# Thruxton Historic Festival – classic motor sport much enjoyed

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An eclectic collection of saloon cars in action for the Allstars race. (Copyright photo by Chris Adamson).

# Exciting classic racing at Thruxton's Historic Festival – Report by Chris Adamson.

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Famous names from the glory days of post-war British motor racing heritage were in action once again at the Thruxton Historic Festival in Hampshire.

Marques such as Jaguar, Aston Martin, Lotus, Lister, Cooper, Frazer Nash, Connaught, Austin Healey and MG brought back memories of the days when British designed and built machinery headed the grid at sportscar races around the world.

Sadly a busy weekend on the motor racing calendar around the country meant that the entry list was a little thin, exemplified by the fact that the Pre 63 GT and Jaguar Classic Challenge for pre-66 cars only attracted a grid of five cars.

But the lack of numbers was made up for with some close racing at the front where the top three E-Types were lapping within half a second of each other during the 60 minute encounter where the example of Matthew Wrigley and Rob Wainwright gradually overcame the speed of pole sitter Ben Adams who couldn't quite re-create his qualifying time.

Event headliner was the one-hour combined MRL Royal Automobile Club Woodcote Trophy (for original sportscars from 1946 to 1955) and the Stirling Moss Trophy (for pre 1961 sportscars).

It was no surprise when the recreation Lister Knobble of Tarek Mahmoud and experienced racer Nigel Greensall, took pole position to head the Stirling Moss entries. However it was the 1959 Lola MK1 of Ben Adams that emerged victorious after completing 39 laps and was presented with the trophy that Moss won at the 1955 British Grand Prix.

The Lister couldn't replicate its qualifying pace and dropped to third behind the Lotus XV of

Michael Birch and Gareth Burnett.

Classic Touring cars, always a favourite with the Thruxton crowds over the decades, put on their usual entertaining display of sporting saloon going sideways and this was highlighted in the Jack Sears Trophy for 1958 to 1966 period cars that opened the two day meeting.

It was venerable Lotus Cortina MKIs that dominated the 45 minute dash with the pole sitting example of Neil Brown and Richard Dutton (both drivers contesting more than one race during the event) leading the field – but they were harried all the way by Pete Chambers whose times were less than a tenth of a second shy of the leaders.

The winners were both out in their own cars for the Sixties Touring Car Challenge with U2TC for pre 66 two litre entries.

Brown in his 1964 Cortina gave chase to the eventual winners Max and Andrew Banks in their 1965 Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GTA and only finished less than eight seconds down after 38 gruelling laps.

Dutton peddling his 1969 Ford Escort MK1 (the lone entry in the more modern Sixties class) qualified third quickest and was matching the Alfa for pace when he retired on lap 22.

The boom period for British teams in both the British and European Touring Car series was the late ‘80s and early ‘90s which was represented in the Historic Touring Car Challenge that featured the throaty roar of the likes of the Ford Capri, Sierra Cosworth, Nissan Skyline and BMW E30.

Former Touring Car star Andy Middlehurst co-driving with Jonathan Bailey put their 2.6 litre 1990 Nissan Skyline on pole for the one hour burn but couldn’t hold off the challenge of the similar Skyline of Ric Wood who led them home by less than ten seconds after 43 tours of the Hampshire circuit.

There was a real mixed bag of entries for the HRDC Dunlop Allstars outing for pre-66 Sports

GT and Touring Cars that featured in club racing of the period.

Ben Colburn set the qualifying pace in his Lenham Sprite and initially led the field that also featured the likes of the Ford Anglia, Aston Martin DB4, Morris Mini, Austin Healey Sebring Sprite and an MGB Roadster.




A Ford Anglia looking good… (Copyright photo by Chris Adamson).

He was involved in a race long three-way tussle with the Marcos 1800GT of Andrew Smith and the mighty TVR Griffiths of Jamie Boot. The power of the TVR eventually proved decisive as Boot eased out a three second winning margin over Smith with Colburn only a second further back.




Top three in the Allstars race with the winning car (No72) in second position here. (Copyright photo by Chris Adamson).

Some of the closest racing of the weekend was to be seen in the two races for the Lackford Engineering backed Midget and Sprite Challenge.



‘…and they are off!’. (Copyright photo by Jeff Bloxham).

Reigning series champion Pippa Cow from Marlow Bottom in her 1390cc race modified 1965 Sprite set the pace in qualifying but in the final race of the Saturday had to fend off the attentions of the 1960 Frog Eyed Sprite of Tom Walker from Bristol.



Reigning Sprite champion Pippa Cow leads the way (Copyright photo by Jeff Bloxham).

The pair were hardly a car's length apart for the full 20 minutes with Cow holding on by just three-tenths of a second at the line. They were well ahead of the rest of the entrants where just over a second separated fourth, fifth and sixth.




‘How to get it wrong at the chicane…’. (Copyright photo by Peter Baker, Retro-Speed magazine).

Sunday’s second outing for the Midgets and Sprites again saw Cow and Walker swapping places until just over half distance when Cow’s engine expired and Walker was able to stroke his car home with a comfortable lead of over a minute and 24 seconds.

Completing the circuit’s racing history were two races for the Jochen Rindt Trophy that featured a packed grid of single seat racing cars up to 2 litres that celebrate the spirit of Thruxton in the 60s ,70s and 80s.

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Many of these cars provided the stepping stone to many Formula One careers including that of Ayrton Senna whose number 11 Van Diemen RF82 was honoured in the class for Formula Ford cars from 1975 to 1983 in the hands of Steven Connor from Ightham who sadly couldn't recreate the success of the great Brazilian and languished at the rear of the 28 car grid.




Ayrton Senna's number 11 Ralt. (Copyright photo by Chris Adamson).

One of those who first showed his promise in these cars on his local circuit before graduating to Formula One was Derek Warwick who was among the spectators watching the action with particular attention on the 1975 to 1983 Formula 3 starters competing for the Derek Warwick Trophy.




Derek Warwick (right) with two of his Formula 3 cars. (Copyright photo by Chris Adamson).

It was therefore appropriate the class winner in both races was the experienced Dan Eagling from Norwich in a Ralt RT1 previously driven by Warwick and sponsored by Warwick Trailers.

Pole position for the opening 20 minute race was taken by the Formula 2 March 722 of Rob Wainwright from Swadlincote. Despite setting the fastest lap of the race he was harried all the way by the Modus M1 Formula Atlantic of Benn Tilley from Bourne who just got his nose in front at the line by seven tenths of a second.

Race two on Sunday looked to be heading the same way until Tilley retired on lap eight

leaving Matthew Wrigley from Ashbourne in his March 79B to give chase, closing the gap to winner Wainwright to under three seconds.

Away from the track action the event featured a special tribute to another British classic, the Land Rover with owners of all shapes sizes and derivatives of the famous Landy providing a series of parade laps.




Land Rover Tribute included this Judge Dredd film version. (Copyright photo by Chris Adamson).

while local car clubs provided a colourful display on the grass banking around the circuit and a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight gave an acrobatic display in the

skies above.




Paddock delights. (Copyright photo by Chris Adamson).