

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## [An audience with the world's most beautiful cars at Heveningham Hall](#)

### Lead

Now in its third year, the Heveningham Hall Motorsport & Aviation Concours d'Elegance took place last week in the idyllic grounds of the Suffolk estate. Is there another place on earth you can ogle a Ferrari 250 GTO, watch a Spitfire dog-fighting a Messerschmitt and pet a pygmy goat in the same day?

The Heveningham Hall Country Fair in Suffolk is a uniquely British occasion. Collies herd ducks, vintage tractors parade around the ring, and Punch and Judy keep the kids entertained while their mums and dads enjoy the local scrumpy.



However, unbeknownst to many at this year's fair, concealed behind the opulent Georgian mansion, away from the pygmy goat petting and the bobbing for apples, was a spectacular automotive concours comprising some 50 of the world's rarest and most desirable cars.

The Kim Wilkie-designed grass terraces on which the concours is held form a vast and impressive natural amphitheatre, and when you stand at the front, it feels a bit like you're a part of the show and the jewel-like cars ahead are your audience.



Conceived three years ago to raise money for charity, the Heveningham Hall Concours d'Elegance is unusual in that it's a new event with the calibre and quality of some of the most well-established and prestigious concours on the classic car calendar. What's more, a separate category was established last year catering to vintage aircraft – yet another string to this summer bonanza's bow.

Sensibly, the automotive concours entrants were separated into three clear categories: pre-War, post-War, and supercars. In the pre-War competition, machines such as the 1896 Benz Patent Motorwagon from the dawn of the automobile vied for victory with early Grand Prix cars including a 1927 Bugatti Type 37 that's regularly raced and rallied to this day and Richard 'Mad Jack' Shuttleworth's sensational 1934 Alfa Romeo Tipo B Monoposto.



Since news broke that Peter and Merle Mullin would be bringing their 1939 Delage D8-120 Cabriolet to Heveningham, continuing their European concours assault, we knew it would be best placed to receive the trophy. And sure enough, the Henri Chapron-designed cabriolet, which Gene Kelly drove in *An American in Paris*, was awarded the pre-War prize by judges Max Hunt, J Mays, and Romulus Rost.

The post-War category was arguably the most fiercely contested and featured a delightful mix of exotic cars. They ranged from what is believed to be the earliest Ferrari currently residing in the United Kingdom, a 1949 166 Inter Superleggera, to competition warriors such as the Aston Martin DB3S and Maserati Tipo 61 Birdcage and unique creations including the Giugiaro-designed Aston Martin DB4GT 'Jet' Coupe.



While we loved seeing 'GPG 4C', Grahame Bryant's famous AC Cobra, again, especially without the hardtop it usually wears when it races at Goodwood, and the ex-Gerard Larrousse 1969 Porsche 911 GT, our pick of the bunch was the 1955 Pegaso Z101. One of just 23 Pegasos clothed in lightweight aluminium bodywork by Touring Superleggera, we thought the two-tone Grand Tourer was charming, with countless intricate details and an overall aesthetic that looked more modern than its build date would suggest. Alas, the judges didn't agree – the category was won by Nick Mason's 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO.

The supercars category featured some of the greatest modern-era sports-racing cars, including a McLaren F1 GTR, the winningest Porsche 911 GT1 Evo, a Ferrari F40 LM, and a Maserati MC12 GT1.



In addition, the beautifully clean and simple Pagani Zonda C12S and cutting-edge hybrids such as the McLaren P1 LM and the Porsche 918 Spyder demonstrated the evolution of the supercar, as we know it today. Ultimately, it was Henry Pearman's Porsche 962 – the 1987 Le Mans pole sitter – that claimed the overall prize.

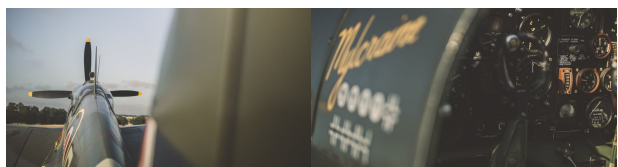
As its 2018 Formula 1 campaign continues to struggle, McLaren brought seven of its most successful cars to take centre stage at Heveningham and recall its brighter days. They included the MP4-14 in which Mika Hakkinen won the title in 1999, Ayrton Senna's final race-winning Formula 1 car, the 1993 MP4-8, and the MP4-23 with which Lewis Hamilton dramatically clinched his first championship on the final corner of the 2008 season in Brazil.





Situated around a quarter of a mile away atop a hill overlooking the scenic Heveningham estate was the aviation concours. And this was the highlight of the event for us. Miraculously, there's a heat wave in England at the moment and the entire event was bathed in searing sunshine throughout the weekend. On Friday evening, minutes before the sun dipped below the horizon, we sneaked up the hill and spent some alone time with this gorgeous selection of planes.

In the golden evening light, beautiful machines such as the 1941 Dragon Rapide DH89A, the Best of Show winning 1952 Morane-Saulnier 315, and the 1943 D84 Dragon Twin-Engined Biplane really evoked the romance of flight.



One plane stood head and shoulders above the others, however, and that was 'MH434', one of the most famous Supermarine Spitfires of them having flown over 80 operational sorties in the Second World War. Over the weekend, it took to the skies for a spectacular 'dogfight' display with a Spanish-built ME109J.



The variety is what made Heveningham Hall Concours d'Elegance such an enjoyable event - both in the automotive competition and across the country fair in general. Whether we were watching a Ferrari 250 GTO doing a quarter-mile sprint up 'Horsepower Hill' or a child astride a Shetland pony in a miniature version of the Grand National, it was a fantastic place to relax away from the realities of life. You certainly don't get to pet alpacas and pygmy goats at Pebble Beach or Villa d'Este!

*Photos: Robert Cooper for Classic Driver © 2018*

**Gallery**

























































































