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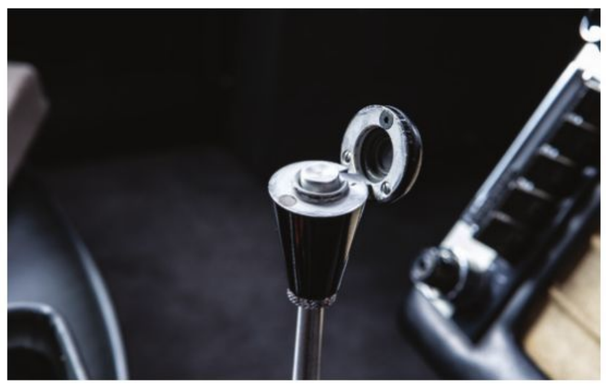
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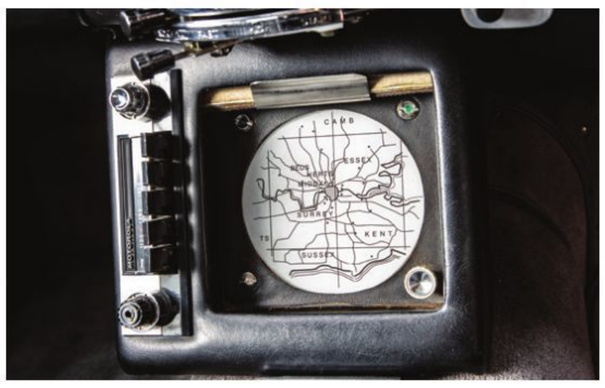
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MOTOR SPORT

WELCOME TO ASTON MARTIN

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD

Few car marques have as long and as proud a history as Aston Martin, from faltering beginnings before World War One to today's luxurious coupés of immense performance and sophistication, all developed against a background of impressive racing success. In that time this most British of British makes has been through its tough periods, with financial struggles and multiple owners, and yet through it all the winged Aston badge has always signified a true sports car, assembled with pride by a skilled workforce.

Raced since the very beginning by various incarnations of the factory and by privateers, Aston Martins have made their mark in arenas from hillclimbs to prototype sports cars, including conquering the great Le Mans 24 Hours and taking the 1959 World Sportscar Championship – and today those Aston wings continue to fly high in international GT racing.

Motor Sport magazine has been reporting on Aston Martin since our very first issue (as the *Brooklands Gazette*) in July 1924. Over those 95 years the magazine has described, assessed and test-driven virtually every road car or racer the firm has built, as well as talking to the firm's various owners, managers and engineers. Here we offer our pick from nine decades of coverage. Enjoy it.

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To read more about Aston Martin's illustrious history and the drivers who have helped to forge a legend, visit:
www.motorsportmagazine.com

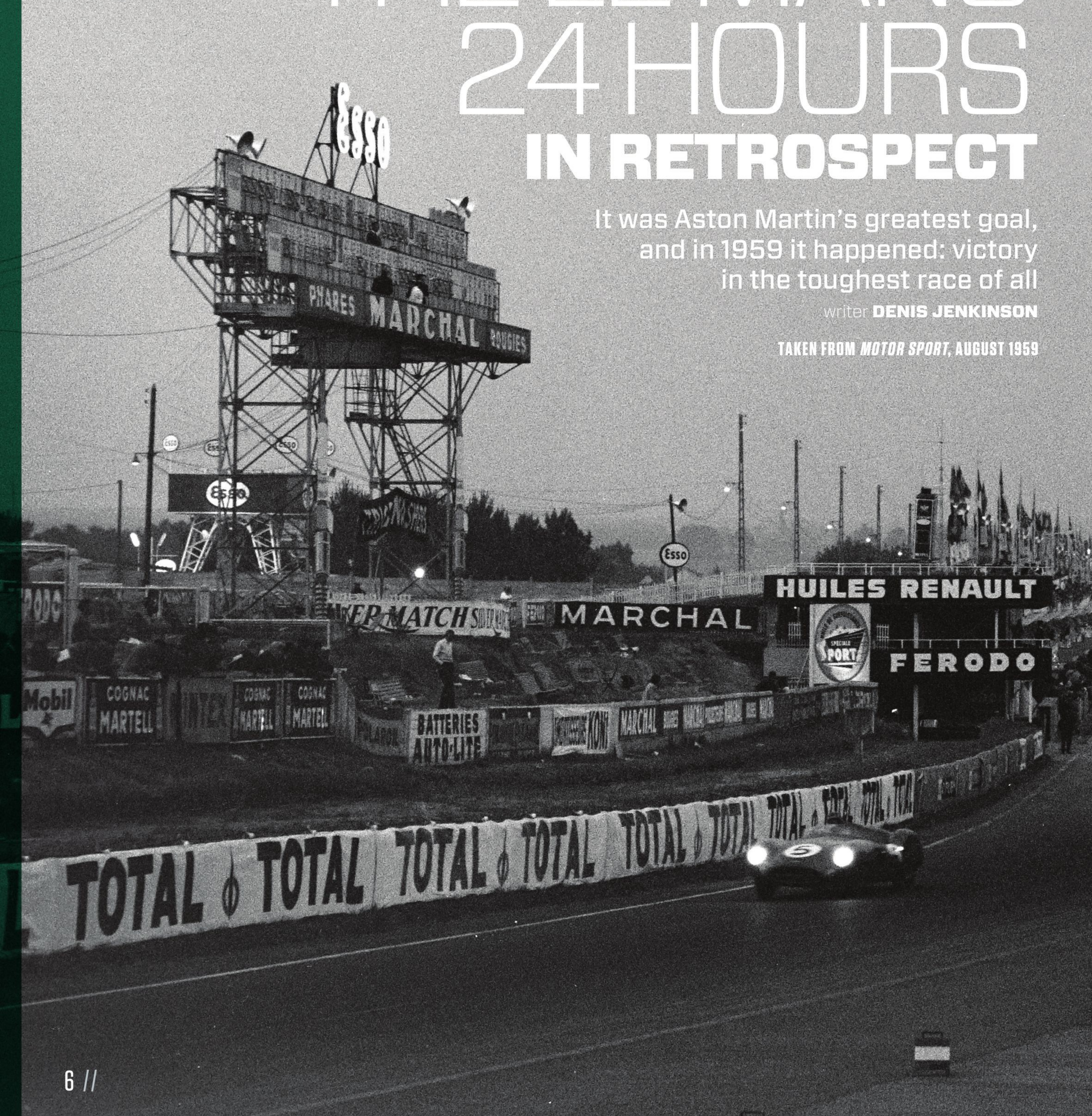
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THE LE MANS 24 HOURS IN RETROSPECT

It was Aston Martin's greatest goal, and in 1959 it happened: victory in the toughest race of all

writer **DENIS JENKINSON**

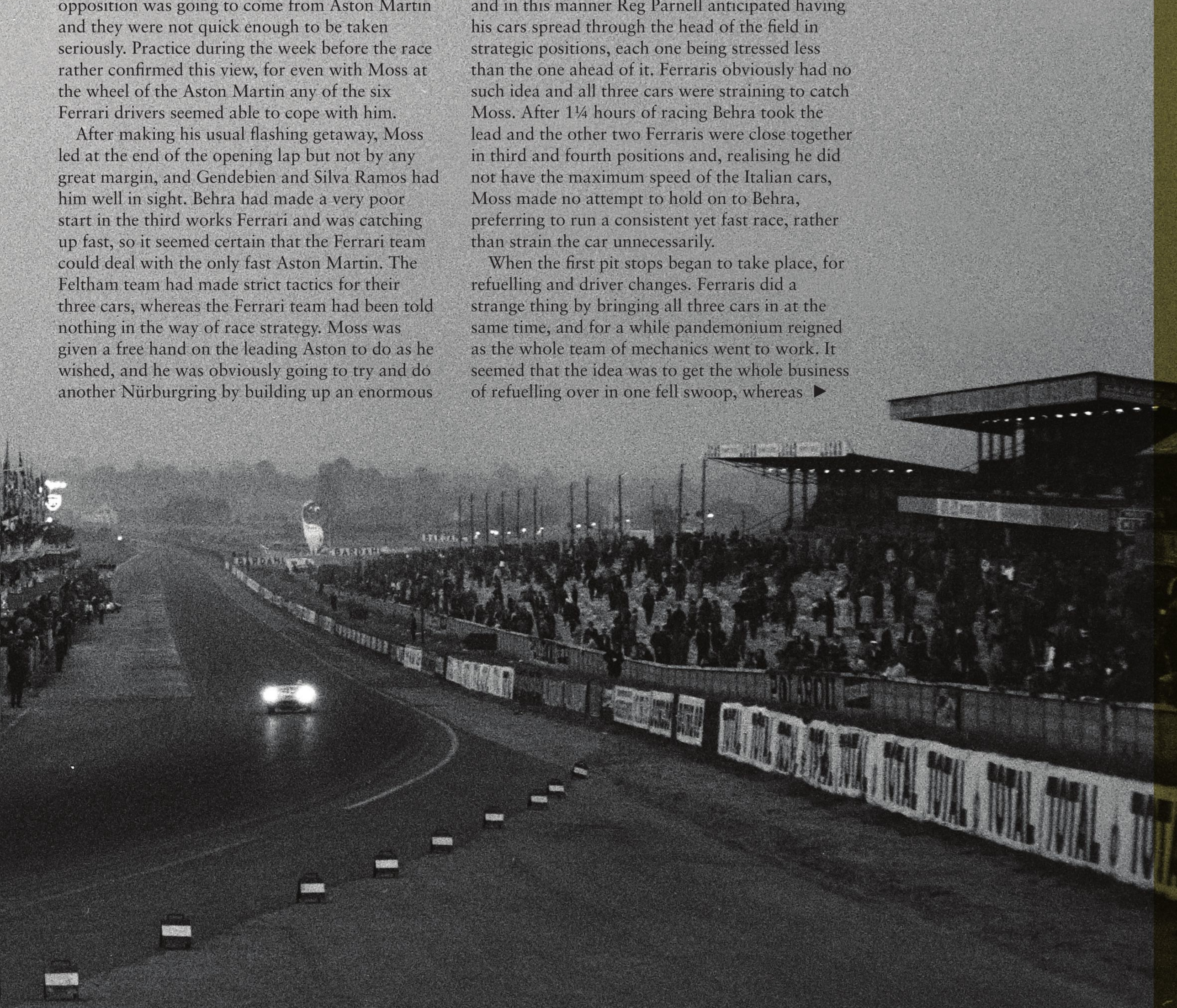
TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, AUGUST 1959



This year the Automobile Club de l'Ouest introduced a new feature in the running of the Le Mans 24-hour race by holding a test-day on the circuit as long ago as last April, and at which various competitors were able to try their new cars. At that time the speed of the 3-litre V12 Ferraris was so impressive that it seemed certain that they would win the race, as the only likely opposition was going to come from Aston Martin and they were not quick enough to be taken seriously. Practice during the week before the race rather confirmed this view, for even with Moss at the wheel of the Aston Martin any of the six Ferrari drivers seemed able to cope with him.

After making his usual flashing getaway, Moss led at the end of the opening lap but not by any great margin, and Gendebien and Silva Ramos had him well in sight. Behra had made a very poor start in the third works Ferrari and was catching up fast, so it seemed certain that the Ferrari team could deal with the only fast Aston Martin. The Feltham team had made strict tactics for their three cars, whereas the Ferrari team had been told nothing in the way of race strategy. Moss was given a free hand on the leading Aston to do as he wished, and he was obviously going to try and do another Nürburgring by building up an enormous lead before handing over to Fairman, but with the Le Mans circuit demanding engine power rather than driving skill, this tactic was not working. Salvadori was running to a fixed lap time, irrespective of what the leaders were doing, and Shelby was to do likewise when he took over. Trintignant in the third works Aston Martin, and his co-driver Frère, were expected to lap consistently 2sec slower than the number two car, and in this manner Reg Parnell anticipated having his cars spread through the head of the field in strategic positions, each one being stressed less than the one ahead of it. Ferraris obviously had no such idea and all three cars were straining to catch Moss. After 1¼ hours of racing Behra took the lead and the other two Ferraris were close together in third and fourth positions and, realising he did not have the maximum speed of the Italian cars, Moss made no attempt to hold on to Behra, preferring to run a consistent yet fast race, rather than strain the car unnecessarily.

When the first pit stops began to take place, for refuelling and driver changes. Ferraris did a strange thing by bringing all three cars in at the same time, and for a while pandemonium reigned as the whole team of mechanics went to work. It seemed that the idea was to get the whole business of refuelling over in one fell swoop, whereas ▶



Aston Martin preferred to stagger their pit stops, taking each one separately and calmly. With Gurney taking over from Behra the leading Ferrari went on drawing out ahead of Fairman, while Phil Hill was closing up in third place, and Allison was back in seventh place with gearbox trouble, and finally the engine broke as a result of the gears jumping out. Just before dark more trouble struck the Ferrari team when Phil Hill was slowed by his carburetters flooding, and then Fairman brought the Aston Martin in with the oil pressure sagging on corners. As he was nearly due for a refuelling stop the reason was simply low oil level and nothing to worry about, and he returned later and handed over to Moss, the car being filled with petrol and oil at the same time. Moss had not gone far before he ran into engine trouble due to part of the air intake duct breaking away and going into one of the cylinders, so the score was one Ferrari retired and one Aston Martin retired.

