

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Silverstone Classic 24-26 July 2009](#)



On the weekend that Lewis Hamilton returned to the winners' podium, F1 returned to Silverstone. No, Mr. Ecclestone hasn't changed his mind regarding Donington (not yet, anyway) but the Silverstone Classic meeting managed to attract over three times as many Grand Prix cars as you were likely to see at the Hungaroring. With two races each over the weekend (for pre-66 Grand Prix cars and GP cars 1966-1981, respectively) all four grids were packed with historic F1 cars.

This appears to be the trend for the **Silverstone Classic**. Yes, there were plenty of celebrity drivers, too, with **Sir Stirling Moss**, **Jackie Oliver**, **Arturo Merzario** and **Bobby Rahal** all taking the wheel, but the cars were the main attraction. With the organisers boasting that they'd attracted over 700 cars to take part in 21 events, plus 4000 classic cars on display at the 60 car clubs featured on Silverstone's infield section, there was indeed something for every type of petrolhead. The F1 circus has scarred Silverstone with endless fenced enclosures and countless security gates, but last weekend they were all open and the good old fee-paying enthusiast could wander freely throughout the whole infield and paddock area. Competitors were encouraged to display a history of their car, and how refreshing it was to gaze at a piece of machinery and know that it had once been driven by the likes of **Ronnie Peterson**, **John Surtees** or **Phil Hill**.



Both **Saturday** and **Sunday** featured racing all day, with events ranging from **pre-War sports cars** to turn-of-the-millennium saloons, and taking in a whole host of sports and Grand Prix categories on the way. Fifty years of BMC's little world-beater was commemorated on Sunday, with two races solely for **Minis**, filling the circuit with these tyre-smoking, buzzing boxes.



Saturday's proceedings were rounded off by the now-customary twilight sportscar race for the **Denny Hulme Trophy**. There were many unusual and rare cars at the Classic this year, but this grid could boast the most. Along with a host of **Lola T70s**, **Chevrons** and **GT40s**, it contained **Alan Mann's 1968 Ford 3L**, a **1970 Ferrari 512M** (the Ferrari factory never managed to get the original paintwork up to such a standard), two **1973 Abarth Osella PA1/04s** and two **1971 Alfa T33s** (shades of the **BOAC 1000Km** at **Brands Hatch**). As the setting sun turned Silverstone orange, the field set off to finish 90 minutes later in the twilight, with headlights ablaze.



Jaguar was the 2009 featured manufacturer, as this year marked the 60th anniversary of the marque's victory at the inaugural *Daily Express* production-car race held at Silverstone. Jags of one sort or another popped up in most races, from the two **XJRs** in the **Group C** event, through **D- and E-types** in all the sportscar races, to a 46-strong line-up of **XK120-50s** for the **Production Jaguar** race. In addition, there was an infield display of just about every type of racing Jag for the visitor to scrutinise.



Other makes and marques were by no means ignored, with 56 owners'/enthusiasts' clubs staging displays on the infield area. There were wall-to-wall **Ferraris**, **Healeys**, **Mercedes**, **Lancias**, **TVRs** and **Sprites** and more to gaze at, plus plenty of rare models, usually with an owner on hand to give you all the details. It wouldn't be difficult to while away a whole day in this section alone, just looking and chatting, and then in the evening take in one of the concerts organised on site. I think my choice would be Santana.



Let's hope that next year's event (23-25 July 2010) will see yet more historic treasures racing at Silverstone.

Highlights from 2009:

- The roar of the '**Breadvan**' **Ferrari's** engine, as **Max Werner** piloted it to victory in Sunday's Pre-1963 GT race.
- The wheel-waving battle between the **Minshaw/Stretton Lightweight E-type** and the **Cobras** of **Simon Hadfield** and **Hall/Hall**. **Simon** took the win but only after the lead had changed many times.
- Bad news for poor **Joe Ramos** as he put his no. 69 Mini Special on its roof – but at least we could still read the number...

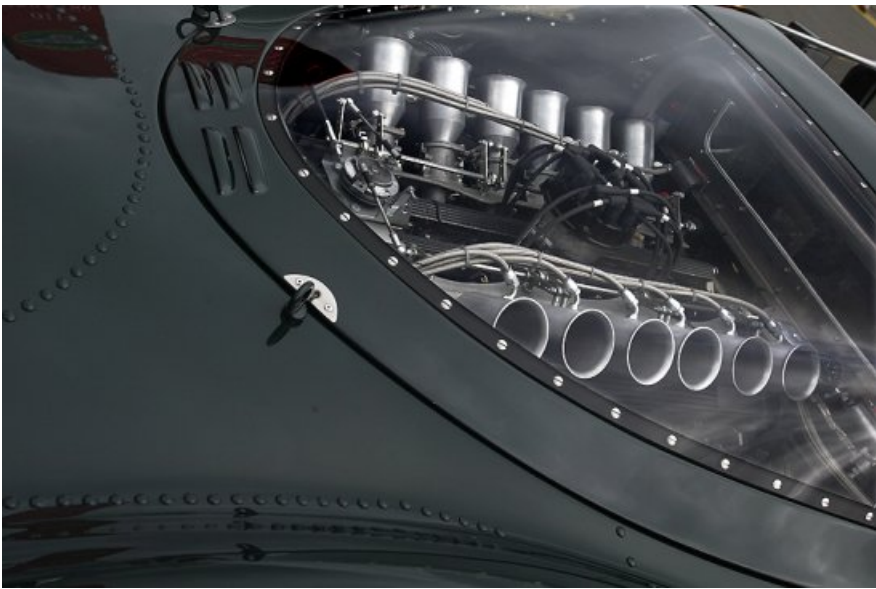


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