



Record 90,000 enjoy the Silverstone Classic

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There can be little doubt that the Silverstone Classic has become the most important historic motorsport event on the calendar. With 1,113 race cars covering sixteen different classes, there is certainly something of interest on the track for every racing enthusiast. And for those with other ideas, there are shops and entertainment galore for the whole family.



The Porsche 911 Parade at the Silverstone Classic 2013

Friday was given over to practice and qualifying, while a full race programme was scheduled for both Saturday and Sunday with the on-track action kicking off at 09h00 each morning. For the first time in the event's history, all tickets via the pre-booking format were sold out before the first day's action, a convincing testament to the popularity of the event.



Porsche 911 Parade at Silverstone Classic 2013

On Saturday the circuit began to fill early due to the 09h00 start, and before long the temperature was up into the high 'twenties' and climbing, perfect weather for race watching. In the Porsche Club area the marshals were kept busy directing cars to their various sections for display and the word was that they weren't sure how they would cope the next morning when the cars arrived for the 911's 50th anniversary record parade attempt. The Aston Martin Owners Club was also well populated, as the manufacturer is this year celebrating its centenary.



AMOC display at Silverstone Classic 2013

Just after the lunch break on Saturday it was the turn of the FIA Masters Historic Formula 1 cars to get their first run in anger, and these included the fabulous JPS Lotus, Tyrrell, Williams, Surtees, Shadow, March, Ensign, Trojan, Penske...the list goes on. Next up was the Trans-Atlantic Touring Car Trophy (Pre-66) race, which saw the mighty Falcons and Fairlanes taking on the extremely quick Lotus Cortinas, Mustangs and Mini Coopers. This could have been a race from the '60s as this menagerie of makes tussled and jostled their way around corners in characteristic drifts, bumper-to-bumper and door handle-to-door handle.



#1 Lotus 76/1, FIA Masters Historic Formula 1, Silverstone Classic 2013

Furthermore, Saturday's Aston Martin centenary parade (more than 350 Aston Martins) dazzled the huge crowd, with Sir Jackie Stewart, Murray Walker and the Duke of Kent among the notable attendees.



Ford Falcon, Transatlantic Touring Car Trophy, Silverstone Classic 2013

The beauty of the Silverstone Classic is that the spectators can wander around the paddock area in between the cars, and chat to drivers, have photos taken, and see the cars up close. Later on Saturday afternoon the FIA Masters Historic Sports Cars came out to strut their stuff, and this class comprised the 5.0-litre Lola T70, the 5.7-litre McLaren M6B, the familiar no.23 Le Mans winning Porsche 917 from 1970, right down to the diminutive (by comparison) 1600cc Elva Mk VII. Also included here were the impressive Porsche 911 RS and RSR, the mighty 7.4-litre Corvette and the gorgeous Alfa Romeo Tipo 33/2. This made for a truly spectacular race, and it was around the time of the end of this race that the commentator mentioned that it had been forecast by the weather boys that the impending storm had been downgraded to a light shower. When I heard this over the sound system, while making notes in the media centre, I wrote down, "We shall see!"



#31 Porsche Carrera 911 RS, FIA Masters Historic Sports Cars, Silverstone Classic 2013

Exiting the media building at around 19h00 on Saturday the heavens opened and the wind blew in the 'downgraded' storm, drenching everyone who wasn't inside. Sprinting the three yards from the media building to the waiting BMW media shuttle was enough to drench me. The result was that the final two races of the day were affected, as was the Lamborghini track parade, which saw only around half of the cars participating. The delayed hour long Race 12 (originally 19h10-20h10) for the Pre '66 Sports Cars had two safety car periods thanks to a couple of big spins and shunts, and the race was cut to 45 minutes in order to accommodate the last race of the day. The much-anticipated 'night' race for Group C cars which was to follow the Sports Car race was unfortunately cancelled due to the amount of standing water on the track. And by this stage, most of the spectators had headed for shelter and the stands were practically empty on account of the downpour.



Jaguar XJR14, Group C Endurance, Silverstone Classic 2013

As a result of the cancelled Group C race on Saturday evening, the Sunday race for these cars was extended from 20 minutes to 42 minutes. The weather on Sunday was far more pleasant with no rain, and a stiff breeze kept things a bit cooler, but feelings on the track were every bit as hot as the no.17 Jaegermeister Porsche 962C rammed the no.10 Havoline Porsche 962, with both cars retiring.



#72 Chevron B16, FIA Masters Historic Sports Cars, Silverstone Classic 2013

Quite possibly the best race of the weekend was Sunday's Race 15 for Pre '56 Sports Cars which proved as nail biting as ever with the no.7 D-type the leader, up until the first driver change. The no.54 Cooper-Jaguar took over the lead and with 20 minutes to go, the order was 54 (Cooper-Jaguar), 7 (D-type), 11 (Cooper T38) and in fourth place, the no.51 (C-type Jaguar). The D-type was noticeably quicker than the leading car and soon got past and before long the C-type overtook both the nos.11 and 54 cars and set off in pursuit of the leading D-type. With each passing lap the C-type gained ground and using every inch of track, and more, the C slid and powered its way until it was on the tail of the D, which eventually won the nailbiting race. Incredibly the C was challenging the more powerful and more advanced D as the two came towards the line, but the younger car just managed to hold off the flying C-type.



#132, Lola T142, #39 Chevron B24, Formula 5000, Silverstone Classic 2013

The Porsche Parade was an all-out success as the Club had hoped to get 911x Porsche 911s on the circuit but the final tally was in fact 1208 cars, earning the Club a world record in the process.

All in all, the Silverstone Classic is the biggest historic racing car festival of its kind in the world, with competition entries spanning 90 years of motor sport history. This feast was watched by a record crowd of 90,000 and with such a success story to draw on, the 2014 event promises to be even better still.

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