The whole picture of the lead of the race had now changed completely, and though the Behra/ Gurney Ferrari was well in the lead, it was followed by the Ecurie Ecosse D-type Jaguar driven by Ireland/ Gregory, both drivers going

"THE ITALIAN PITSTOPS WERE PRETTY CHAOTIC COMPARED WITH ASTON'S WHICH WERE A MODEL OF DISCIPLINE AND EFFICIENCY"

extremely well and leading the works Lister-Jaguars which were using identical engines. Aston Martin tactics were paying off now, for the Salvadori/Shelby car was now third and their remaining car was comfortably in seventh place, with between them the Ecurie Ecosse Tojeiro-Jaguar, the Bueb/Halford Lister-Jaguar and the troubled Gendebien/Hill Ferrari. The Porsche factory had entered two 1600cc RSK Spyders and it looked as if they were making a bid for an outright win rather than a class victory for both teams were going strongly. Herrmann/Maglioli and Bonnier/von Trips were lying eighth and ninth, and Porsche reliability in previous Le Mans races indicated that they would be certain to have a car in the first three finishers, if not in the lead. Their first setback came just after 9pm on Saturday, when the Herrmann/Maglioli car blew its engine up, which was most unusual for the Stuttgart firm. The Dino 196 Ferrari of Scarlatti/Cabianca, of which much had been expected, also blew its engine up about this time, and as if to show that engines were to be the weak point of the 1959 Le Mans race the Hansgen/Blond Lister burst its Jaguar engine in no mean fashion.

Following what seems to be a tradition at Le Mans, there was now a fire as Russell in the Cooper-Monaco rammed a Stanguellini at Whitehouse, both cars being burnt out but the drivers escaping comparatively lightly considering the wreckage. Between 10pm and 11pm the lead changed when the Gurney/Behra Ferrari had a headlamp fall to bits and two stops were made before the trouble was cured, and this let the Salvadori/Shelby Aston Martin into the lead, for about the same time the Scottish D-type Jaguar engine went up with a bang. Meanwhile the second works Ferrari cured its flooding trouble and began to regain ground rapidly, so that by midnight on Saturday it was in second place behind the Aston Martin, with the other Ferrari third; then came the Bueb/Halford Lister-Jaguar, but not for long for it, too, burst its Jaguar engine in a big way, so the second Aston Martin now moved up to fourth position, followed by the Flockhart/Lawrence Tojeiro and the first of a row of Porsches.

In the early hours of the morning Gurney broke the gear lever off the Ferrari and after stopping to have a piece of tube rammed over the stump he later handed over to Behra, who shortly afterwards returned to the pits with steam coming from the left-hand set of exhaust pipes, and that was that. The Tojeiro-Jaguar was also having engine trouble for the head had warped and it was losing water, so it had to limp on until the required 30 laps, or 251 miles, had been completed since the previous refuelling stop. By that time the damage was beyond repair and it joined the rest of the Jaguar-engined cars in the dead-car park, all having gone out with engine trouble.

After 2am the Salvadori/Shelby Aston Martin had a long pit stop during which time fuel and oil were put in, rear wheels changed and new brake pads fitted to the Girling disc brakes, all this work having to be done by two mechanics and a refuelling man. Although this meant that the car was now in perfect trim, it had let the Gendebien/ Hill Ferrari take the lead and get one whole lap ahead. By now Porsches were lying fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh, and it looked as though their bid for an outright win might come off. At 4am the situation was unchanged, except that the Ferrari had increased its lead to two laps, this being half-distance, the Trintignant/Frère Aston







Top: winning car passes signalling post after Mulsanne, Above: John Wyer ensured Aston pitstops were well drilled

was third and the four Porsches still followed, with the Bonnier/von Trips car leading on Index of Performance.

As Sunday dawned fine and bright the Porsches ran into trouble and first the 1600cc retired and then the works 1500cc car of Barth/Siedel wrecked its engine, and any hope of a Porsche victory was lost, for they had clearly stretched things too far. During the next hour the Beaufort/Heinz Porsche succumbed to engine trouble, and now a new facet of the race made itself apparent, for privately-owned Gran Turismo Ferraris were now in fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth positions, all of them having been running faultlessly, and though not as fast as racing/sports cars they were now profiting from reliability. This situation now continued for some time, with only 20 of the original 53 starters still running, and it seemed unlikely that either of the Aston Martins would catch the lone Ferrari, even though the Italians were still pretty chaotic in their pit stops compared with the Feltham team, who were a model of discipline and efficiency, a driver change and refuel with petrol and oil taking little more than 50sec, carried out in complete silence, whereas the Ferrari took as much as 4min amidst a lot of shouting and confusion.

At 11am on Sunday morning the weather was perfect and it seemed that no further drama was likely to happen, for everyone was circulating in that confident, steady manner that usually marks the last hours of a Le Mans race. The order was Gendebien/Hill (Ferrari), Salvadori/Shelby (Aston Martin), Trintignant/Frère (Aston Martin), Hugus/Erickson (Porsche), and then the four Gran Turismo Ferraris. Just after 11am Gendebien arrived unexpectedly at the Ferrari pit with his engine showing signs of overheating and the mechanics increased the fuel-pump pressure in the vain hope that the trouble was being caused by weak mixture in the hot morning sunshine. One ▶

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lap later the car was back and a check was made on the oil level and water was poured on the fuel pump in the hope that vapour locks were causing the weakness to the carburation, and the consequent overheating. They could not check the radiator level as the car was still in its 30-lap non-refuelling period, so Gendebien set off again with 1½ laps lead to try and keep going slowly, and meanwhile Phil Hill was woken up and told of the trouble. At 11.45am Gendebien returned to the pit and after a quiet consultation the car was withdrawn before the engine was wrecked completely, for all the cooling water had leaked away through a cylinder liner joint failure, and to break the seal on the radiator before a period of 30 laps ended would have entailed disqualification and to have gone on would have wrecked the engine. A very sad pair, Gendebien and Hill had to give up with victory in sight, and this left the two Aston Martins now comfortably in first and second positions. Almost unnoticed while the leaders were in trouble, the two remaining Porsches both blew their engines up at Mulsanne, almost simultaneously, and that left only 17 cars still running, of which three were in a sick condition.

With four hours still to go the Gran Turismo Ferraris, all privately owned and driven by amateur drivers, were now third, fourth, fifth and sixth and those people who had no faith in Aston Martin reliability at Le Mans, from past experience, could visualise a Gran Turismo car winning. However, for once the David Brown cars held together and they finished first and second, bringing victory by reliability, careful planning, coolness and discipline which was a fine example of how to approach the Le Mans 24-hour race.

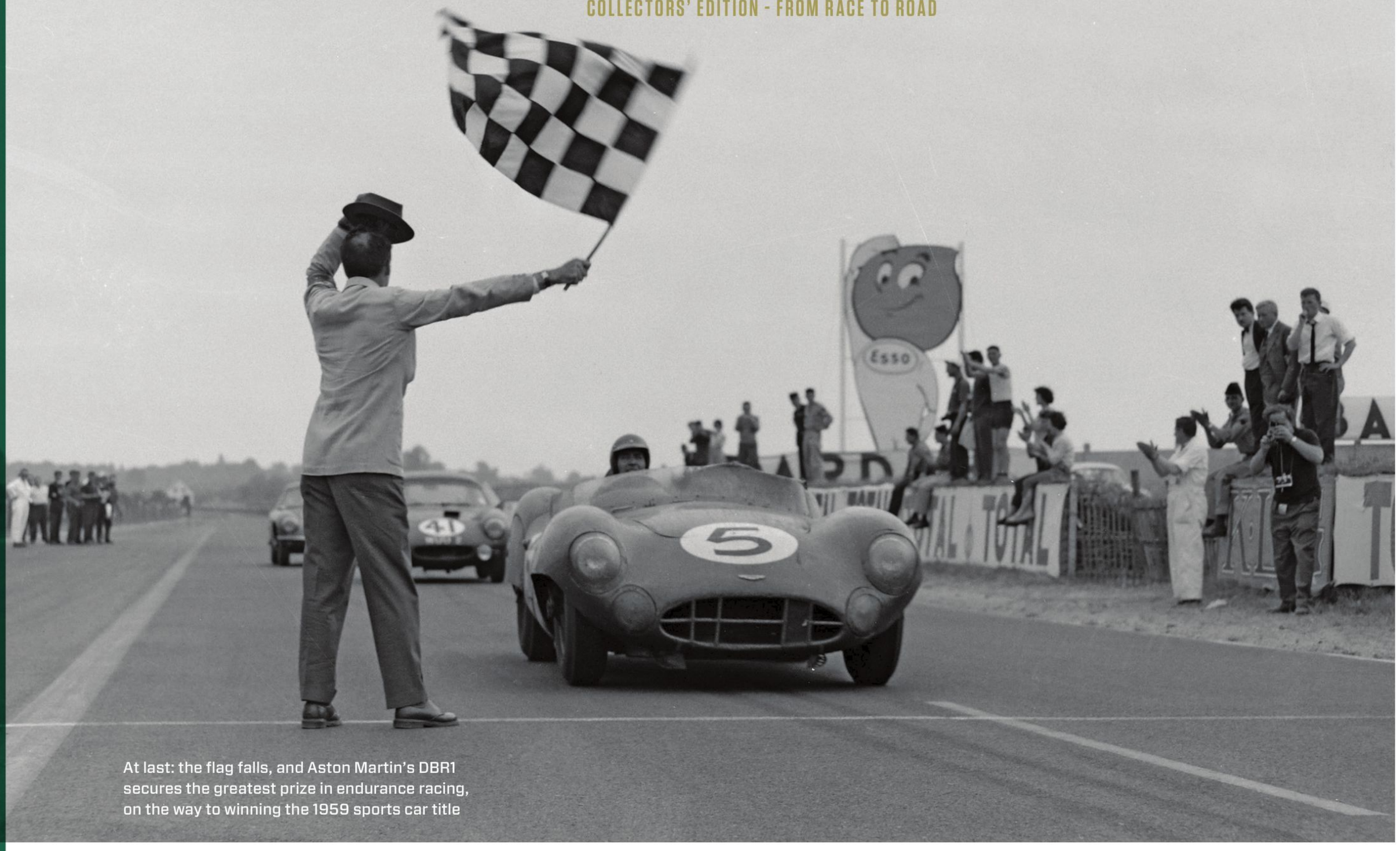
Thus was the story of those competing for the outright win, but what of the others, for most of the 53 starters had little hope of winning but were either intent on a class win or the Index of Performance Handicap, or the new Fuel Consumption Handicap. In the 750cc class a strong force of works DB Panhards, three of them using new twin-ohc engines, were opposed by Stanguellinis, Oscas, two Saabs and two Lotus XVII. To begin with it looked as if there would be a good battle between the Stacey/Green Lotus and the Osca driven by the Rodriguez brothers, but the Italian car burst an oil gallery leaving the Lotus on its own, way ahead of all the DBs, while the second Hornsey car was having distributor trouble and eventually the leading car went out for a similar reason, leaving the French cars in charge of things. The 1500cc class had a strong entry of Porsches, one being a works car, two privately owned new RSKs and an old RS and with them were three Lotus Elite coupés.





Top: Trintignant and Frère shared the second-place Aston. Above: Moss makes a rapid getaway as the race starts

As already mentioned all the Porsches retired, mostly with engine troubles ranging from broken valves to broken crankshafts, and this left the Lumsden/Riley Lotus Elite to win the class. This privately entered car ran like a clock throughout the 24 hours, being about the only car that did not have any work done on it. The other two Elites were a different story, for the Scottish-owned one driven by Clark/Whitmore had constant trouble with its starter motor getting cooked from the engine heat and the French-owned one had distributor trouble which caused overheating and the red-hot exhaust pipes set the wiring on fire and the whole car was burnt out. In the 1501 to 2000cc class there was every possibility of a fierce battle, with the winner being well placed in the General Classification. There was a single works-supported Ferrari Dino 196, a ►



At last: the flag falls, and Aston Martin's DBR1 secures the greatest prize in endurance racing, on the way to winning the 1959 sports car title

Cooper-Monaco, three works Triumph Specials with twin-cam engines, two 1600cc works RSK Porches, a 2-litre twin-cam Climax-engined works Lotus with new rear-mounted five-speed gearbox, and privately-owned AC-Bristol, Frazer Nash and twin-cam MG. Trouble was rife throughout this category and the production AC-Bristol was the only finisher showing that the tortoise-hare act is not a myth. The Ferrari burst its engine, the Cooper crashed, two of the Triumphs put their fans through their cooling systems, the third one had oil pump trouble less than two hours from the finish, the Lotus XV was delayed in the night by breaking a wishbone due to faulty assembly and then blew a large hole in the side of its engine, the two Porsches blew up and the MG had numerous bothers including hitting a dog and wrecking the front end while the Frazer Nash finished up on a sandbank. The AC-Bristol which is used every day as a normal sports car was driven to and from the race and was a wonderful example of how to confound the experts and the racing world.

