



IGNITION // EVENTS



MODENA CENTO ORE CLASSIC

Finding gold in Italy's supercar heartland

Four-day blast on glorious roads and tracks featured an impressive entry list

Words Anthony Pozner and Robert Gluckman

UNDER AN ELECTRIC BLUE sky, the car park at Modena's Hotel Rechigi hosted an amazing selection of Ferrari 250s, AC Cobras, a Maserati 300S and a Bugatti Type 35A, not to mention an assorted mix of Jaguar E-types, Porsches, Alfa Romeos and Lancias. It made for a colourful start to the 13th Cento Ore, a four-day, 1000km classic rally-race based in Modena and taking in Florence, Arezzo, the Apennine mountains and special stages on Mille Miglia roads and at Mugello circuit.

With scrutineering out of the way, the official start was from the main square at Rubiera, with the cars being waved off by an enthusiastic crowd. The event was divided into the familiar regularity and competition sections, which attracted several competitors well-known in historic rallying.

Dr Sasha Bernstein, the debonair dentist from Düsseldorf, drove a highly modified Jaguar E-type with fluorescent green wheels and hints of *Mad Max* machinery about its preparation. He later provided entertainment in the competition section, with several nail-biting laps as he battled with the AC Cobra of determined and experienced Mark Freeman, and Thomas Studer's Shelby GT350. The Cobra, true to its name, bit the E-type in the rear as they clashed in a corner, and both retired from that race. Later they recuperated, the Cobra doing rather better, eventually going on to win the competition section. Mauro Bompani, founder and organiser of

the previous Modena Cento Ore, magically conjured up a new rear wishbone for the E-type so it could continue, but the results had been determined.

Winner of the 2010 Mille Miglia, Giordano Mozzi enjoyed the hillclimbs in his 1963 Porsche 356C: 'It is very exciting for us regularity drivers to be challenged on closed roads and enjoy pushing the limits on turns in complete safety. It is not easy to find another race where this is possible.'

Phil Reed entered an elegant Ferrari 250GT Lusso in the regularity section. His co-driver Pete Sailstrom sang and played guitar in the town square



Top and above

The route took in medieval squares, twisting mountain passes and the Mugello racing circuit, and competitors' cars ranged from Porsches and Shelybs to a Bugatti Type 35A.

at the end of the event – only for an impatient local, desperate to hear his favourite Italian group (which was waiting in the wings), to pull the plug.

Mauro Bompani kept a paternal eye on proceedings and co-drove his daughter Francesca, who was piloting a rare 1956 Porsche 356 Speedster, in the Modena hillsides. She demonstrated the skills she'd learnt from her racing driver father, as we, the Hendon Way Motors team in our Ferrari 275GTB/4, did our best to keep up with her through the twisty roads above Modena.

Day three added a lot of road miles through the vineyards and olive groves of Chianti, with a succession of hairpin bends and tight turns. After a lunch stop in the magnificent medieval square of Arezzo, we were fighting through minimal visibility in a sudden flash thunderstorm. Yet the spirit of the event stretched beyond the driving, with beautiful lunches and dinners laid on by organisers Scuderia Tricolore. A wonderful gala soirée took place in the elegant 14th century Chiesa di Orsanmichele, whose top floor looks out over Florence, and across the hot terracotta roofs to Brunelleschi's marvellous dome.

The final morning brought thrilling laps at Mugello Autodrome, where Ferrari tests its F1 cars – Modena is at the heart of Italy's motoring heritage. The competition section was won by the Freeman/Ellis 1964 AC Cobra, and the regularity by the Mozzi/Azzali 1964 Porsche 356C.