

Modena Cento Ore

Unseasonably hot weather brought a high contrition rate with almost all the racers suffering some kind of mechanical difficulty along the way...

Reported by the competitors

This year's edition celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Modena Cento Ore that has evolved from a small local competition created by local enthusiast, Mauro Bompani and his friends to one of motoring's "must do" events. Now under the ownership of Canossa Events, the organisers used the occasion to create a special route from Rome to Modena. Catering to both competition and regularity competitors, there were races at Vallengunga, Magione, Mugello and Imola interspersed with 13 special stages on some of the finest roads Italy can offer.

A national holiday brought big crowds to Villa Borghese where the cars were scrutineered. Cento Ore always attracts a great selection of cars and this year, from the pre-war Alta of Wilfred Bechtolsheimer to the gorgeous sand beige 1967 Porsche 911 of Jonathan Procter, the grid was a motoring feast. One of the certainties in Italy is that what might be certain is never certain and the organisers soon proved their prowess when the welcome cocktail was delayed for an early evening tour of Rome. The traffic

So it was back to Florence in good time to get our best bibs and tuckers on for a rather special Cento Ore 15th Anniversary dinner in the cloisters of the Basilica Santa Maria Novello. I won't bore you with the details, have a look at Wikipedia, but it was very impressive.

in Rome has not improved much since the Italian Job, but at least this impromptu special stage gave the chance for one team to practice changing their clutch!

Wednesday morning saw the cars head to Vallengunga for the first race of the event. The paddock was almost immediately a hub of activity as several cars fell prey to mechanical maladies. Richard Walbyoff showed that when it comes to changing a diff, he could

After a lot of retirements and mishaps the winning cars were Didier Denat/Charlie Remnant in the Period G-J Porsche (L), and the Period F category went to last year's winners, Philip Walker and Howard Redhouse in the E-type





easily match owner, Mark Freeman's pace on the track, whilst the father and son team of Kevin and Lee Jones continued to assemble their ex-RAC Rally Escort in the paddock. Rumour in the paddock was that they had couriered the car to Rome in pieces with the intention of assembling it on the event! The competition section was separated into two races: Up to period F and then periods G, H & I. Former event winner Carlos Monteverde showed the potential of his ex-Ford France Le Mans Cobra, but 2014 winner Howard Redhouse showed car owner Philip Walker how close he was by returning with a little styling crease in the nose of the E-type. In the 2nd race, 911s swept the podium as Didier Denat took victory from Klaus-Dieter Frers and Jeremy Cooke.

Leaving the circuit suitably covered with oil for the regularity section, (ask Mike Thorne), the hard men and women of competition headed for the first special stage at Bolsena. The special stages are what define the Cento Ore. Whilst many of Italy's roads leave you wondering whether you should soften the suspension, the stages are another world. Fast, long, challenging and, for a nation best known for its straight roads, reassuringly not! Whilst the stages tend to favour the powerful cars, inveterate campaigner and former event winner, John "Driller" Sheldon showed that with good navigation (pace notes?) and plenty of commitment, power was not all, as he took his Lotus Elan to fastest time overall. The event was blessed with numerous lady crews in the regularity section, but none tried harder than "Gino" in the competition section. Gino was the hard working Alfa GTA in the hands of the very able Daniela Ellerbrock and Jackie Rohwer and they posted a very creditable 11th OA on the stage. With a high rate of contrition amongst some of the more powerful cars as the event continued, this team finished third overall and first ladies team. Both the Bolsena and Colonna stages were run twice, giving crews a chance to really perfect their techniques before the happy troupe headed to the beautiful city of Perugia.

After a sharp start on the following day, the field assembled at the tight and twisty circuit of Magione for the first race of the day.

Monteverde used the power of the Cobra to take pole from Howard Redhouse. Sadly for John Sheldon a minor engine fire took him off the grid and out of contention on a circuit that looked to suit the Elan. Redhouse harried Monteverde all the way to the line, but Carlos took victory again, by 0.5sec. Race two of the competition section was a bit of a Porsche fest with 9 cars in a field of 13. The race nearly got off to an early start when the Stratos of Gian-Maria Traversone made a blinding start and had overtaken four rows of the grid until he realised it was the green flag lap! Didier Denat held the lead until, on the last lap, a highly dubious overtaking manoeuvre by Klaus-Dieter Frers gave the German the victory but left both cars slightly damaged. But the crowd's favourite was undoubtedly the beautiful sand beige 911 of Jonathan Procter that finished a strong 26th OA in the combined grid results.

There was one special stage at Lisciano Niccone, before participants moved on to the important business of lunch. For a man schooled in the art of lunch by some of the great masters, there is no rally that comes close to Cento Ore. Whilst one has to wait until the close of play to imbibe some of Italy's great wines, the lunches were superb, comprising spectacular venues and great local food. Arezzo was no exception, with the cars parked in the ancient Piazza and a splendid offering, not to mention enough time to enjoy the food and company of fellow competitors, it really couldn't get better – except it did!