Most of the competitors in the 2001 to 3000cc class have been dealt with in the story of the race, especially those who vied for the lead at one time or another though in addition there were two American-owned Testa Rossa Ferraris, one retiring with a broken rear axle and the other due to going off the road and damaging some oil pipes, and a Belgian one which had engine trouble. An experimental Aston Martin coupé was also in this class, being a DB4 body-chassis unit with a 3-litre version of the old 3.7-litre racing engine and fitted with a five-speed gearbox. It was no real match for the GT coupé Ferraris and quit early with engine trouble.

The most outstanding feature of this year's Le Mans was undoubtedly the mortality among engines, all the Ferrari works cars withdrawing because of engine trouble, most of the Porsches, all the Jaguar-engined cars and so on. The Le Mans circuit, with its very fast, long straight, is one on which engine power is more important than driver skill or road-holding, and being a 24-hour race engine reliability is as necessary as performance. In all categories and all types of car engine failure was predominant and the production engines proved to be much more reliable than the specially built racing engines, apart from the two victorious Aston Martins. ■

"THE OUTSTANDING FEATURE WAS THE MORTALITY AMONG ENGINES, ALL THE WORKS FERRARIS AND MOST PORSCHES WITHDRAWING"







1961 ASTON MARTIN
DB4 GT ZAGATO

1 of just 19 DB4 GT Zagato built, and one of the 7 in Left Hand Drive ■ Built to a bespoke specification for Dr Elio Zagato and raced by him in period ■ Subsequently owned by marque specialist RS Williams, and cared for by him, for almost 40 years ■ Offered publicly for first time

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100 REASONS WHY WE LOVE ASTON MARTIN

In the centenary year of the firm, rather than re-tell its history we present, in no particular order, 100 things we love about one of Britain's great traditionalists

writers **SIMON ARRON & GORDON CRUICKSHANK**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, OCTOBER 2013



ASTON MARTIN

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



Above: Aston's Nürburgring Test and Development Centre [7].

1 JAMES BOND'S DB5

The most prolific of all Bond cars, ripe with useful features — ejector seat, machine guns, bullet shield, rotating number plates — which Aston Martin curiously continues to omit from its parts catalogue. First seen in *Goldfinger* (1964) and most recently blown up, for the umpteenth time, in *Skyfall* (2012), but will doubtless be recycled in future. A more appropriate 007 companion than the Ford Edge, but then not much about *Quantum of Solace* made sense.

2 COUNT LOUIS ZBOROWSKI

In the line of wealthy customers who have opened their wallets for love of Aston, the Flying Count rides high. He wanted to go grand prix racing, so he funded Aston Martin with a staggering £10,000 to build the two twin-ohc 16-valve racers that went to Strasbourg in 1922. And at Brooklands he kept Aston's wings spread with a string of records and wins. It wasn't all Chitty-Bang-Bang.

3 YELLOW EYEBROWS

Initially there merely as an identification feature, the yellow stripe along the flared top of Frank Feeley's 'Gothic arch' DB3S cutaway wheelarch has become one of those visual tropes that signify certain cars, like a *cavallino rampante* on the flank, a BRM's orange noseband or the white bands across the nose of an Ecurie Ecosse C-type.

4 WO BENTLEY

It's not often remembered that 'WO', expelled from his own firm to join Lagonda, contributed a vital element to Aston Martin's post-war progress. It was his six-cylinder 2.6-litre Lagonda engine that David Brown chose over Claude Hill's pushrod project to power the DB2. Already well developed, the twin-cam was smooth and robust, offering 105bhp and 123bhp in Vantage form and was a perfect match for the sweet-handling chassis. It then powered DB3 and 3S racers, swelling to 2.9 and eventually producing well beyond 200bhp.

5 ZAGATO

The big Z. A coachbuilding link that endures. It's perhaps surprising that restrained Aston Martin went to the quirky Italian firm in 1960 to pare weight from the DB4GT, but Ercole Spada's menacing design hit the spot. In the '80s, when costly low-volume specials were the way to a quick profit, Aston commissioned 50 Zagatos based on the V8 Vantage, then 33 Volantes, all striking rather than handsome. Aston once owned 50 per cent of Zagato, and today there are once again Zagatos in the range — as odd and exaggerated as ever.

6 THE OLDEST OF THEM ALL

Aston Martin took a long time to get moving: in 1922 only three cars were assembled. Amazingly, one of those has been rediscovered after years of obscurity. Known as A3, it was much altered by the works, running as a back-up to the Strasbourg Grand Prix cars and then appearing in races and hillclimbs, sometimes with a touring body, sometimes with smooth racing coachwork and packing different engines. Now restored to original specification, it is a proud possession of Aston Martin Heritage Trust.

7 NÜRBURGRING TEST CENTRE

They could have built their own test track or taken a block booking at Silverstone. Instead Aston built a test and development centre on the Nordshleife,



the most demanding, thrilling challenge you can put a road car through — all new models do a 10,000km endurance run here. This is also where the various Aston GT race cars are honed. Striking building, too, with car on display high in the air in a glass box.

8 LOLA-ASTON MARTIN B09/60

It looked the part in the 2009 Le Mans 24 Hours, gorgeous lines cloaked in Gulf livery, and sounded even better. Aston's V12 was a potent contrast to the muted diesels of Peugeot and Audi. The opposition might have been faster, but this was how all racing cars were supposed to sound. If you were there, chances are that the Aston's siren call still resonates.

9 VICTOR GAUNTLETT

Arch-patriot whose petroleum company became a major Aston shareholder in 1981. His ebullient chairmanship helped the firm through the 1980s oil crisis, and he founded the Nimrod race project to put the firm back on track. Along with joint chairman Peter Livanos, commissioned the limited-edition Zagatos that generated some handy cash.

10 ASTON MARTIN CYGNET

The smallest and silliest Aston Martin in history. Everybody knows it's just a Toyota iQ with lashings of leather and a lustrous paint job, but it speaks volumes for the lure of the Aston name that anybody should be prepared to pay more than £30,000 for one of these... especially when the donor car looks quite pricey at about £12,500.

11 NEWPORT PAGNELL

Aston has had something of a peripatetic existence, but for more than 50 years was based at Newport Pagnell. Its presence added lustre to a town that might otherwise have been known only for lending its name to a tawdry M1 service station.

12 GORDON SUTHERLAND

If you need proof that the motoring world is heaven, just look at the number of angels that came to Aston's aid over the years. This time it was the son of a shipping magnate who in 1932 persuaded his father to buy the firm. Sutherland proved a serious force, getting a decent production run under way, backing the increasing competition efforts, steering the firm through the rocky 1930s and conceiving the highly advanced Atom. But the investment required to restart after the war was too much, and he placed a small ad in *The Times*. It was seen by David Brown...

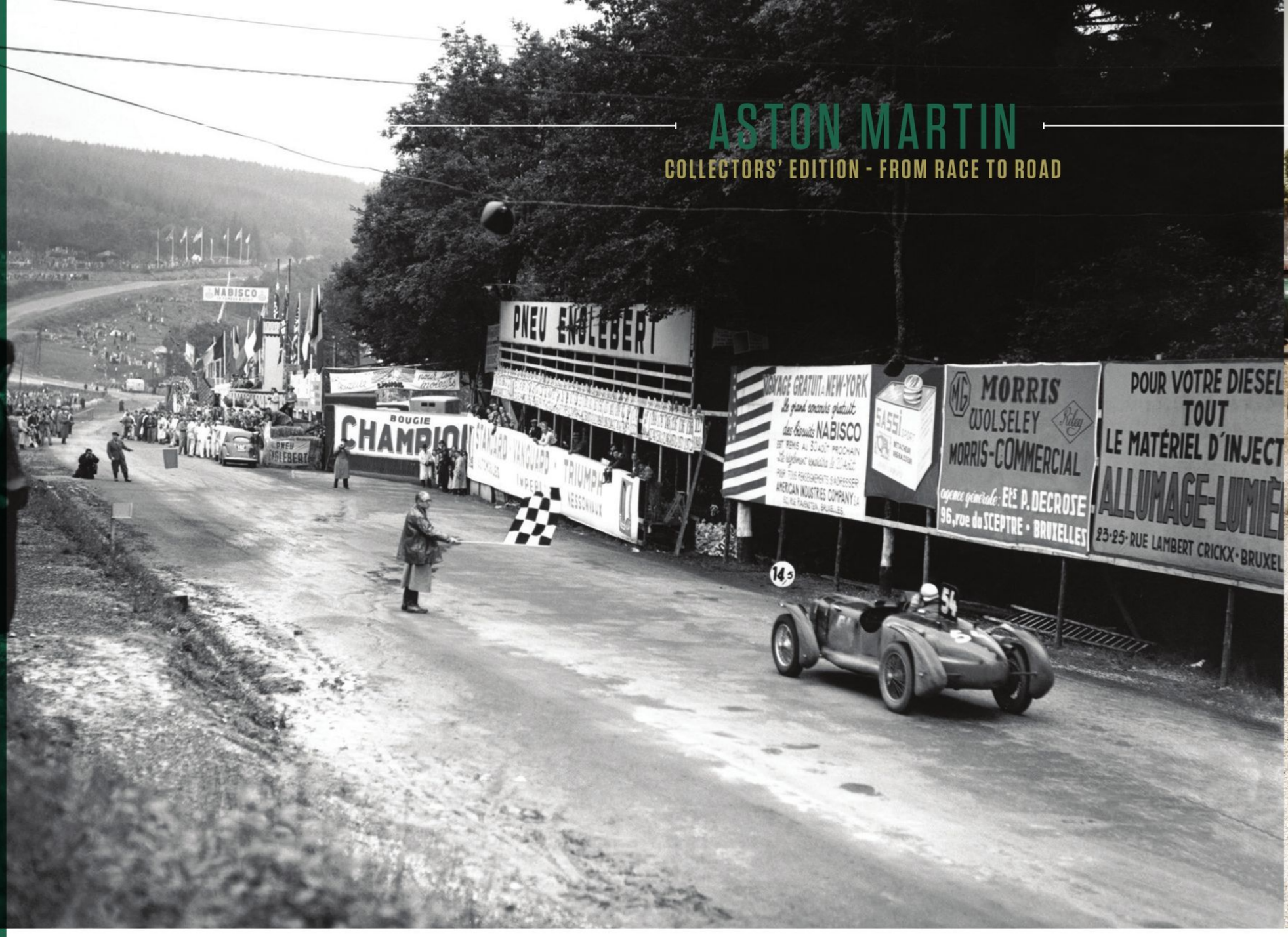
13 LOLA T70 MK3-ASTON MARTIN

A flop, yes, but gloriously so and it's also a good excuse to run a picture of the Lola T70, not that any should ever be needed. The T70 was conceived to accommodate any V8 and Aston Martin saw this as an opportunity to market its new overhead-cam 5-litre. It proposed to enter three cars for Le Mans in 1967, but in the end sent only two and both dropped out within a matter of laps, the engine having been short of development funds and, as a consequence, reliability. It still looks sensational, though...

14 MAREK V8 ENGINE

Mainstay of the Aston range from the late '60s right into the '90s, Tadek Marek's big alloy quad-cam V8 appeared first in 5-litre form as a race engine, unsuccessfully, but finally hit the road in the DBS for which it had been designed. Each engine was famously hand-built by one man whose name ▶

Cygnet, smallest Aston ever, aimed to bring down emissions average across the model range [10]





Above: real-life secret agent Horsfall [15] wins at Spa. Above right: Aston Martin DBR1 [21], the car which finally clinched Le Mans

appears on a small plaque affixed to the block. Started at about 340bhp, soaring to 600 in Vantage versions, and was even turbocharged for an experimental Lagonda (inevitably dubbed 'Turbolag') and the outrageous Bulldog which claimed 700bhp. Also a class winner at Le Mans, and even powered the Group C EMKA racer.

15 ST JOHN RATCLIFFE STEWART 'JOCK' HORSFALL

Forged his reputation as a racing driver during the 1930s, at the wheel of his Aston Martin 2-litre Special, and also worked for Britain's secret service during WW2 (a prototype James Bond, then, if a little more real). His landmark victories included the 1938 Leinster Trophy at Brooklands and the 1948 Spa 24 Hours, sharing an Aston with Leslie Johnson. Horsfall died in an accident at Silverstone in 1949, but to this day the Aston Martin Owners Club names events in his honour.

16 PRINCE CHARLES'S DB6 VOLANTE

These days the royal family is assigned three days of rolling news as soon as one of its Corgis develops a sniffle. The real story is that there's a sense of soul beyond the public facade — not least the fact that HRH still owns this rather lovely DB6 drop-top, given to him as a 21st birthday present in 1969. It has been converted to run on E85 bioethanol, which makes it both regal and (vaguely) green.

17 SPEED MODEL TYPE C

Relied on the very traditional Speed Model chassis developed for Le Mans, but the 1939 Type C struck out for the future with its streamlined curves. With wings integrated into the body and headlights tucked within the grill, it looked fast — if you discounted the extra windscreen, projecting rad cap and other excrescences designers hadn't yet learned caused drag. Pioneered Claude Hill's new body-building method of alloy over square tubes — his own version of `Superleggera'.

