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Brooklands celebrates the centenary of Britain's first Grand Prix

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Sell-out centenary celebration hailed as an unforgettable tribute to the birthplace of British motorsport

- The most comprehensive gathering of Grand Prix and Formula 1 cars ever assembled
- More than 120 legendary racing cars representing over 50 marques and more than a century of Grand Prix history
- Historic recreation of the start of the 1926 Grand Prix of the Royal Automobile Club
- 1996 F1 World Champion Damon Hill joins the celebrations

The 100th anniversary of Britain's first Grand Prix has been celebrated in spectacular style at Brooklands Museum, the very place where this landmark event in British motorsport history was staged on Saturday 7 August 1926.

Bringing together an extraordinary collection of racing cars, legendary drivers and



thousands of enthusiastic spectators, the Brooklands Centenary Celebration proved a fitting and hugely successful tribute to the moment when Britain's Grand Prix story began.

With tickets sold out weeks in advance, the event transformed Brooklands into a living celebration of a century of Grand Prix racing. From pioneering machines of the 1920s to championship-winning Formula 1 cars of the modern era, the sheer scale and quality of the gathering created a spectacle that delighted enthusiasts and casual visitors alike.

Indeed, the centenary celebration underlined the remarkable legacy of that first Grand Prix. Since the seminal race set the wheels in motion in 1926, Britain has gone on to be home to more World Championship-winning drivers, teams and manufacturers than any other nation on earth.

And it all began at Brooklands.

Believed to be the most comprehensive showcase of Grand Prix machinery ever assembled, the centenary celebration featured more than 120 legendary racing cars representing over 50 marques, tracing the extraordinary evolution of Grand Prix and Formula 1 racing across more than a century.

From pioneering Bugattis, Delages and Alfa Romeos to iconic Ferrari, McLaren, Tyrrell, Mercedes, BRM and Brawn machines, the gathering brought together an unrivalled collection of racing history in one remarkable location.

And this was far more than a static display.

Many of the iconic machines were fired into life and returned to action in a series of evocative demonstration runs on preserved sections of the world's first purpose-built motor racing circuit, as well as on the adjacent Mercedes-Benz World test track built within the original Brooklands speedway.

The result was a spectacular combination of sights, sounds and atmosphere that transported



visitors back through the golden eras of Grand Prix racing.

A CENTURY TO THE MINUTE

The celebrations began with an exclusive VIP Preview on Friday evening, before the major public Brooklands Centenary Celebration on Saturday.

Ahead of Friday's sun-drenched curtain-raiser, an extraordinary gathering of 100 Grand Prix cars mustered on Brooklands' historic Finishing Straight, recreating a century of Grand Prix history at precisely 2pm – the time at which the first Grand Prix of the Royal Automobile Club had been flagged away 100 years earlier.

Occupying pole position at the centre of the front row was a Delage 15-S-8, identical to the victorious machine shared by French aces Robert Sénéchal and Louis Wagner in 1926. Flanking it were two actual entrants from Britain's first Grand Prix – the Thomas 'Flatiron' Special and the Halford Special.

Completing the remarkable front row were six more legendary racing cars spanning successive generations of Grand Prix history. Representing the 1930s was a stunning recreation of the mighty Mercedes W125, while an all-conquering Alfa Romeo 158/159 represented the 1950s. The innovative six-wheeled Tyrrell P34 flew the flag for the 1970s, while the iconic red-and-white, ex-Ayrton Senna Honda V12-powered McLaren MP4/6 represented the 1990s.

Completing the timeline were a Silver Arrows Mercedes-AMG Petronas W01-04 and a papaya-coloured McLaren MCL38 from reigning World Champions McLaren.

The second row was every bit as impressive. A French racing blue Bugatti Type 37 commemorated Malcolm Campbell's runner-up finish in the 1926 Grand Prix, while the famous Brooklands record-breaking Sunbeam Tiger and Sunbeam Tigress were reunited in public for the first time in 50 years.