In the afternoon the Vallombrosa stage started to claim scalps. The Monteverde/Pearson Cobra suffered a minor ignition failure, the Alfa GTA of the Halusa brothers nearly floated away in a sea of petrol as the bag tank exploded, the Morgan of Roddie Feilden and Bill Bridges suffered an intermittent misfire and Didier Denat had blockages in the fuel line. The first run saw Frers ahead, but in the second run, the Ford Escort of father and son team, Kevin and Lee Jones literally slid its way sideways to fastest overall – a mighty achievement.

By this time we were all thirsty and so it was full steam ahead for Florence, but we should not forget the men and women of regularity

and a close battle was being fought between the Ferrari of Axel and Andrea Urban and the MGA of Barry Smith and Paul Crew, with the Ferrari team on top at the end of the day. A surprise pairing in regularity this year were the Kiwi couple, David Fitzsimons and Neil Tolich. After many years in the competition section, they decided to come out and do regularity. If they thought it would be more peaceful, they were wrong. On the stage they were not only hit by a deer, but met an official course car coming the other way. When David pointed this out to the organisers, the initial reply was, "It's ok, it's an official car!"

The end of the day finished on a high with the parc fermé in the splendid Piazza Ognissanti and a welcome glass (or two, or three..) of prosecco to slake the thirsts of the competitors. With a big party planned for the following night, participants were free to enjoy a night in Florence.

Day three began like the preceding ones – hot and dry, but the delights of Mugello awaited. As circuits go this is one of the best anywhere – definitely bucket list material. This time there was only one grid for competition and with the Monteverde Cobra having retired, the pressure was on the leading E-type of Walker/Redhouse. Walker elected to leave the enthusiastic Irishman in the pits and take command of the situation. The heat and pace of the event was still taking its toll on the cars and Richard Walbyoff had his spanners out again as he changed the gearbox on the green Cobra of Mark Freeman whilst the Escort of Kevin Jones was looking more like a prop from the latest Mad Max film as Kevin used all his ingenuity to solve his fuel problems. In an effort to maintain his reputation for sideways action he also selected the unusual combination of 12-year-old Dunlop M section tyres on the rear and slicks on the front. Having spun on the first lap he later admitted that it might have been an unwise choice. In the race Didier Denat took the win from his regular sparring partner, Frers. Further down the beautiful sand beige 911 of Jonathan Procter took a well-deserved 19th OA.

With two special stages, both along the historic Circuito Stradale del Mugello, each done twice in the day, it was a brilliant way to get hot, sticky and go fast in Italy. Lunch at the Golf Club was excellent especially the ice cream, though for some reason, we had a checkpoint in an outlet shopping mall where the regularity competitors were given the chance to indulge in a little retail therapy. Tolich and Fitzsimons said they really enjoyed it, whilst the no. 34 Porsche of Peter Kolling used the opportunity to show off in the car park when they took the engine out to change the

spark plugs. They said they had a clutch problem, but I don't believe them!

So it was back to Florence in good time to get our best bibs and tuckers on for a rather special Cento Ore Anniversary dinner in the cloisters of the Basilica Santa Maria Novello. I won't bore you with the details, have a look at Wikipedia, but it was very impressive. Suffice to say it took nearly as long to build as to restore a classic car. The food was great though perhaps a little late arriving, indeed some of our number left early to do their pace notes. Nevertheless it was an honour to dine there and typical of the effort that the organisers go to.

Day 4 dawned and after a slightly more leisurely start, the pack headed to the first stage at Monte Faggiola, where there was a slight delay as the Freeman Cobra suffered an engine fire, fortunately not too serious. Indeed it merely brought forward, and to a degree helped, the planned strip and repaint and rewiring. The second stage at Sambuca was great fun, though it had an interesting finish just after a hairpin. Then it was off to Imola for the last of the races, once again up to period F raced together, whilst period G, H & I had their own race. With the pressure on to secure a second consecutive victory in the historic class, team patron Philip Walker took the wheel, leaving co-pilot Redhouse to chew his already well gnawed fingernails. Didier Denat took a close victory from Frers, whilst Cooke's 911 coughed its lunch and spewed a pall of smoke from its rear as it headed to third place. Philip Walker drove a faultless race to seal overall victory in the historic section of the event. Jonathan Procter brought in the crowd pleasing beautiful sand beige 911 in a credible 20th OA.

With the messy business of racing over, it was time to follow the coppers back to Modena to the Piazza Grande for cold beers and a few prizes. There was little time to lose before we were assembled at the Museo Enzo Ferrari for the official prizegiving. Once again the food was great, even if the timing a little slow, though in a moment of candid honesty, the star chef did admit that Modena was "a place of fast cars and slow food".

Luigi Orlandini and his very attractive team doled out the prizes, and there were plenty of special prizes for deserving causes:

The Kiwis got one for turning up, but they are good fun and we like their attitude

The Police got one for being nice to us

The Germans got one for.... being German and turning up in an organised team



The beautiful sand beige 911 of Jonathan Procter relaxes between stages with a pair of Austin Healeys, driven by Mike Thorne/Sarah Bennet-Baggs and team mates Robert Rawe/Xavier Sanz De Acedo. The Healey team had various trials and tribulations, including loose oil pipes, failing clutches and overheating.