18 ASTON MARTIN LAGONDA

Opulence has rarely looked so quirky. From a company that crafted some of the world's most handsomely proportioned grand tourers, the William Towns-penned Lagonda was an object lesson in acquired taste. Still, full marks for having the brass neck to build it. Stayed in production for a lot longer than people realise — 1974 to 1990, through four iterations — and about 30 remain taxed today. That makes it only slightly less rare than the Aston Martin Cygnet...

19 DARREN TURNER

Proof that there are opportunities beyond Formula 1 and an inspiration to anyone whose single-seater career appears ever on the cusp. Seems to have been part of the Aston Martin set-up since James Bond was a twinkle on Ian Fleming's typewriter, but it's done him no harm: cult figure with two Le Mans class wins to his name.

20 INSTRUMENT BINNACLE

Brilliant stroke of design thinking. With the appearance on the new Mk III of what would become Aston Martin's signature radiator grille shape, someone had the neat idea of repeating it inside. The clocks nestle inside a hooded binnacle reflecting the three-section grille you can't see when you're at the helm.

21 ASTON MARTIN DBR1

Made its World Sports Car Championship debut in 1956 and three years later became the first — and, so far, only — Aston Martin to score an outright victory in the Le Mans 24 Hours. Driving chassis DBR1/2, Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby finished a lap clear of another DBR1 driven by Maurice Trintingnant and Paul Frère. Fact: the last of that race's 12 classified finishers was a Saab 93 Sport, driven by Swedes Sture Nottorp and Gunnar Bengtsson.

22 SUPERLEGGERA

It means `superlight'; but it's also an alluring name for a production process... Touring had long built cars this way, using thin steel tube instead of timber to support alloy panels, so it was wise to import the method along with the firm's gorgeous DB4 design. The genius move was badging the bonnet of this English icon with a hint of the Continent — a dab of Italian mustard on English roast beef.

23 SHOOTING BRAKES

Some of the sexiest-ever fast estates have ridden on Aston underpinnings, notably the Harold Radford-converted DB5 and 6, though things got a bit shaky with the FLM DBS version and then fell off a cliff with a Towns Lagonda estate that looked as though it had been faxed. Luckily, the latest Rapide Jet shooting brake from Bertone gets the principle back on track.

24 1922 FRENCH GRAND PRIX

July 16, Strasbourg: Felice Nazzarro wins for Fiat, well clear of Pierre de Vizcaya's Bugatti, but Aston Martin is on an international grand prix grid for the first time. The cars of Clive Gallop and Louis Zborowski retire with engine failures, however.

25 DB4GT & ZAGATO

Introduced in autumn 1959 as a lighter, brisker version of the svelte DB4. The engine — Tadek Marek's straight six with twin spark plugs, three twin-choke Webers and cylinder head mods — generated 302bhp, good for a top speed north of 150mph. One year later, Zagato launched its own version, which was yet more slender and strikingly curvaceous.

26 ARNOLT ASTON

Unconventional US car importer Stanley 'Wacky' ArnoIt often clothed British chassis in bold Bertone designs, and the DB2/4 scrubbed up well — though badging it as an Arnolt riled David Brown. With its cut-down screen the spartan spider looked as aggressive as any Ferrari, while the more *luxe* GT, less bizarre in concept, had its own elegance.

27 GREEN PEA VOITURETTE

The car Zborowski drove at Strasbourg in 1922 and the oldest surviving Aston racer. Nicknamed Green Pea by subsequent owner Mrs Marion Nagnew.

28 ASTON MARTIN RACING

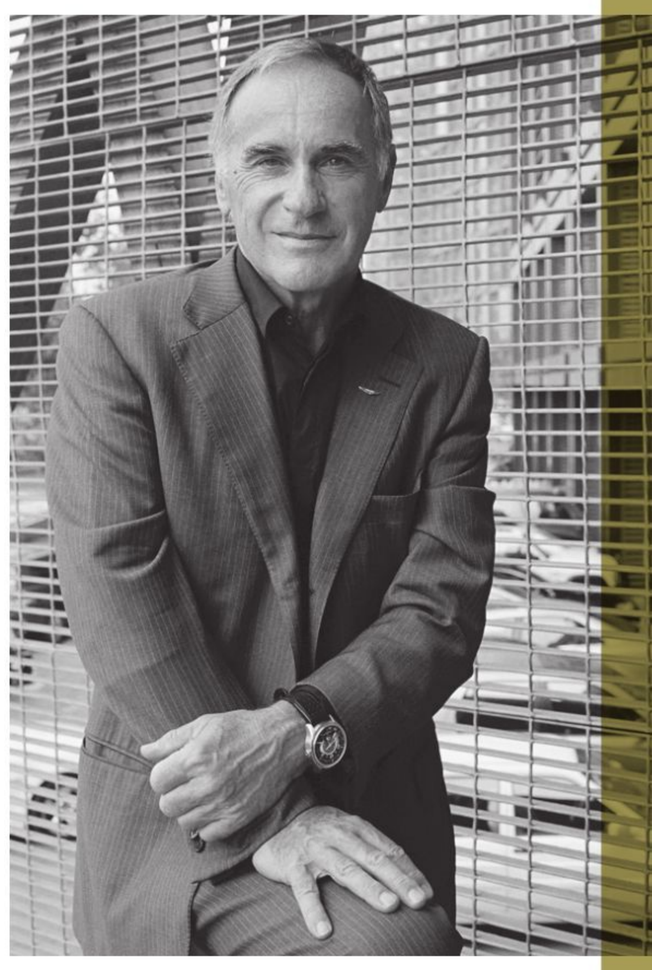
The contemporary motor sport division, performing with grace, dignity and success on the global stage. And what's not to like about a campaign founded on a lusty front-engined GT?

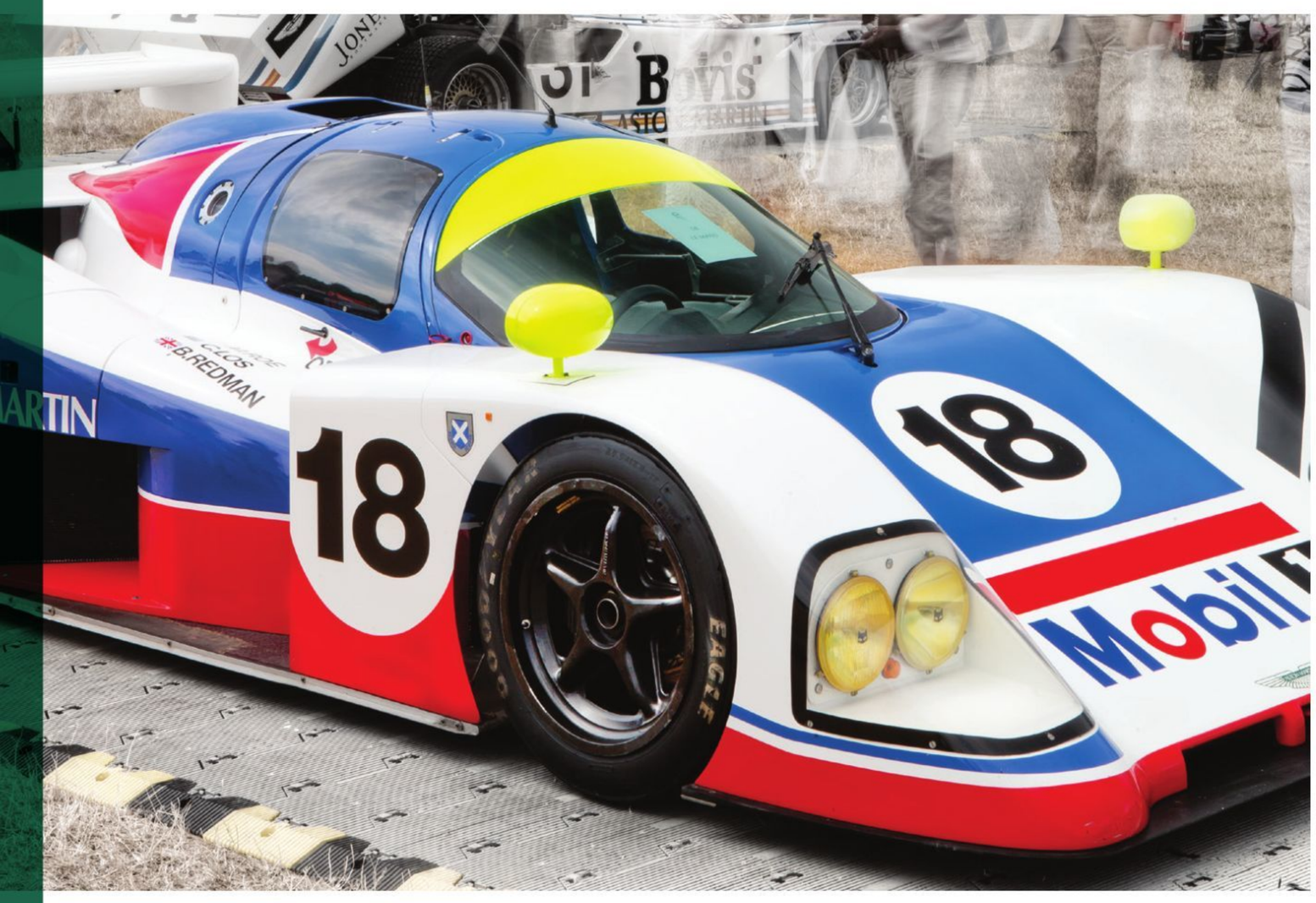
29 DR ULRICH BEZ

Having obtained an engineering doctorate from Stuttgart University, Bez went on to direct design development at Porsche, BMW and the slightly less fashionable Daewoo. His design credits include the BMW Z1, with retracting doors that solved a ▶

Below: Arnolt Aston with Bertone body [26]. Bottom: Ulrich Bez, Aston racer – and CEO [29]







Above: AMR1 [35] briefly seemed a serious contender in Group C, but cash stopped play

nonexistent problem. Became Aston's CEO and chairman in 2000, then later organised its sale to the David Richards/John Sinders consortium. When not directing Aston affairs, Bez could frequently be found racing its products.

30 GOODWOOD PIT FIRE/TITLE GLORY

Late in the 1959 season, the World Sports Car Championship's destiny hinged on the outcome of the Goodwood Tourist Trophy. The occasion's most enduring image is that of the Moss/Salvadori DBR1 igniting following a fuel spillage during a pitstop. Aston privateer Graham Whitehead subsequently withdrew from the race to allow the works team to use his pit: Aston went on to win and secure the world title.

31 TICKFORD

In 1955, Newport Pagnell-based engineering company Tickford Ltd became an Aston Martin subsidiary and would later conjure miracles such as a turbocharged 140mph Ford Capri. It prepared engines for Aston racing projects in the early 1980s and later tuned Cosworth V8s for the FIA F3000 Championship (effectiveness underlined by Damon Hill in 1990) and Fl Judds for Lotus.

32 AMOC

Like Bentley and Rolls-Royce, all members (including overseas) belong to the parent club — this fosters a sense of family for an organisation that offers everything from lunchtime noggins and natters to a serious weekend of racing. And in 1974 the Aston Martin Owners Club saved the firm. In receivership yet again, it was rescued by four enthusiasts after a 'Save Aston' campaign by AMOC. Hurrah!

33 GLASS IGNITION KEY

In the Sixties, Dr Who set designers used chunks of Perspex to indicate bafflingly advanced alien technology. Now your Aston comes to life by sliding a chunk of glass into a slot. No longer alien but still advanced and very cool. And still baffling.

34 THE HATCH IN THE DB2/4

Who cares which was the first five-door hatchback? We don't want to go shopping. But cutting a hole in the back of the new DB2/4 and fitting fold-down seat backs gave buyers an express estate car that looked like a performance coupé. Which it was – 120mph without sending the luggage on ahead. Pre-dated E-type, Reliant GTE, Volvo 1800ES and all the other speedy wagons.

35 ASTON MARTIN AMR1

Aston's second and final attempt to take on sports car racing's grandees during the fondly remembered Group C era looked the part, but faced stiff opposition from Mercedes-Benz, Jaguar and Porsche. A testing accident forced the team to miss the opening race of the 1989 season (Suzuka, Japan) and that led to a $250,000 fine. Two cars were prepared for Le Mans, one finishing 11th, but the seasonal highlight came on home soil, in the Brands Hatch 1000Kms, when Brian Redman and David Leslie finished fourth. A new car was on the drawing board for 1990, but financial considerations led to the project's abolishment after a single season.

36 LIONEL MARTIN

Picking a terrible time to found a car company, Eton-schooled Cornishman Martin teamed with Robert Bamford in 1913 to tune Singers, but soon got ambitious. Managed to build the first complete car during the European unpleasantness and got things moving again by 1920, when Bamford & Martin took larger premises. A handy pilot (and competitive cyclist), Martin's trials, hillclimbs and races got his new marque noticed, but after Bamford resigned in '21 it was another two years before B&M sold its first car. A cash crisis forced Martin out in 1925.

37 AMR DRIVER TRAINING SCHEME

A costly option, perhaps, but designed to convert complete novices into competition licence-wielding Aston Martin GT4 racers faster than you can say "hydraulically actuated automated sequential manual".