Joining them were six further icons of Grand Prix history: a 1932 Maserati 8C 3000 with Brooklands racing history, a game-changing rear-engined Cooper from the 1950s, the legendary shark-nose Ferrari 156 from the 1960s, a 1981 McLaren MP4/1, a 1998 Benetton B198 and the title-winning Brawn BGP 001 from 2009.

The rows behind were equally star-studded, featuring racing icons from every era alongside fascinating and often overlooked innovations such as the Ferguson P99 four-wheel-drive Formula 1 car raced by Stirling Moss in 1961 and the 1908 Austin Grand Prix car, the oldest machine in the gathering.

The Friday Preview was not only a fitting and memorable tribute to one of the defining moments in British motorsport history, but was also graced by the presence of HRH Prince Michael of Kent, Patron of Brooklands Museum since 1989.

A SPECTACULAR DAY OF ACTION

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If Friday provided a suitably historic curtain-raiser, Saturday's sell-out celebration surpassed all expectations.

Under bright blue skies, thousands of visitors descended on Brooklands to witness an extraordinary day of historic machinery, demonstrations and displays - with the sights and sounds of Grand Prix racing echoing around the birthplace of British motorsport once again.

Harking back to the circuit's halcyon heyday, the old Finishing Straight and Test Hill were home to dramatic demonstration runs by revered racers from much-loved bygone eras. The evocative setting was further enhanced by the chicanes and branded bridge installed in 1926 for the first Grand Prix.

As in period, large numbers of enthusiastic Bugattis were out in force, much to the delight of the crowds.



For many aficionados, however, one of the most poignant moments was the appearance of the recently restored Thomas Special, which returned to action at its Brooklands birthplace for the first time in more than 80 years.

The more modern machinery ran exclusively on the neighbouring Mercedes-Benz World Test Track, where crowd-pleasers included two of the best-sounding Grand Prix cars ever built – the extraordinary V16 BRM and Honda V12-powered McLaren MP4/6.

The roar of these legendary machines, echoing around the historic Brooklands site, provided a visceral reminder of the extraordinary engineering, courage and innovation that have defined Grand Prix racing for more than a century.

RECREATING THE FIRST GRAND PRIX

Saturday also witnessed a moving recreation of the 1926 Grand Prix grid on exactly the same spot as the original race start on the Members' Banking.

As in 1926, nine pioneering cars lined up, comprising two Delages, the Halford Special and an Aston Martin – this time the 1922 TT1 'Green Pea'.

The Thomas Special also took its place on the grid, albeit a century later than originally intended, alongside a pair of Bugattis. The tableau was completed by the pioneering front-wheel-drive Alvis, which raced in the following year's Grand Prix at Brooklands, and the unique Béquet Delage, the world's first V12-engined Grand Prix car.

When the inaugural Grand Prix got underway in 1926, the starting flag was dropped with 'commendable promptitude' by Brooklands' legendary handicapper and starter, A.V. 'Ebby' Ebbelwhite.

One hundred years later, the honour fell to David Brabham, son of Sir Jack Brabham, the triple Formula 1 World Champion, himself a former Formula 1 driver and Le Mans winner.



It provided one of the most symbolic moments of an unforgettable weekend, linking three generations of motorsport history in a single start – even more so, perhaps, as Sir Jack was born in 1926.

CHAMPIONS AT BROOKLANDS

Among the many distinguished guests at Brooklands was Damon Hill (pictured below), the 1996 Formula 1 World Champion and President of the Brooklands Trust Members.





Hill has a special connection with the preservation of the historic venue and was eager to seek out a number of the Formula 1 cars he and his double World Champion father, Graham Hill, had raced during their illustrious careers.

The Royal Automobile Club, which organised the first Grand Prix in 1926, was also represented through its prestigious British Grand Prix Trophy, which was displayed at Brooklands throughout the weekend.

