Brooklands welcomes home legendary Thomas ‘Flatiron’ Special for Grand Prix Centenary Celebration

Published: June 8, 2026

Author:

Online version:

https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/brooklands-welcomes-home-legendary-thomas-flatiron-special-for-grand-prix-centenary-celebration/

A 100th birthday homecoming for an illustrious Brooklands icon. Brooklands Museum tells us…

(All words and photographs from Brooklands Museum).

- Restored racer to perform for the first time in more than 80 years
- One of the highlights in a massive gathering of 100 Grand Prix cars
- Tickets for exhilarating and historic milestone event selling out fast

The return of a true Brooklands favourite will be one of the major highlights of this summer's special centenary celebration marking 100 years since Britain's first Grand Prix, held at the famous banked Surrey circuit in 1926.

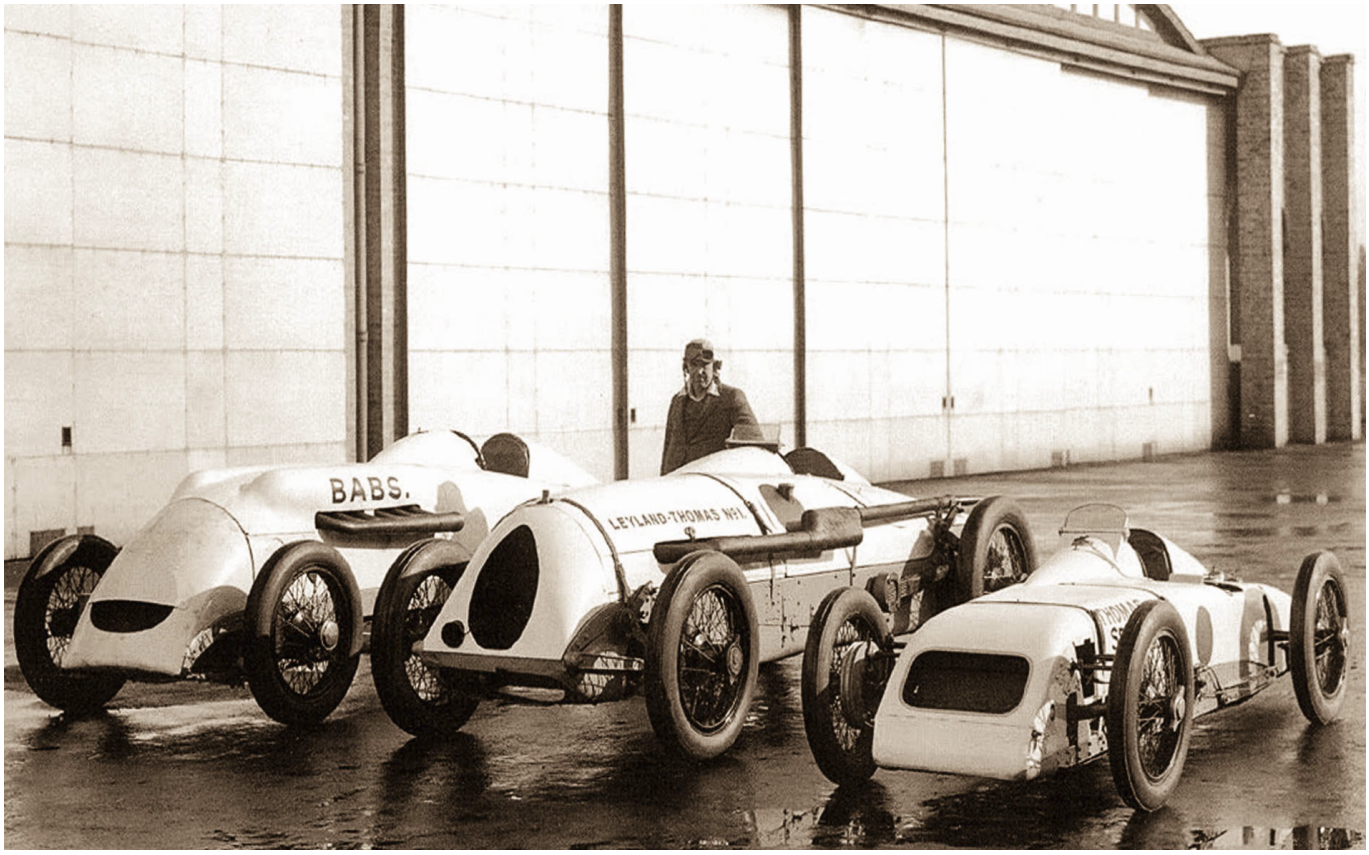


Parry Thomas at the wheel…

Designed and built at Brooklands by eminent Welsh engineer and pioneering racing driver John Godfrey Parry Thomas, the Thomas ‘Flatiron’ Special (photo above with Thomas at the wheel) made its debut in 1926 and quickly became a regular and successful competitor at the circuit in the years that followed.