38 ASTON MARTIN GT700R

Wigan-based club racer David Ellis had a fantastically well-developed Aston DBS V8 that ▶



1959 Aston Martin DB MKIII Drophead Coupe

Subject to a no expense spared ground up rebuild to the very highest standard by ourselves completed in November 2015. Fitted with overdrive from new and finished in elusive blue with white gold Connolly luxan leather.
Fitted with steel crankshaft and conrods complete with alloy cylinder head.
It is rare to find a car of this age with such traceable history that offers a new owner or collector the opportunity to own a unique car that has been restored to our personal high standards.
Possibly the very best in existence today. POA.



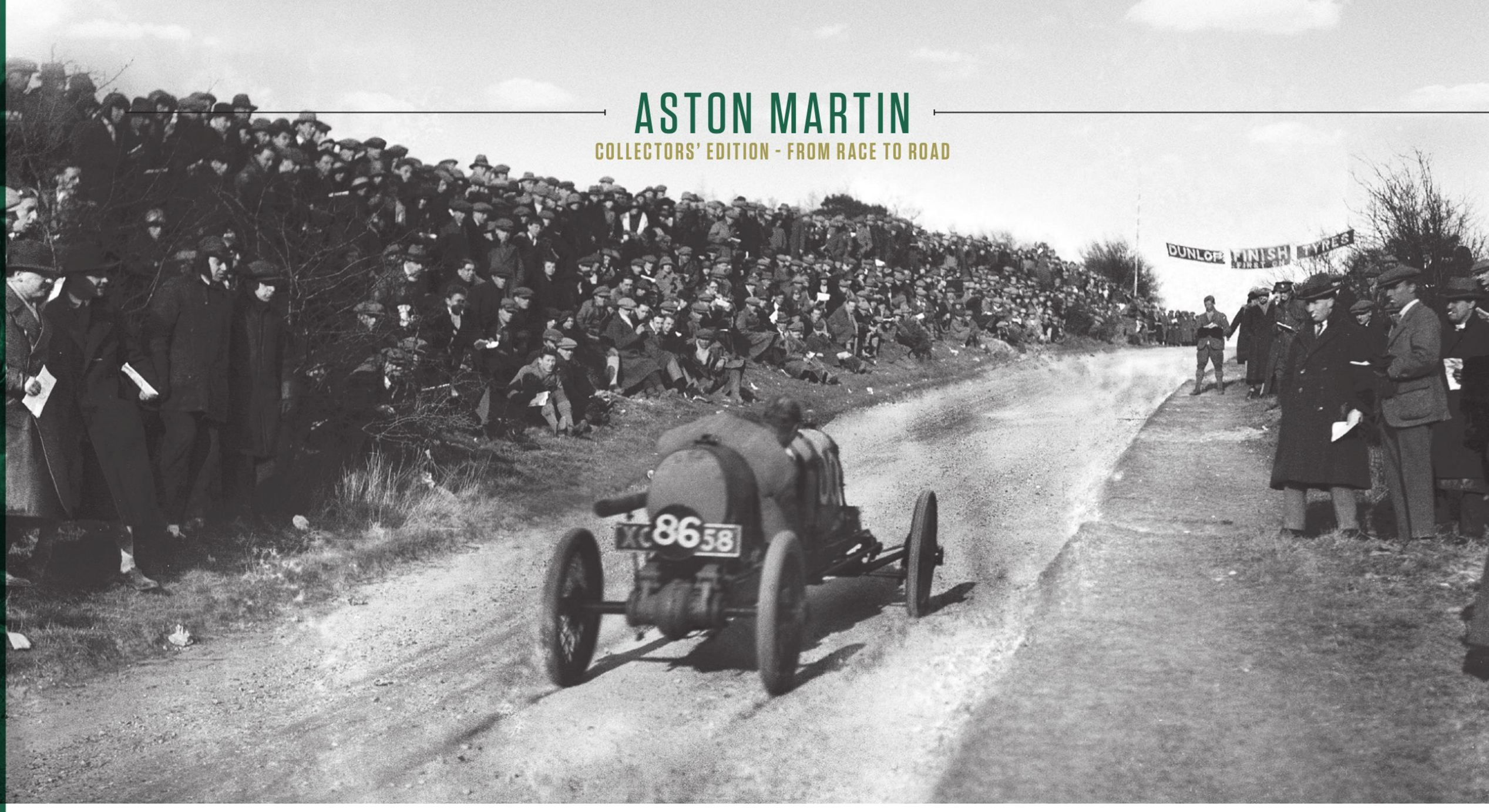
1964 Aston Martin DB5

Subject to a total body off restoration by ourselves over 3 years with a no expense spared approach. Engine to 4.2 litre specification with steel conrods etc. Finished in its original Dubbonet metallic and fawn vaumol hides by Connolly.
A full photographic record accompanies the car and ready for immediate delivery. Completed 2018. POA.

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Above: Eddie Hall tackles Kop Hill in Razor Blade [42].

used to mop up many a sports/GT contest in the early 1980s... although it was eventually barred from AMOC events for being too quick. Next stop? The GT700R, which was swifter still...

39 HYDE VALE DBS V8

Traditional steel racer, painted a fetching shade of silver. Raced with great vim by Ray Taft — and sometimes by former F1 driver Mike Wilds. During the summer of '82, at Mallory Park, Wilds was involved in a memorable duel with David Ellis (see above). Proper racing, relished by all too few...

40 ALL ASTONS THAT DON'T DISPLAY A SICKLY SLOGAN WHEN YOU SWITCH ON

You bought your Aston Martin because you love cars and driving. You're about to hear engine noises that will make your armhairs stand up. You know your pulse will soar when you get to a proper road. You don't need tasteless on-screen computer puff to tell you what to feel.

41 ASTON MARTIN ULSTER

Looks as exquisitely proportioned today as it did when first sculpted in Feltham. A racing version of the MkII, the Ulster was built in small numbers of which most are still running. Three cars finished in the top seven in the 1934 Ards TT, enabling Aston to scoop the team prize.

42 RAZOR BLADE

Stand behind it and it almost vanishes – that's how blade-thin this one-off record car is. That elbow-scraping cockpit is just 18in wide. Revealed in 1923, it plugged a spare twin-cam GP engine into a solid rear axle just 3ft wide, skinned by aeroplane makers De Havilland in sheer alloy for the slickest shape that side of Lockhart's LSR Stutz.

43 ASTON MARTIN RALLY GT

Maurice Gatsonides took an Aston DB2/4 to seventh on the 1955 Monte Carlo Rally, but Astons have rarely been an obvious stage weapon. In 2006, however, the V8 Vantage-based Rally GT was introduced for the purpose. No, we haven't seen many in action, either...

44 AC BERTELLI

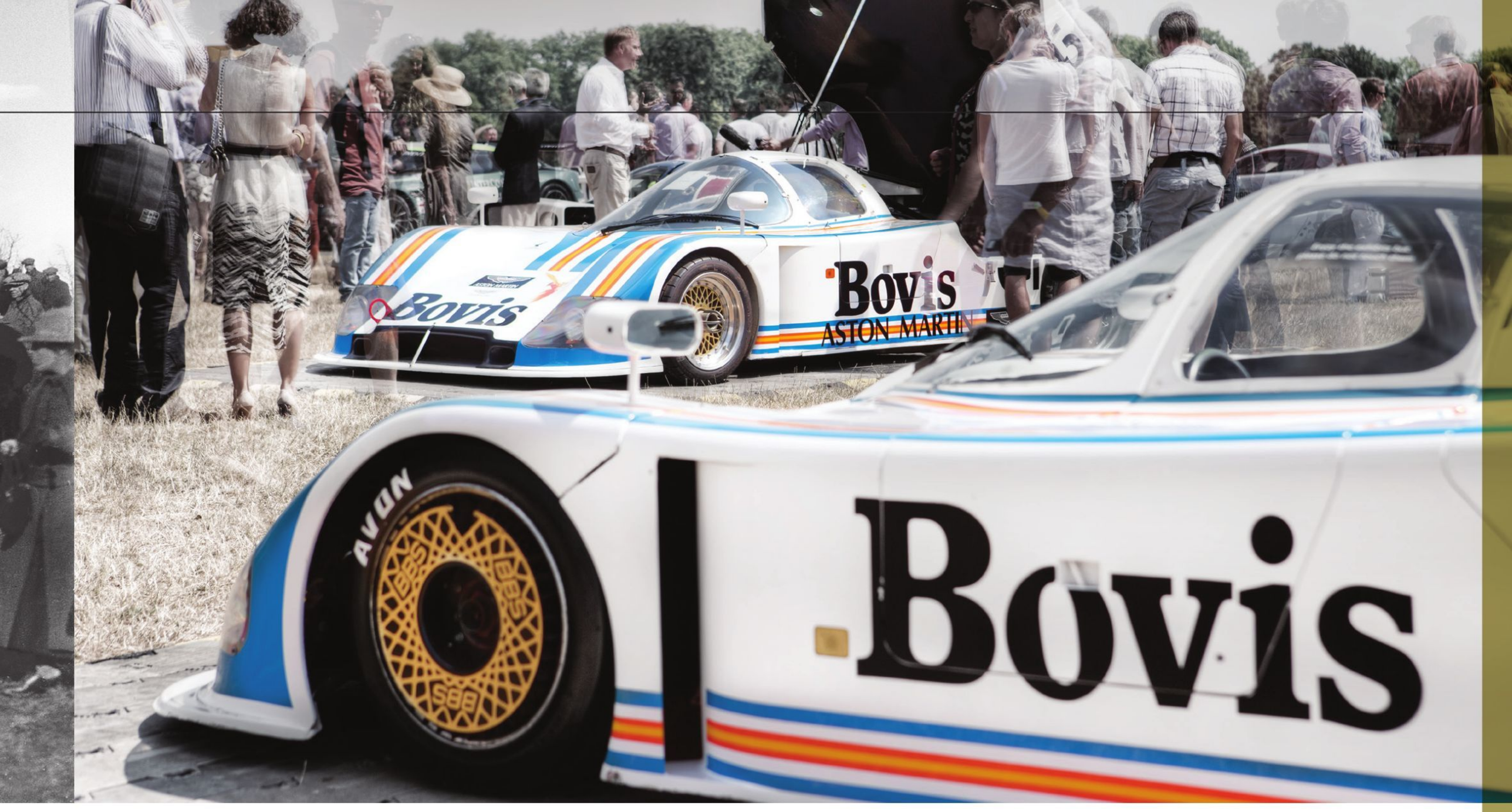
Along with wealthy William Renwick, Augustus 'Bert' Bertelli took over B&M, changed it to Aston Martin and began a glorious new era. His all-new cars refloated the name and invented that distinctive radiator, and his Ulster and International models brought winning acclaim. 'Mechanical differences' saw him walk in '37, but his input was crucial in making Aston a sporting marque par excellence.

45 BILL TOWNS

Some say bold, brave, inventive; others wonder what he was on. Creator of the 1980s 'sculpted by angle-grinder' Lagonda and the origami Bulldog supercar, Aston's in-house designer also penned the first DBS — a pitch-perfect shape that at least one person here thinks is among the 10 most beautiful cars ever made. Towns went on to design modular kit cars from sheet plywood — which sold like hot cakes.

46 V12 ENGINE NOISE

Not the unsuccessful '50s Lagonda V12 racer, but the one you can revel in today — even as a bystander. Yes, the unit has Ford roots, but so did the Cosworth FVA, and such base thoughts disappear the moment you press the starter button. The instant



rumble, the gruff bark when you flex your toe, the glorious blare as staggering gobs of torque flood through the rear wheels... It may be artfully contrived in the sound lab, but they got it right.

47 ASTON MARTIN DBS V8 GTP

Probably one of the least elegant Astons ever produced, but marque devotee Robin Hamilton had touching faith in its durability. An evolution of his own club racer, it was taken to Le Mans in 1977 and defied cynics' predictions by finishing (17th overall and third in class). The car continued to be developed and raced on until 1980. Pensioned off from circuit life, it was later used to set a new land speed record in the realm of caravan towing...

48 ASTON MARTIN DBR4

Ted Cutting's handiwork was a byword for front-engined Formula 1 elegance, but such was its plodding gestation that Cooper had rewritten the rulebook by the time the DBR4 hit the track. It wasn't bad — Roy Salvadori qualified third and finished second, with fastest lap, against a strong field in the 1959 International Trophy at Silverstone — but suffered mostly from immediate obsolescence. By 1960 Aston Martin had lost interest in F1 and it hasn't returned since.

49 NIMROD RACING

A Victor Gauntlett/Robin Hamilton co-production that brought Aston Martin's name back into international endurance racing, as engine supplier, without the inconvenient expense of having to run its own team. Viscount Downe's privately entered car showed flickers of promise in 1982 – sixth at Silverstone, seventh at Le Mans – but the official Nimrod entries suffered persistent niggles. Downe made valiant efforts to keep the cars active, but two were burnt out in the same accident at Le Mans in 1984 and the team's ambitions were simultaneously consumed.

