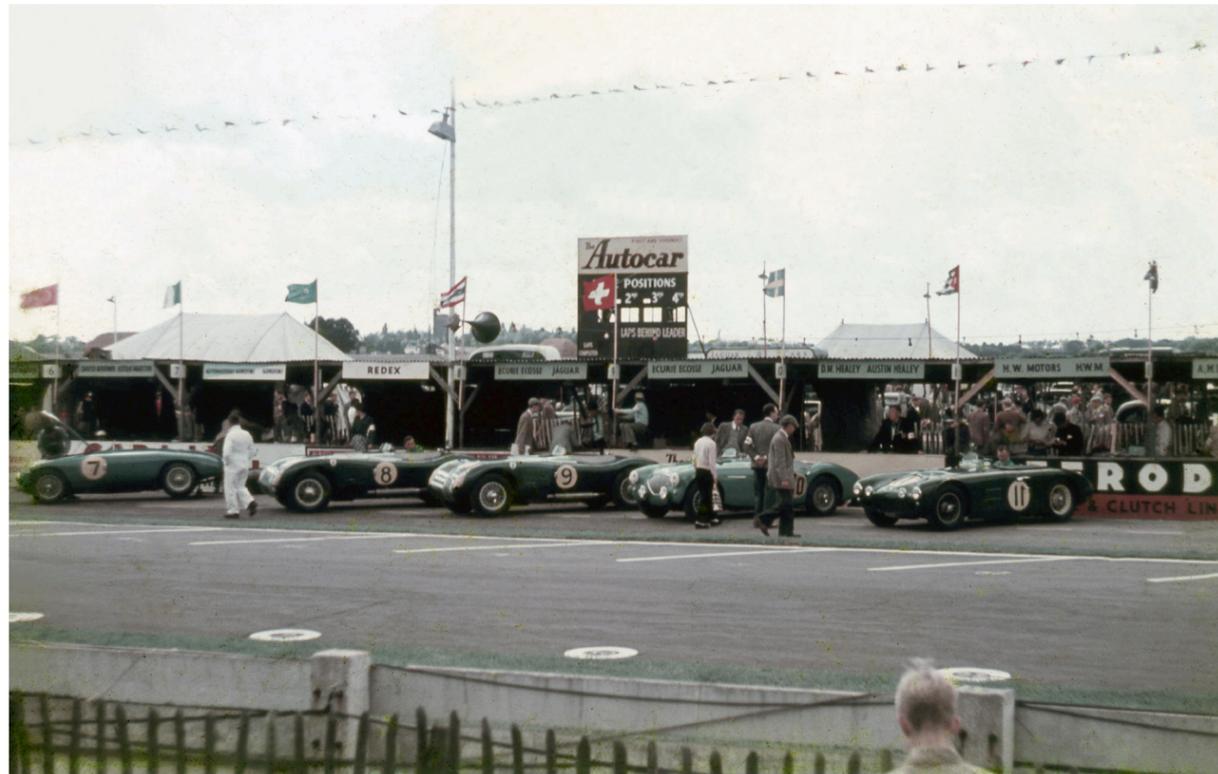


1953 Goodwood Nine Hour Race and British Grand Prix

Images: *Monopod Archive* Words: *Philip Newsome*

"Personally speaking, I saw lockdown as an ideal opportunity to spring clean the endless boxes of old slides, packages of prints and all the other ephemera I had collected down the years, a collection that seemed to grow ever larger with each new project I embarked upon. Little wonder that sales of film scanners rocketed during this extended period of enforced isolation. One day, as I emptied the contents of an envelope containing what I thought to be early Macau Grand Prix images, out dropped an old faded film packet containing a small number of very moth-eaten 120 colour slides as well as some equally scruffy strips of 35mm black and white negatives. I couldn't make out the subject matter and so set about scanning the films and within no time the images contained in this article came to life on my computer screen. With considerable help from my old friend Guy Loveridge it became clear rather quickly that both these films were shot in 1953 and featured the start of the second Goodwood Nine Hour race (*above*) as well as images taken at that year's British Grand Prix. I am just happy that these films survived and that, almost seventy years on, we are now all able to enjoy their contents."



During the immediate post war period there had been little in the way of long distance races held in the U.K., a situation exacerbated by the loss of Brooklands as a racing venue. Great efforts had been directed towards the development of Goodwood circuit but the races held there up to this point had been much shorter in duration. One major concern about holding an endurance race at the track arose from the arduous nature of the circuit itself with officials wondering whether cars or drivers could stand up to nine hours continuous driving round the somewhat tortuous track. As much as anything this was a considered reflection of the precarious reliability of British-built cars of that period. However, after much discussion, the Goodwood Nine Hour was introduced in 1952, a sportscar race starting at 3pm and ending at midnight.

In order to ensure as great a margin of safety as possible, the committee finally decided that no driver should be allowed to exceed a period of approximately two successive hours at the wheel. The 1953 BARC yearbook chronicles the challenges of running such an event at that time:

"Other problems arose. For example, the provision of lighting on the circuit was no easy task owing to the short supply of mains electricity, to say nothing of the great expense of special installations. However, after some tussles and extraordinarily fine cooperation from lo-

cal authorities and others, the arrangements were at last completed in time for the first practising day.

"The marshalling of the race also required special attention. One could hardly ask professional or honorary officials to be on duty for the entire nine hours so that for pretty well every duty relief services had to be provided. All the race officials cooperated in a splendid job.

"Another ambitious project was the scoreboard organisation. Apart from the main scoreboard in the paddock, subsidiary boards were installed at various corners all operated from one central control. On these boards were accurately maintained the lap by lap positions of the first four cars throughout the nine hours of the race.

"The cars had to carry illuminated competition numbers, and although, so far as we could estimate, everything possible had been covered, it was not without some trepidation that we awaited the first practice period after nightfall. Happily, all went well; the lights worked; the drivers found their way round the circuit quite safely, and practising was completed without any untoward incident."

The works Aston Martin DB3 driven by Peter Collins and Pat Griffiths eventually won that inaugural running and one year on an impressive array of cars lined up at the start.



These two images (above and opposite) show all of the entries for the 1953 event lined up opposite the main grandstand. Opposite, we can see the no. 7 Gordini T15S of Schell and Lucas, the two Ecurie Ecosse Jaguars of Stewart/Dixon (no. 8) and Lawrence/Curtis (no. 9) as well as the Abecassis/Whitehead HWM Jaguar (no. 11).

Moving along the line up of cars (above) it is clear that a wide variety of machines contested the race from an Allard J2X (no. 17) to an Aston Martin DB2 (no. 16).

Overleaf, Stirling Moss in the works Jaguar C-type (no. 1) makes a good start and soon took the lead but would retire on lap 269 with engine problems. While the works C-type of Rolt/Hamilton (no. 2) would retire just one lap later, the third works Jaguar of Whitehead/Stewart (no. 3) did survive and would go on to finish in third place behind the two works Aston Martin DB3s of eventual winners Reg Parnell and Eric Thompson and runners up Collins/Griffith.

While only four images from the 1953 Goodwood Nine Hours race appeared that lockdown morning they nevertheless paint a very evocative picture of what it was like to be in the August Bank Holiday crowd at the start of one of the most eagerly anticipated motor racing events of the year.

