

MODENA CENTO ORE CLASSIC

Some like it hot

The popular Italian event celebrated its 15th anniversary with competition and regularity categories, and a heat wave...

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2-7 JUNE
Rome to
Modena,
Italy



A HEAT WAVE arrived for the start of this year's Modena Cento Ore, a special 15th anniversary event which took competitors from Rome, through Perugia and Florence, before arriving in Modena four days later. Competitors were able to choose between a competitive category that involved a race each morning and closed road special stages, or taking things at a somewhat more modest pace in the regularity class.

With only 80 cars competing in total, the Modena Cento Ore – Italian for 100 hours – is fast becoming the event of choice for classic racers, and this year there were more than 50 entrants from the UK. A manageable number of cars lends the event a friendly feel, with minimal queues and fewer transit miles than on other big tours. This format also allows slightly longer to enjoy the white linen lunches and gala dinners, whilst the venues and organisation couldn't be faulted this year.

The searing 40°C heat led to inevitable retirements including the AC Cobras of Monteverde and Pearson on day three and Freeman and Ellis on day four, the latter catching fire dramatically at the

end of the last stage. This year's circuits comprised Vallelunga, Magione, Mugello and Imola, which offered competitors lots of variety. During the last race of the event the Martini-liveried Porsche 911 RSR of Cooke/Dowd had its engine let go in spectacular fashion; luckily the final time control was just outside the paddock gate and they were able to push the car through. However, to officially classify all competitors and cars had to arrive in Modena, so they loaded the 911 onto a trailer for the last 80km and quietly pushed it into the Piazza Grande, giving them their podium finish.

Overall winners of both the regularity and competition categories were all British entries who had also won in 2014. Barry Smith driving an MGA triumphed in the Regularity section, while in the Competition classes Didier Denat in his Porsche 911 RSR took the Post '66 silverware, with Philip Walker

in a Jaguar E-type claiming the Pre-65 spoils. Frenchman, Vincent Tourneur picked up the Index of Performance win in his ex-James Dean Porsche 356 Speedster.

Special mention goes to BRDC legend John Sheldon and his wife Lesley in a Lotus Elan. They had a few technical issues, including a small fire at the start of week, but by Imola John was seen battling for the lead of the Pre-65 race. The immaculately presented Aston Martin DB4GT of Ian Dalgligh graciously shrugged off a coming together with a very keen yellow Lotus Elan on day two, but later was emitting some nasty grinding noises from the gearbox. Battling on, they finished in the top 10 overall and fourth in the Performance Index.

At the prize-giving in the spectacular Enzo Ferrari Museum, event director Luigi Orlandini said he 'was thrilled the event ran smoothly'. Next year he plans to change the route back to a closed loop, starting and finishing in Modena with a stop by the sea; the full programme will be announced in early September. As this event will inevitably increase in popularity, it may be wise to book early for 2016.

Clockwise from top left
Ancient Italian towns made for a glorious backdrop to the event; Cobras were strong until the heat killed them off; winners pose for photographs; MGA of Smith and Crew took regularity win; Denat's class-winning RSR.