50 SPA 24 HOURS, 1948

Not only a dramatic and unexpected victory, but the impulse that convinced new company owner David Brown he could go racing properly. Sparked by designer Claude Hill, in just a few weeks the team built one 'parts bin' racer using the Atom four-cylinder engine. Leslie Johnson and St John Horsfall used it to score a decisive win in the 1948 Spa 24 Hours, the first major post-war sports car race in Europe. By 1950 a team of DB2s was scoring class wins, and a pure racer, the DB3, was under construction in the hands of Auto Union import Eberan von Eberhorst.

51 ASTON MARTIN DB MKIII

The name isn't quite a sequential fit, but then the MkIII was a halfway house — a last hurrah for the DB2 but a foretaste of things to come with the pouting grille that would define the DB4.

52 ASTON MARTIN ATOM

An early Aston Martin concept car, designed by Claude Hill and introduced in 1939. It's said that a run in this very advanced car persuaded businessman David Brown to purchase Aston Martin.

53 ASTON MARTIN 'COAL SCUTTLE'

The very first car to emerge from the Kensington premises of Lionel Martin and Robert Bamford, in 1915. Nicknamed after a popular household accessory *du jour*, it ploughed a lonely furrow for several years because World War One interrupted the firm's manufacturing plans. ▶

Above: Nimrod project was a brave semi-privateer effort [49]



Above: Aston created the CC100 concept to celebrate its 2013 centenary [63].
Below: Carroll Shelby, Le Mans winner [56]



54 JACK FAIRMAN'S BICEPS

Stirling Moss had to persuade John Wyer to let him take a DBR1 to the 1959 Nürburgring1000Kms. As partner, 'Jolly Jack' Fairman (finally forgiven for blotting his Aston copybook in 1950) was a 'safe pair of hands' — except that while leading he ditched the Aston. In the pits a frustrated Moss began packing to go home, but hadn't reckoned with Fairman's physical strength: alone, he dug the big machine free, set his weight against it and heaved it back on track. With three cars now ahead Moss began one of the great comeback drives, snatching victory out of despair thanks to Aston's pocket Atlas.

55 ASTON MARTIN BADGE

The wings don't go back to B&M days; they appeared with Bertelli and the move to Feltham around 1927. Initially more naturalistic, they got a makeover in the 1930s when racing journalist 'Sammy' Davis, a founder AMOC member, clipped them to resemble an Egyptian scarab beetle. David Brown inserted his name during his reign, but the crisp, clean stylised logo has remained broadly the same since.

56 CARROLL SHELBY

Tough Texan Shelby was a shock to sleepy Feltham when he arrived asking for a car, but John Wyer knew talent when he saw it. Initially foisted on Aston by Sebring's organisers in 1954, the dungaree-clad chicken farmer quickly became a marque stalwart, campaigning his works-supported blue-striped white DB3S around Europe. Later he was a vital member of both sports car and Fl squads, and in 1959 partnered Roy Salvadori to Aston's apotheosis Le Mans victory at last.

57 ASTON MARTIN ONE-77

There is exclusive.., and then there's the Aston Martin One-77. The name reflects the fact that only 77 were made, with full carbon chassis and 7.3-litre 750bhp V12. Other impressive numbers included 200mph-plus top speed and a CO_2 rating of 572g/km. That means a Band M VED rating of £490 per annum, although such details are unlikely to deter anybody capable of meeting the £1,150,000 asking price.

58 THE OTHER ASTON MARTIN ONE-77

A slightly cheaper alternative to the One-77. The limited-edition One-77 bicycle retailed for just £25,000 (although we'd also counsel purchase of a stout padlock).

59 FRANK FEELEY

Until the DB4 era, it was Frank Feeley's instinctive eye that shaped Aston's look, and he had a natural eye for a fine curve. Joined Lagonda in 1926 aged 14, shaping the LG cars, then in the Brown days clothed everything from the 2-litre, or DB1, to the memorably curvaceous DB3S and its coupé variants featuring those extraordinary cutaway arches. But as Brown shifted production to Newport Pagnell, Feeley declined to move too. Enter Touring and the DB4...

60 ASTON MARTIN DB7

It took about 25 years, but the DB6's spiritual successor eventually arrived. There were one or two setbacks during early road tests – cars catching fire, mainly – but it seemed quite popular between conflagrations. The public certainly liked it, for it sold in greater numbers than any previous Aston Martin.



Above: DB4GT Zagato 2 VEV, frequent star in Jim Clark's hands [62].

61 ASTON MARTIN DB8

This should be part of the current range, but the story goes Aston felt uncomfortable launching a 12-cylinder car with an '8' in its name, hence the DB9...

62 ASTON MARTIN DB4GT ZAGATO 2 VEV

As if the Zagato body wasn't distinctive enough, the memorable numberplate of this DB4GT features in some of the great photography from 1961. One of two Zagatos bought by the Ogier stable, 2 VEV won when the Ferraris weren't playing, but the Italian-clothed machines ate up too many tyres to be contenders. Still, a shot of Jim Clark in the TT, tyres screaming for mercy as the pugnacious Aston comes to heel for the master, should make anyone's blood turn to five-star.

63 ASTON MARTIN CC100

Unveiled in 2013 during the Nürburgring 24 Hours race weekend, this is a concept car created to commemorate Aston Martin's centenary. Styling cues were pinched from the 1959 Le Mans-winning DBR1, which consequently makes this Aston's approximate equivalent of the modern MINI or Fiat 500.

64 2-LITRE SPORTS (DB1)

Voluptuous consequence of the aforementioned Atom — the first car produced during David Brown's tenure and now often labelled 'DB1'. Society considered it terribly expensive at the time, with a list price only £2 shy of £1500.

65 AMOC INTERMARQUE

It has been a popular club racing staple for many a season, but in the year 2013 it is heartening to note that this team-themed race series features drivers representing Aston Martin, Ferrari, Porsche... and Sunbeam.

66 ASTON MARTIN DB2 'VMF64'

Doesn't trip off the tongue as smoothly as EMU or VEV, but in 1950 and '51 this highly successful DB2 racer cemented Aston's image among the grandest of grand tourers, thanks in part to fastidious preparation by new recruit John Wyer. An extensively lightened team car, it placed third at Le Mans, winning its class twice there and once in the Mille Miglia. The trademark sporting fastback look and 'three-step' radiator are all present as Aston Martin shifts into third gear and gets motoring.

67 DAVID RICHARDS

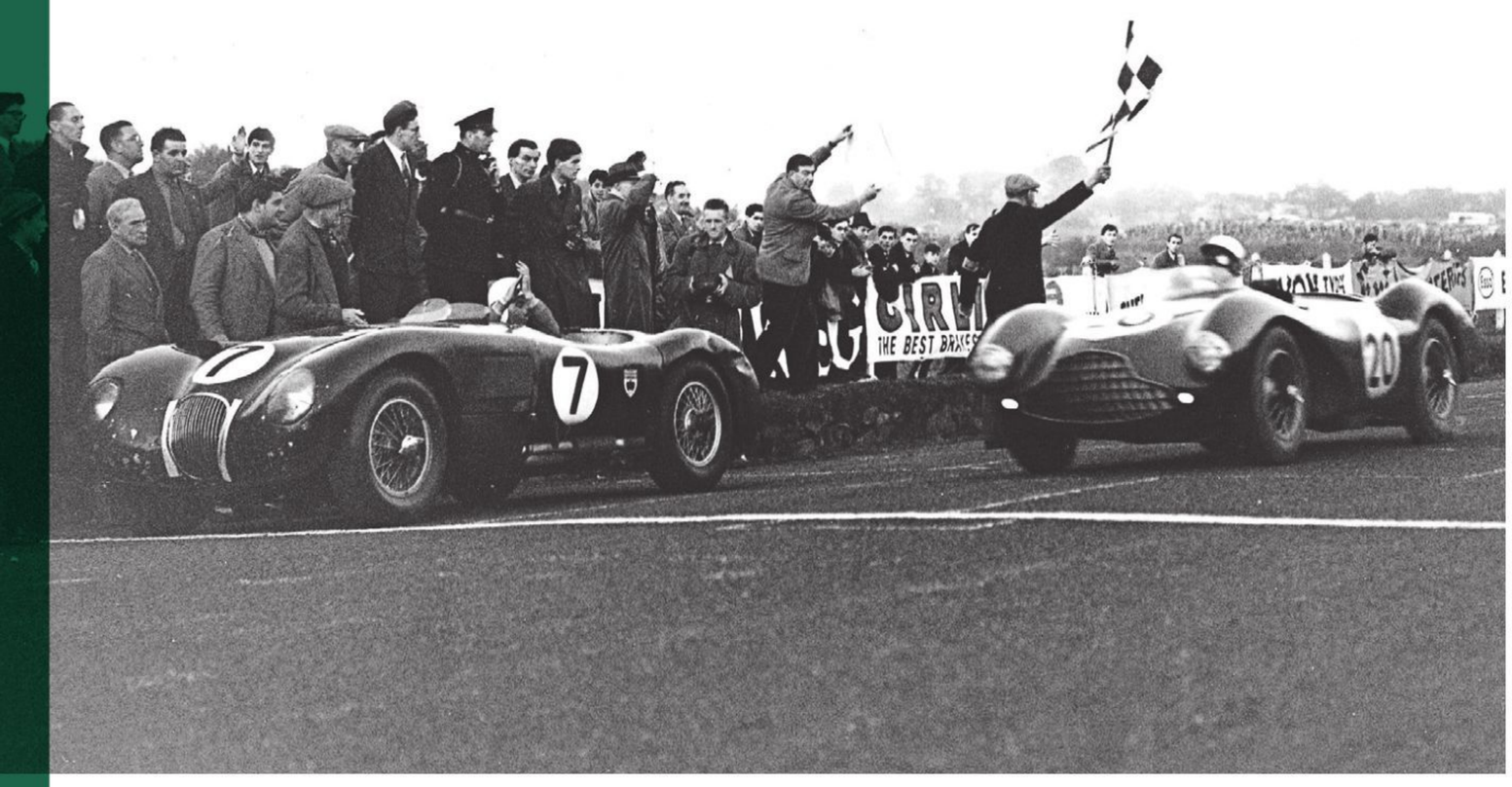
At Aston Martin's helm during 2007-13. When he ran Formula 1 teams, the media appreciated his approachability. When he worked in rallying, however, some journalists were wary because they felt him "a bit too Fl..." He's a successful businessman, but also an enthusiast. Heart in the right place, then.

68 KENSINGTON GARDEN CENTENARY

The royal park is used to motor car concours, but not on this scale – Aston Martins as far as the eye could see. And what a selection, from the oldest marque survivor, A3, via the great '50s and '60s models to the eye-boggling CC100 concept, all within crisp white picket fences.

69 O.H.M.S.S DBS V8

Yes, it's another James Bond Aston...voluptuously elegant, but fatally flawed. It appears only ▶



Above: Dundrod 1953 – Collins proves a DB3S can beat the C-types. [77].
Below: Lagondas star in Fifties road-race drama *Checkpoint* [75]

occasionally during *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Q Branch really should have fitted bullet-proof glass to spare poor Diana Rigg, the late Mrs (very briefly) Bond...

70 DAVID BROWN

Aston's history has lurched from crisis to receivership and back again, and there is a litany of saviours. But among those, polo-playing Yorkshire entrepreneur David Brown deserves the gratitude of all marque supporters. Wealthy from building tractors, he switched to high-performance sports cars in 1947 (long before tractor maker Ferruccio Lamborghini) after seeing the ailing company advertised in *The Times*. Quickly added Lagonda and Tickford, then continued to fund both road and race car development without worrying too much about making money... Putting his name on the badge looked egotistical at the time, but considering his legacy we can forgive him.

71 SIR MALCOLM CAMPBELL

When he wasn't chasing speed records or winning the Grand Prix de Boulogne, Sir Malcolm Campbell had a reputation for driving road cars of distinction. His inventory include a 1933 Aston Martin Le Mans and a 1934 Lagonda T45 Tourer. Naturally, both were painted blue.

72 VOLANTE

Pinched from the Italian language, but just as *béchamel* sounds much more exotic than simple white sauce, Volante has a much more sophisticated air than plain old convertible. Used for all rag-top Astons from 1965 on. Not very logical — where does 'flying' come into it? — but a sexy element in Aston's V lexicon.

73 VANQUISH

The first one. Another of Ian Callum's masterworks — a symphony of squat power, tensed muscle and barely contained aggression, animated by that sensational V12. Far from Aston's recent run of serving the same dish with different dressings, the Vanquish grew out of a 1998 show car and had a carbon-fibre and aluminium chassis with six-speed paddle-shift gearbox.

74 V8 VANTAGE

Compact refinement of the well-established Aston Martin profile and — even after 10 years — it looks delicious from every angle. Naturally available in several flavours, but as with food simpler is better, aesthetically speaking. There's a Volante, too, but why would you slice off the most handsome part? That sweep from roofline into rear-quarters is masterly.

75 CHECKPOINT

Fifties film melodrama directed by Ralph Thomas centred around a Mille Miglia-style road race and featuring the only decent performance by the two 1954 racing Lagondas. Ironic, as they had been slated to do the MM but failed to make it there.If you think Pat Symonds was poorly treated by Renault in 2009, spare a thought for Stanley Baker, hunted down and killed on team orders! Meanwhile there's a feast of MM footage starring the Feltham pair as 'Warren Ingrams' before they're pushed off a cliff. Which is just what John Wyer wanted to do with them..