The trophy is now presented annually to the winner of Britain's blue-riband Formula 1 race at Silverstone. As the winner in 1994, Damon Hill is one of the many illustrious names adorning its famous plinth.

A LANDMARK CELEBRATION

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From the moment the first cars assembled on the Finishing Straight to the final demonstration runs, the Brooklands Centenary Celebration captured the imagination of everyone who attended.

The combination of an unparalleled collection of racing cars, spectacular on-track action, historic recreations and a sell-out crowd created an atmosphere that was as memorable as the milestone itself.

For Brooklands Museum, the event provided a fitting celebration of the extraordinary role the venue has played in shaping British motorsport. For the thousands of visitors who packed the historic site, it offered a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see, hear and experience more than a century of Grand Prix history brought vividly back to life.

One hundred years after Britain's first Grand Prix set the wheels in motion, Brooklands once again became the centre of the Grand Prix world – and delivered a centenary celebration worthy of its unique place in motorsport history.



“This was quite simply the biggest and most ambitious event we have ever staged at Brooklands Museum, and I think it is fair to say that everyone absolutely loved it,” enthused Alex Patterson, CEO of Brooklands Museum. “To see more than 100 Grand Prix and Formula 1 cars, representing more than 50 marques and more than a century of racing history, gathered here at the birthplace of British motorsport was an extraordinary sight.

But what made the weekend particularly special was that these were not simply cars to look at. We brought so many of them back to life and onto the track, allowing visitors to experience the sights, sounds and sheer drama of Grand Prix racing across the generations. To recreate the 1926 start on exactly the same spot 100 years later, and then to see and hear these extraordinary machines running at Brooklands, was genuinely emotional.

The response from everyone who came – from the owners and drivers who generously brought their cars, to our partners, volunteers, members and, most importantly, our visitors – has been phenomenal. There was an incredible atmosphere throughout the weekend and a real sense that people understood they were witnessing something very special.

Brooklands has always been a place where history was made, and this centenary celebration demonstrated that its story is as relevant and compelling today as it has ever been. We wanted to celebrate the past, but also to show why Brooklands continues to matter to the future of motorsport. I am immensely proud of what the whole team has achieved.”

Although tickets for Brooklands Museum’s Grand Prix Centenary celebrations sold out well in advance, the celebrations don’t end with the centenary weekend.

Summer of Speed is in full swing at Brooklands Museum, giving as many people as possible the chance to experience the excitement, stories and legacy of 100 years of Grand Prix racing throughout the summer – with Great British Summer Saving on admission making it even easier to enjoy a day at the birthplace of British motorsport.

At the heart of the summer is the newly opened Britain’s Grand Prix Story exhibition in the historic Jackson Shed, bringing together an exceptional collection of iconic Grand Prix and



Formula 1 cars spanning the decades. Alongside these legendary machines, fascinating artefacts, immersive audio and interactive displays reveal the innovation, determination and personalities that have driven the sport forward for generations.

Visitors can also get behind the wheel with the brand-new Brooklands Simulator Experience, putting their driving skills to the test and experiencing the thrill of racing for themselves.

For families, the brand-new live science show Get Set Go! runs every weekday until 28 August, combining fun, experiments and plenty of energy to explore the science behind speed, racing and what it took to become a Brooklands racer.

And there's much more to discover. A packed programme of events, activities and experiences runs throughout the summer, with something for dedicated motoring and aviation enthusiasts, families and anyone inspired by the extraordinary stories of Brooklands.

The Grand Prix Centenary may have been one unforgettable weekend, but Summer of Speed means everyone can be part of the celebrations all summer long.

Brooklands Museum is open daily throughout the summer from 10.00am to 5.00pm. Advance admission is priced at £25.70 for adults and £10.70 for children aged 4-17. Annual membership, from £68, offers unlimited admission throughout the year.



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GRAND PRIX**
100
YEARS