



## THE SCRAMBLE FOR CLASSIC CARS

**RICHARD WEBB** discovers a natural epicentre for heritage cars, a place and community that are driving the ‘future of the past’.

A thriving social scene is gaining momentum among collectors, owners and enthusiasts who get together at purpose-designed venues to experience classic and exotic cars, and make the most of a community that’s known for overcoming barriers of colour, status, gender and creed.

Few people keep a classic purely for transport these days. The cars represent a lifestyle, and they’re there for fun and to be used, but not everyone has the luxury of time to be able to spend a full week at a rally or an entire weekend on a race circuit. Plenty of people, though, love the idea of being able to look out the window on a Sunday morning, see that the sun is shining and take their classic for a spontaneous spin.

This has given rise to a number of specialist venues for classic-car fans. My current favourite is Bicester Heritage in Oxfordshire. The brainchild of venture capitalist and classic-car fan Dan Geoghegan, it has revitalised and restored a previously derelict RAF Bomber Command base. The World War II Spitfires and Bristol Blenheim bombers have made way for their earth-bound cousins, as classics tour its three kilometres of perimeter road and occupy many of the 50 historic buildings on site.

Bicester Heritage represents an increased demand, particularly noticeable at the top end of the market, for turnkey, outsourced ownership arrangements. It is now known as a global centre of excellence, where skills are preserved to ensure that old cars are being driven and not

parked in museums. A superfluity of specialist suppliers are on hand to make, mend or restore virtually any classic car or part.

‘Bicester serves as a [place] for owners and enthusiasts to meet, like our “Sunday Scrambles”. The perimeter road offers the chance to drive classic cars in a track environment suitable for speed testing,’ says Geoghegan. The thrice yearly Scramble (named after the Battle of Britain fighter pilots’ call to action) sees some 7 000 classic-car lovers feast their eyes on a vast collection of supercars and vintage vehicles. Bentleys, Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Porsches and many more iconic motoring marques assemble in a non-commercialised, period setting to provide a real glimpse into the past, beyond just classic cars. ■



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