.

76 THE PERSUADERS

James Bond (Roger Moore) drives an Aston Martin (DBS) in a series (The Persuaders) that has nothing to do with James Bond. The DBS was finished in Bahama Yellow and Moore was reunited with it not so long ago for a promotional shoot. Co-starring with Tony Curtis ('Danny Wilde'), Moore played Brett Rupert George Robert Mark Anthony Andrew Sinclair, 15th Earl of Marnock. Or Lord Brett Sinclair, according to the title credits...

77 DUNDROD 1953

First year of the neater, lighter DB3S, which went to Ireland for the Tourist Trophy with two wins under its bonnet. While some, including chief Jaguar rival Moss, disliked the twisting, bumpy public road Dundrod circuit, Peter Collins, driving with Pat Griffith, loved it and not only won but lapped Mr Moss. Yes, the C-types had gearbox trouble but the Astons didn't. It was a major boost for Aston's racing hopes, but for '54, over-confidence would see the team blow a gasket. ▶



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HERITAGE









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The Vulcan is powered by a naturally aspirated 7 litre V12, has a Xtrac 6 speed sequential gearbox , Brembo calipers and carbon ceramic discs. This car is a truly remarkable machine and is beautifully styled.

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ASTON MARTIN

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD









Above: Marsh Plant DB4 Lightweight brought Gerry Marshall his 600th win [78]. Above right: Tippi Hedren drives DB2/4 to her avian encounter [81]

78 MARSH PLANT ASTON MARTIN DB4 LIGHTWEIGHT

Officially, there was no Lightweight model in the Aston sales catalogue.., but a fair few were created for racing purposes (assorted steel parts being ditched in favour of aluminium). Aston aficionados regard the Lightweight as a logical development the company might feasibly have pursued, given time. We pick the Marsh Plant example for one reason alone: it was in this car, at Snetterton on August 6 2000, that the late, great Gerry Marshall recorded the 600th win of a race career that began during the early 1960s.

79 JOHN WYER

Legendary case-hardened team manager with a penetrating eye for detail and a deaf car for excuses. Joined Aston for 1950 as chief development engineer and sand-papered the team into shape with endless testing and thorough preparation. Continued to run the teams with a rod of carbon steel and his famous 'death ray' stare while overseeing development through to 1963 when racing stopped and he set off for highly successful careers with Ford, Porsche and Mirage. But his first Le Mans victory was when that dusty DBR1 of Shelby and Salvadori crossed the line in 1959. Who glares wins...

80 ASTON MARTIN DP214

The last hurrah of racing Aston Martins until the next one. After the 1962 toe-in-water Project 212, Brown sanctioned one prototype and two rule-stretching 'GT' cars increasingly distant from their DB4GT roots and boasting extended low-drag skins. After the 'wrong tyres' debacle at the Goodwood TT, Salvadori drove the race of his career in 0194/R to steal the 1963 Coppa InterEuropa at Monza from Mike Parkes' Ferrari 250GT0. A couple of victories in France apart, it was the end of works Aston Martin racing for a while.

81 THE BIRDS

Hitchcock's realisation of a Daphne du Maurier short story took it a long way from Norfolk – all the way to California's Bodega Bay. But he gave Tippi Hedren an open DB2/4 to transport her, elegantly head-scarfed, towards her avian encounter. Sit back and enjoy the six-cylinder soundtrack to the trip along winding cliffside roads above the Pacific and don't miss the two lovebirds in their cage banking through the corners.

82 2-LITRE SPEED MODEL

Gorgeous to behold and the epitome of how any 1930s sports car should look – but how easy would it be to scald your elbow on its cockpit-side exhaust?

83 BERTIE WOOSTER'S MKII

In the canon, PG Wodehouse doesn't specify a marque for his hero beyond the "old two-seater", and frankly it's hard to imagine intellectually negligible Bertie choosing such a sporting make as an Aston Martin... And of course ITV's choice of MkII is about a decade too young. But the sight of Steven Fry's Jeeves proceeding down a country house drive in bowler-hatted splendour with half of him above the windscreen is a recurrent pleasure.

84 CORGI TOYS

A contender for the finest toy of all time, Corgi's James Bond DB5 has been reissued a couple of times, but originals fetch a fair few bob on eBay... and 1960s boxes are being advertised for £50-plus on their own. There are other Corgi Bond Astons, of course, but only one has this much charisma.

85 FOUR DOORS

We don't need the awful Porsche Panamera to tell us it's hard to design an elegant four-door sports car. Yet AML has a commendable back catalogue of truly handsome four-doors. Lagonda Rapide, Mr Brown's Dralon-lined DBS-and-a-bit Lagonda, William Towns' 1970s razor-edge Lagonda: even under different designers the firm's aesthetic senses held firm while adding extra doors. And look at today's Rapide — at a glance you barely notice the extra openings. Sublime.

86 TRI-ANG MINIC MOTORWAYS

Scalextric has conjured some very nice slot-racing Aston Martins, but its oft-forgotten 1960s rival made some, too. Minic slot cars complemented Triang-Hornby train sets... and it is hard to reproduce elegance in 00 gauge (aka 1/76 scale). Two of its best efforts were catalogue numbers M1574 (Aston Martin DB4) and M1581 (DB6), although we also have a sneaking admiration for M1543 (the Humber Super Snipe).

87 ASTON MARTIN DB3S

Not initially a contender for victory at the top level, the DB3S staked out Aston's ambitions – and John Wyer's. Robust and sweet-handling, the cars side-stepped the disappointing DB3 and quickly brought results. Clad in some of Frank Feeley's finest body designs, the 3S beat the Jaguar C-types in the 1953 TT and Nine Hours and went on to become Aston's chief weapon, cheerfully over-running its sell-by date when the DBR1 was slow to arrive. As late as '58 the Whitehead brothers took second at Le Mans in their private entry. And DB3S could have been the Cobra: in 1962 Shelby discussed using it for his new V8 project...

88 MANUAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

For all the world's technological advances during the 100 years since Aston Martin's creation, its cars remain largely hand-built. Sometimes, the old ways are still best.

89 VANTAGE AIRDAM

Perhaps the most brutal bit of restyling ever. Now we've upped power to 380bhp and created earth's quickest-accelerating saloon, let's try to keep it on the ground by walling off the underside and sealing the radiator inlet with sheet ally...

90 ASTON CLINTON HILLCLIMB

Instead of becoming Bamford Martins, Astons were partially named after the Aston Clinton hillclimb, where Robert Bamford was a regular competitor. With a twist of geography and timing, then, the cars could have become Gurston Martins or Kop Martins.

91 ASTON MARTIN ULSTER 'LM20'

When a car is known by its number you know it must be special. This Ulster punched well above its 85bhp to claim an amazing third overall in the '35 Le Mans classic under Charles Martin and Brackenbury. One of three team cars with undertrays, lie-down spare wheel in the tail and 1500cc engines balanced to reach 5500rpm, it was painted red because of superstitious Bertelli. Went on to fourth in the TT and fifth in the '37 Le Mans — and you'll see it in action at any major vintage race.

92 OGLE SOTHEBY SPECIAL

Sponsored by Wills tobacco, this took the DBS chassis and wrapped it in a startling (even by 1972 standards) wedge of glassfibre and glass. With 22 ▶

Above: Rapide elegantly integrates four doors into coupé form [85]. Below: hand tools highlight Aston craftsmanship [88]







Above: Ian Callum, Aston's design chief [93]. Above right: Ogle Sotheby Special was built on DBS mechanicals [92]. Below: Robert Bamford – the forgotten marque co-founder [96]

rear lights that chimed in as braking increased, it dazzled motor show visitors but failed to float the Sotheby's-branded cigarettes it was built to promote and was soon repainted Embassy red. You know, the fags your dad smoked..

93 IAN CALLUM

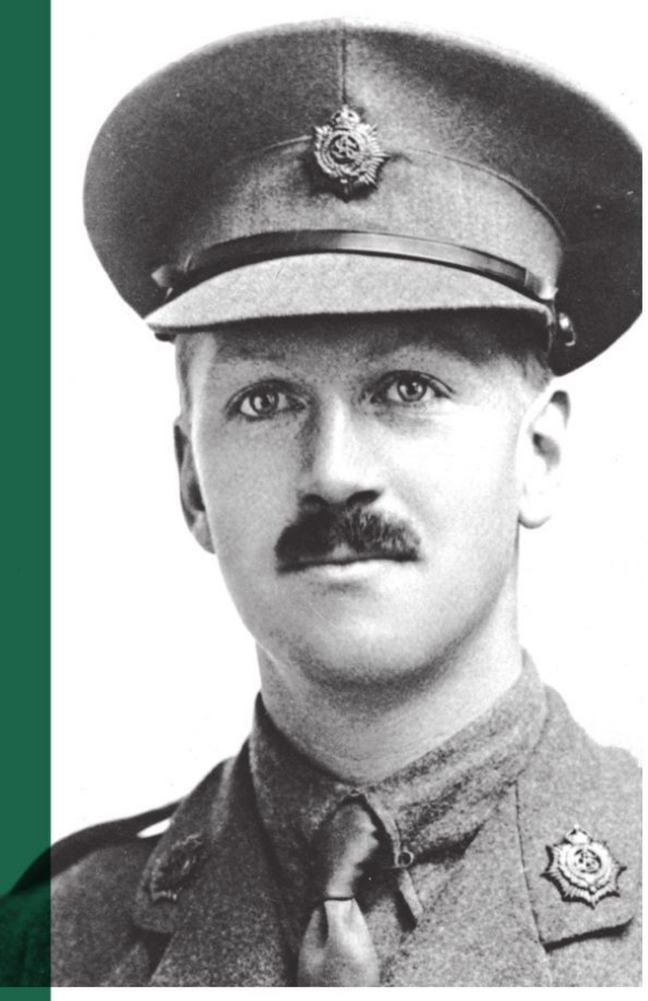
Another lucky strike for Aston after the Ford purchase was Ian Callum's previous experience with the huge combine. His design firm TWR shaped the DB7 and Vanquish. After joining Jaguar, by then also part of Ford, he worked on the DB9. Callum is a dyed-in-the-wool car enthusiast with a hot rod in his garage — the perfect man to instil a new direction at Newport Pagnell.

94 YOU TUBE

A rich seam. Start off by searching for 'Aston Martin Nordschleife' or 'James Bond car chase'(or *Italian Job* if you can bear seeing a DB4 convertible being scrunched by a digger) and go with the flow.

95 WALTER HAYES

The man who sired the DFV didn't want to see the ailing (once more) marque die, so as Ford Europe VP suggested to Henry Ford II that the Blue Oval embrace AM's wings. In 1991, after Victor Gauntlett left, Hayes became chairman and inspired the DB7, named with the blessing of retired D Brown. It saved the firm... Hayes loved cars and couldn't bear to see AM vanish.



96 ROBERT BAMFORD

Henry Ford. Herbert Austin. Ferruccio Lamborghini. Enzo Ferrari .William Rootes. Marcel and Louis Renault. Armand Peugeot. WO Bentley. Charles Rolls. Henry Royce. Lionel Martin... Their names gained resonance within the automotive industry and retain it still. Martin's founding partner, however, remains less celebrated.

97 TED CUTTING

One of the new boys of the David Brown era, Ted Cutting's engineering nous gave Aston its famously cutting-edge handling. His first task was the successful DB2 chassis, and by 1955 he was in charge of race car design, producing the ill-fated DBR4 grand prix car and the very rapid Project racers. But his greatest achievement was DBR1, the beautiful Le Mans and championship-winning 3-litre sports car, over which he had complete control. Thanks to Cutting it looked right, it was right and it proved him right.

98 THE ONE YOU COULDN'T SEE

James Bond has hit impressive levels of car silliness over the years: the amphibious Lotus Esprit; the 2CV car chase (one of the best, we reckon); Scaramanga's flying Matador; Roger Moore driving half a Renault 11 around Paris... but the invisible Vanquish in the awful *Die Another Day* tops the lot. Mangled science reaches new levels — and for once, Aston Martin is upstaged in a Bond film by the metallic green Jaguar XK8 driven by nemesis Zao. Those rockets would come in handy over Wandsworth Bridge on a Monday morning.

99 ROY SALVADORI

Fret not, for we have not overlooked one of the foremost figures of 1950s motor sport. Roy Francesco Salvadori sounds a little cosmopolitan for a son of Essex, but he was as British as Aston Martin — a marque whose interests he served well. He shared the winning DBR1 with Carroll Shelby at Le Mans in 1959 and was entrusted with the short-lived Aston F1 project in 1959/60. Carried on competing in World Championship grands prix until 1962, with Cooper — a team he later managed. Passed away only in 2012, shortly after his 90th birthday.