Now, a century on, a Thomas Special will relive those glory days, running in public at Brooklands for the first time since before the Second World War.

Although best known for his Land Speed Record exploits in the mighty 27-litre *Babs* – a pursuit that tragically cost him his life on Pendine Sands in 1927 – Parry Thomas was also responsible for designing and building two far more advanced racing cars in his Brooklands workshop (photo below: Thomas with Babs, Leyland-Thomas and Thomas ‘Flatiron’ Special).



With a low centre of gravity and bespoke 1.5-litre straight-eight engines, the pair of Thomas Specials were purpose-built for circuit racing. Both were expected to compete in Britain's first-ever Grand Prix staged at Brooklands in August 1926, although neither ultimately took part.

Their potential was soon proven. Parry Thomas went on to win a 50-mile handicap race at Brooklands in October and later set new class speed and distance records, covering an impressive 112.77 miles in an hour to set a new world record.

Following Parry Thomas's death, the cars continued to demonstrate their competitiveness in private hands. Both started the 1927 Brooklands Grand Prix, retiring early, but remained active – and successful – competitors at the circuit until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

With Brooklands' closure as a racing circuit after the war and the arrival of a new generation of machinery, the Thomas Specials' competitive era came to an end. One chassis was later scrapped in Canada, but the other survived – and has now been painstakingly and passionately restored over the past decade.

The surviving car has been bought back to life (photos below) by Geraint Owen, whose father, Owen Wyn Owen, famously rebuilt Parry Thomas's *Babs*.

This slideshow requires JavaScript.

"Emotionally, it is incredibly special to take the Thomas Special back to Brooklands," said Geraint Owen. "It's the first time the car has returned since 1958, and back then it was not even complete with an engine. To see it running again at its birthplace, in its 100th year, is something truly remarkable."

Alex Paterson, Chief Executive of Brooklands Museum, added: "The return of the Thomas Special is a deeply significant moment for Brooklands. This is not just a car coming home – it is a living piece of our engineering heritage. To see it take its place among 100 years of Grand Prix history, alongside modern Formula 1 technology, perfectly captures the spirit of this centenary celebration."

The reappearance of the Thomas Special will form part of an extraordinary display of 100 Grand Prix cars spanning the entire history of motor sport, celebrating the centenary of Britain's very first Grand Prix at Brooklands in August.

Pioneers such as the Thomas Special will represent the earliest days of racing innovation, while reigning World Champion McLaren Racing will showcase the very latest in Formula 1 technology.

Tickets for the Brooklands Grand Prix Celebration are now available via the official website: www.brooklandsmuseum.com. Adult admission is priced at £39.95 in advance, with tickets for accompanied children aged 4 to 17 (under 4s are free) available at £19.95. Brooklands

Members can purchase tickets to an exclusive VIP Preview evening on the Friday. They are also offered Saturday admission for £19.95 (child £9.95)—a special price that includes an official programme.

Early booking is strongly advised, as record numbers of tickets have already been purchased for what is expected to be a truly outstanding – and sell-out – occasion.

About Brooklands Museum

Brooklands Museum is the largest museum in Surrey, occupying 32 acres on the site of the world's first motor racing circuit, which opened in Weybridge, Surrey in 1907. It showcases the achievements of the pioneering men and women in motorsport and aviation and uses their history of innovation and endeavour to inspire a new generation.

Since opening as a public Museum in 1991 it has continued to grow its collection of aircraft, racing bikes and cars as well as opening the award-winning Brooklands Aircraft Factory and the only Concorde with public access in South East England. With displays in original buildings, motoring and aviation events and an extensive learning programme for schools and colleges, including the award-winning Brooklands Innovation Academy, the past is brought to life again for over 180,000 visitors a year.

About the British Grand Prix

Britain's very first Grand Prix was staged by the Royal Automobile Club at Brooklands in August 1926, exactly 100 years ago. The country's second Grand Prix was held at the same venue the following summer. Throughout the 1930s, several non-championship Grand Prix took place at Donington Park. Racing at Brooklands ended during World War II when the venue was converted into an aircraft production site.

The first post-war Grand Prix was held at the former RAF Silverstone airfield in 1948, and two years later, Silverstone hosted the first points-scoring World Championship Formula 1 race. In the years that followed, the British Grand Prix also visited both Aintree and Brands

Hatch before Silverstone secured a permanent place on the F1 calendar from 1987.
Britain’s first Grand Prix was won by French drivers Louis Wagner and Robert Sénéchal in a Delage 15 S 8. Almost a century later, the most recent 2025 British Grand Prix was won by reigning World Champion Lando Norris in a McLaren MCL39.