

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Donington Historic Festival, 30 April and 1 May 2011: Preview](#)



It's just a couple of weeks to go now till the first ever Donington Historic Festival, to be held right after 'that' wedding, on the weekend of 30 April and 1 May. In the meantime, an early April test day did much to raise the pulse-rate of serious historic motorsport enthusiasts.

Some 300 historic cars are expected at the Festival itself, and the test day offered a full taste of the action. Most notably, a spectacular selection of Group C cars took to the track in anticipation of a race on Sunday 1 May that will welcome a phenomenal grid of more than 25 of these predominantly 1980s racers. If its Donington opener is anything to go by, Group C Racing looks set for a very special year.

But since the Festival is, in part, a celebration of the resurgence of the Donington circuit after a period of great uncertainty, it's appropriate that the first race of the weekend takes us right back to the pre-War era, with a race enticingly called the 'Mad Jack' – in honour of Richard 'Mad Jack' Shuttleworth, winner of the first ever Donington Grand Prix, in 1935. Expect to see everything from huge and powerful 8-litre Bentleys, through Alfa 8C Monzas, to Sue Darbyshire's tiny but hugely entertaining 3-wheeler Morgan Super Aero (quicker than you might think!), and the oldest car entered for the Festival – Richard Frankel's 1921 TT Bentley 3 Litre.



In between these two eras is a satisfying spread of single-seaters, GTs and sportscars – plus Touring Cars, that could well be a real highlight for spectators. Donington is known as a bit of a Touring Car mecca, and the Festival pays tribute to this history by staging two races packed with the types of machine that graced the race circuits decades ago. The Historic Motor Racing News U2TC (under 2-litre Touring Cars) features cars that would have been found on 1963-1965 grids, such as Lotus Cortina and BMW 1800Ti, while the new [JD Classics Challenge](#) – just launched by Motor Racing Legends – showcases Groups 1 and 2 and Group A Touring Cars, such as those raced in the British and European Touring Car Championships between 1972 and 1985. Think TWR XJ-S, BMW 3.0 CSL and the rest.

The feature race on the Saturday evening, 30 April, is a 250km, two-driver endurance race for sports prototypes of the type that competed in the World Endurance Championships pre-1972. This is the first ever round of a new series – launched by Carol Spagg and Jason Wright – a 1000km challenge comprising four, individual 250km races spread across the year.



Then there's the well-established and much-loved Royal Automobile Club Woodcote Trophy, for genuine pre-1956 sports-racers – everything from Jaguar D-types, through Aston Martin DB3s and Austin-Healey 100Ms, to the little 1500cc Lea-Francis, 'The Skelly'.

There are the pre-'63 GT cars, a series launched in 2009, and which has since attracted the most illustrious marques and models... SWB Ferraris and DB4GT Astons (even a genuine pre-'63 Project car), to name but two. And the Stirling Moss Trophy, open to genuine, pre-1961 sportscars and sports-racers, has apparently attracted an overwhelming grid, including the Minshaws' Maserati Birdcage, the 1959 Le Mans-winning Aston Martin DBR1 and plenty of Listers.



But single-seater fans needn't feel left out. The HSCC's Historic Formula 2 Trophy, for F2 cars from 1967 – 1978, attracts entrants from across Europe and beyond; and there's also the FIA Lurani Trophy (for Formula Junior cars from 1958 to 1963), celebrating the brainchild of Italian Count 'Johnny' Lurani who devised the Formula that replaced the motorcycle-engined 500cc F3 cars as the stepping-stone to Formula 1.

Off-track, the entertainments include Group B rally cars in demonstrations on the Grand Prix loop, historic karts, plus all the usual autojumble and memorabilia stalls, cafés and bars. There is free paddock access for spectators, and a fine display of classic vehicles in the infield, courtesy of all the participating car clubs.

Have a look on the event website to get the details but – in contrast to many full-blown historic racing festivals – ticket prices have been kept low, with advance tickets starting at just £18 for adults and free entry for accompanied under-16-year-olds. On-the-gate adult tickets will be £22. Call the Donington Historic Festival ticket hotline: 0844 873 7355 or see www.doningtonhistoric.com.

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