Luigi Orlandini

The “new” organiser of the Modena Cento Ore, Luigi Orlandini gave us his thoughts on the event.

“ I’m very happy about this year’s Cento Ore, and I’m very grateful to all of you as the event ran smoothly and in a friendly way. I’m also happy to host so many British crews, as they all behave like gentlemen (and btw I love England), but I also love to have so many countries present with such a small number of cars.

I took over the Modena Cento Ore in 2012, after my friend Mauro Bompani (who created the event in 2000) stopped running it in 2010. It started in a very unlucky time: in April I broke an ankle and I spent three weeks in hospital and six months recovering. In May there was the big earthquake in our region and many participants cancelled their entry, so in June we started with a very limited number of cars... (11 in competition and 20 in regularity).

But the event was good and the next year we doubled the number. In 2014 we closed at 70 participants and it was a great race, and this year we closed at 80 but with many more applications.

Now the Cento Ore is what I had in mind: A relatively small number of crews, with a wide variety of good cars and nice people from all over the world.

During the day a tough rally with racetracks and uphill special stages, going through historic city centres and scenic roads, and at night a charming event with enjoyable evenings, special locations, good food and wines.

Most importantly, at all times, a friendly atmosphere where you can meet old and new friends.

For the future, we are already working on 2016 (and I already have an idea for 2017). We’ll change the route back to a closed loop starting and ending in Modena and with a stop by the sea as in 2014. We will announce the new programme in London on September 7 at RM’s auction in Battersea Park, so please save the date! We will keep it a “small” event. The time of the year will still be at the beginning of June. Rome will come back in the future...”



Kevin and Lee Jones got one for attempting to rebuild their car on the rally rather than before

Mark Freeman, (read Richard Walbyoff) got one for changing everything except the engine

The regularity competitors got lots of prizes

The competition drivers got slightly fewer

And before I forget the rest of the results:

Philip Walker and Howard Redhouse won the event overall

Didier Denat and Charlie Remnant won the period G, H & I

Vincent Tourneur won the Index of Performance (top job by a great bloke!)

Barry Smith and Paul Crew won the regularity section

And the beautiful sand beige 911 of Jonathan Procter and Ben Cussons secured a top ten finish –yeah!

Luigi and his team pulled out the stops to make the 2015 edition of Modena Cento Ore a really enjoyable event. The organisation was excellent, the weather fab, the camaraderie was genuine and as the winning Irish Racing Drivers Club member, Howard Redhouse, would say, “it was a good craic”.

If you haven’t done it, put it on your list, (even if you don’t get a watch for winning!).



Competition Periods C-F - Top Ten

1. Walker/Redhouse (Jaguar E-type)
2. Dalgligh/McCulloch (Aston Martin DB4 GT)
3. Ellerbrock/Rohwer (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint)
4. Tourneur/Fiat (Porsche 356 Pre-A S)
5. Singleton/Singleton (Ferrari 275 GTB)
6. End/End (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint)
7. Nearburg/King (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint)
8. Louisoder/Schneider (Jaguar E-type)
9. Sabatie'-Garat/Balducci (Jaguar XK 120 OTS)
10. Beecroft/Marsh (Ferrari 250 GT SWB)

Competition Periods G-J - Top Ten

1. Denat/Remnant (Porsche 2.8 RSR)
2. Cooke/Dowd (Porsche 911 RSR)
3. Schleicher/Geiger (Porsche 911)
4. Niggeler/Gnani (Porsche 914/6 GT)
5. Bratke Von Bergen/Von Bergen (Porsche 930 Turbo)
6. Kurth/Karl (Porsche 911 Carrera)
7. Joy/Hermann (Porsche 911 2.7 RS)
8. Procter/Cussons (Porsche 911 2.0 S)
9. Feilden/Bridges (Morgan Plus 8)
10. Traversone/Hernandez (Lancia Stratos)

Regularity - Top Ten

1. Smith/Crew (MG A Twin Cam)
2. Urban/Urban (Ferrari 246 GT)
3. Bennett/Bennett (Alfa Romeo Giulia TZ)
4. Branse/Koditz (Jaguar XK 120)
5. Brenninkmeyer/Syborn (MG A)
6. Sucari/Sucari (Ferrari 250 GT SWB)
7. Bigatti (Porsche 911 Carrera 2.)
8. Harper/Nikolic (Alfa Romeo Giulietta Sprint)
9. Horbach/Mueller (Porsche 911 2.8 RSR)
10. Maes/Deplancke (Porsche 914/6)

Index of Performance - Top Ten

1. Tourneur/Fiat (Porsche 356 Pre-A)
2. Sabatié-Garat/Balducci (Jaguar XK 120 OTS)
3. Otten/Bonhof (BMW 328 Roadster)
4. Dalgligh/McCulloch (Aston Martin DB4 GT)
5. Ellerbrock/Rohwer (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint)
6. J-End/Y-End (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint)
7. Nearburg/King (Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint)
8. Walker/Redhouse (Jaguar E-type)
9. Beecroft/Marsh (Ferrari 250 GT SWB)
10. Rawe/Sanz De Acedo (Austin Healey 100 M)

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