the **Lotus Elan** of French pairing **Jean-Pierre Druguet** and **Eric Perou** went off very heavily at **Paddock Hill Bend**. The race did re-start and this gave **Martin Stretton** (**Jaguar E-type** no. 33) the chance to snatch the lead from **David Heart's Cobra** (no. 5).

Then, with 15 minutes to go, the **Safety Car** came out, closing the field up again and, within a couple of laps of the re-start, **Heart** had regained first place. Despite being harried by **Stretton** to the finish, he took the win by six seconds.

It was an exciting finish to three days of Bank Holiday racing where it should be - Brands Hatch.

A full list of results is available at: www.themastersseries.com/event-information.html.

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