100 THINGS ASTON HAS OUTLIVED...

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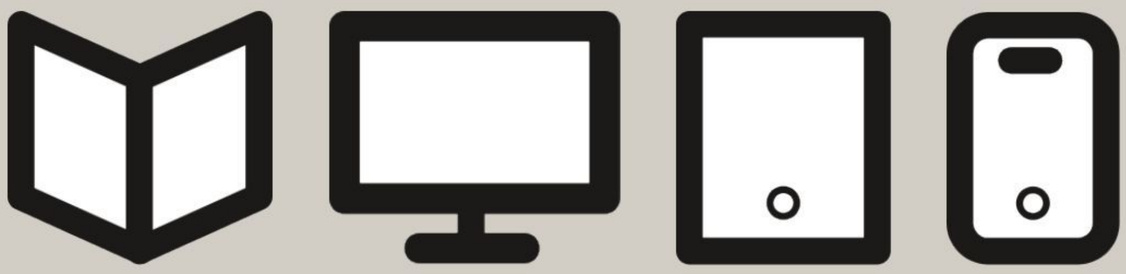
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ROAD TEST

ASTON MARTIN DBS SUPERLEGGERA

Aston Martin's new DBS Superleggera appears a brave move but, on closer inspection, it has a market all to itself

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, OCTOBER 2018

It is said that fortune favours the brave and, judging by the spectacular recovery of Aston Martin in the last few years, there would seem to be something in it.

As anyone who follows the industry even at finger-tip distance will know, the Aston Martin today is unrecognisable compared to the Aston Martin of even five years ago. The DB11 and Vantage have been accorded rapturous receptions, while the Valkyrie hypercar sold out as soon as its existence was made known to its most favoured customers.

And now more fortune has fallen Aston Martin's way, and it has come from the most surprising of quarters. For it was Ferrari's decision to reprofile the positioning of its flagship model when it modified the F12 into the 812 Superfast that created the gap into which this new DBS walks.

I'm sorry, I meant DBS Superleggera. To me it seems something of a contrivance, albeit harmless, to exhume not one but two names from Aston's past, and although the DBS does indeed weigh a little less than the DB11 upon which it is based, there is nothing super-light about it. Then again, nor was there about the 1959 DB4, the first Aston to bear a name which then referred specifically to a Touring of Milan construction technique involving a platform chassis with certain stressed parts upon which a tubular frame was then built to support the body. Today it means nothing of the sort even if echoes of actual Superleggera design were in some Astons right up to the turn of the century. ▶



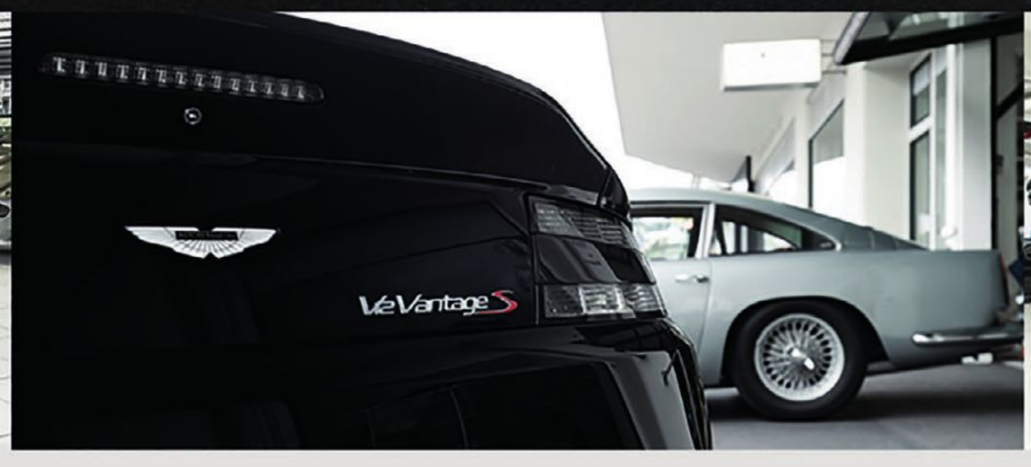
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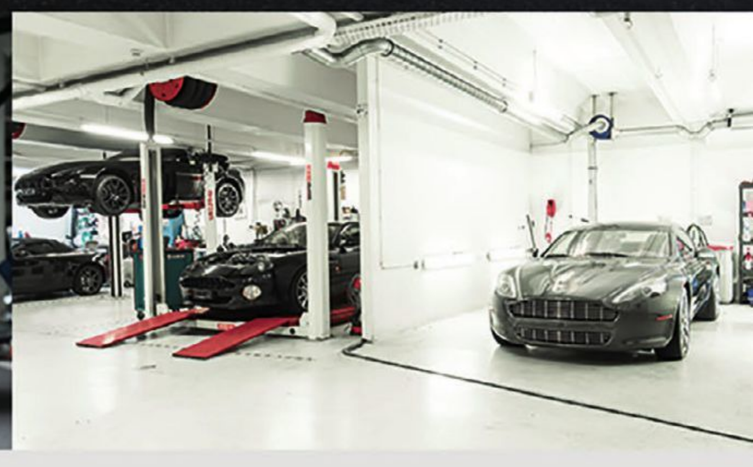
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The DBS isn't as lightweight as its name suggests, but is impressive nevertheless



I digress. The point is that the 812 Superfast is a super GT no longer, but a more traditional kind of supercar, the most sporting in character since the Daytona and as such a closer rival to a Lamborghini than the Aston. So the fact the Ferrari has 789bhp and the DBS a paltry 715bhp is not the weakness it might seem for the British car, for in truth the DBS is now a car without any immediate or obvious competition. Which seems odd when you drive it, because for all its power and startling appearance, its character feels rather traditional. Indeed as I alternately cruised, blasted and skidded my way around Austria and Germany in it, I was reminded powerfully of the great V8 Vantages of the late 1970s and 1980s, a beautiful example of which is owned by Aston boss Andy Palmer.

A coincidence? Perhaps not entirely.

Like that car, the DBS is a considerably warmed-through version of a pre-existing product, which is ironic because the car that spawned that first Vantage started life as the original DBS… This time the 5.2-litre V12 has been given 715bhp, fully 115bhp more than when it first fitted the DB11, an output achieved not by fitting bigger turbos, new manifolds and uprated internals, but simply by taking the cork out: the engine was always good for this power and was artificially held back by its electronics for the DB11. The DBS has a wider track, stiffer suspension, fatter tyres, ceramic brake discs as standard, bodywork that provides more downforce but no more drag, largely carbon-fibre panels and a brand new ZF gearbox to cope with a mighty (147lb ft) increase in torque. A comprehensive job then, as you'd expect given the £225,000 price Aston Martin has chosen for it.

But does it feel sufficiently different to the DB11 to justify the name? The last DBS launched 10 years ago did not, and there are those in the factory to this day who think it would have been more honest and accurate to have called that car the DB9GT.

Well, I think we can dispel those thoughts quite quickly. Yes, it looks like a DB11 but only in the sort of way that a Bengal tiger looks like a cat. The relationship is clear, the weaponry of a completely different order. ▶

FACT FILE

ENGINE 5.2 litres, 12 cylinders, turbocharged
TRANSMISSION 8-speed automatic, rear-wheel drive
0-62MPH 3.4sec
TOP SPEED 211mph
PRICE £225,000 **POWER** 663lb ft@1900rpm
TORQUE 515lb ft @2000rpm **FUEL/CO2** 23mpg, 285g/km

Forget that its 0-62mph time of 3.4sec is 'only' half a second quicker than the original DB11, for this is a car that produces so much torque it will light up its tyres in the first three gears on a smooth dry road if you let it.

To be honest with you, it's the first Aston I've driven that feels relentlessly quick in the modern vogue. Probably the least appreciated transformation in the way cars drive these days is how turbochargers have changed power delivery. Once, exhaust-driven forced induction came only by sacrificing half or more of the rev range to off-boost lethargy, but now it's the turbo motors that make the normally aspirated motors feel peaky, and few more than the DBS. There is no discernible turbo lag, just an avalanche of torque everywhere, often more than this very fluently suspended car can handle. And even Aston Martin admits that if it's going to provide more in a front-engined car, the front axle will have to share traction-providing duties.

If Aston Martin had been insane enough to attempt to deploy such potency a few years back the result would have been so funny you'd still be laughing as you went through the hedge. Today, with computers controlling the damping, torque restricted in the lower gears and expert traction control simply rejecting any request for more than the rear axle can handle, progress is pretty serene for as long as you want it to be. The car steers wonderfully well, capably disguising its weight and wheelbase without the need for rear-wheel steer, and blasts you towards your destination to the inimitable song of 12 cylinders almost unaffected by the need to breathe through its turbos.

If I have a reservation about the DBS, it is not the car it is, but the kind. Whether built by Aston Martin, Ferrari or anyone else, these super GTs are always somewhat paradoxical – the most expensive cars in their ranges, yet also the most compromised. The truth is that a DB11 is a better GT than this because it's quieter and more comfortable, while a Vantage is a superior sports car because it is lighter, shorter and stiffer.

Of course what neither provides (although the DB11 easily could with the right mapping) is that wrecking-ball punch from little more than idling speed. And Aston Martin has worked hard at providing a characterful interior design with a bewildering array of retail opportunities for the customer keen on customisation. But the Mercedes-Benz parts bin components are as easily seen here as on a Vantage costing little more than the half the money, and while it all works splendidly, visually it grates.

But none of this can obscure the fact that this is another confident, charming and capable Aston Martin that delivers in full on the promise of its looks. And right now I can think of nothing else like it: the Ferrari 812 Superfast is too hardcore, the Bentley Continental GT is a touring car first and a sports car a very distant second.

The Vantage remains my favourite of the new breed of Aston Martins, but that may say more about me than Gaydon's current model line up. What I do know is that the company has got itself not only a fine new flagship, but sole occupancy of the field in which it stands. ■



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PLANS OF HOPE & GLORY

Aston Martin returns to Le Mans this year hoping for a victory against the odds. Much as it did in 1959...

writer **ROB WIDDOWS** photographer **MITCH PASHAVAIR**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JUNE 2009


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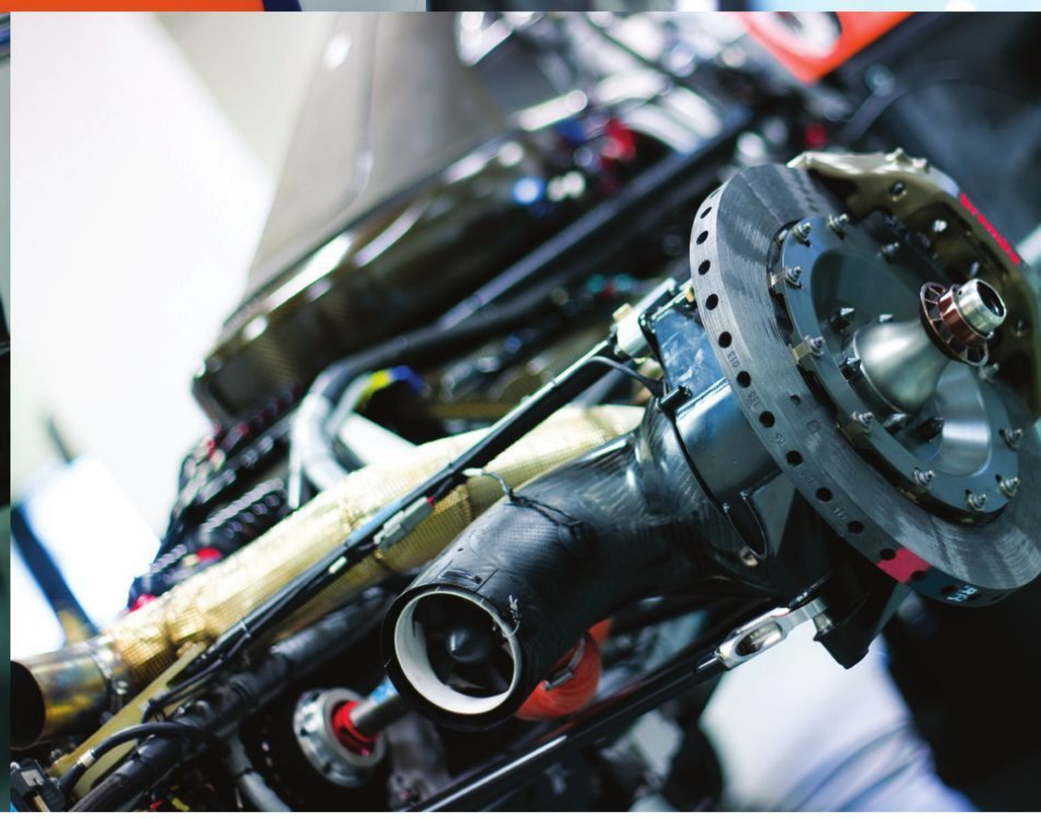
















Testing the car at Paul Ricard, showing Aston Martin design cues over Lola tub. Opposite, cars are assembled at Prodrive

Only mad dogs, Englishmen and Aston Martin go out in the midst of a recession to try and win Le Mans. Is this audacious, or brave, or simply mad? Or perhaps a combination of all three? Whatever it is, we hereby applaud the spirit.

Aston Martin, that most British of cars, is going back to Le Mans on the 50th anniversary of its famous victory with Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby in the DBR1.

The new car will not be in the gorgeous green of the old DBR1. The 2009 edition will be decked out in the blue and orange colours of the Gulf oil company, surely one of the most evocative liveries in racing history. Maybe it's a good omen.

Does Aston Martin Racing (aka Prodrive) really have a chance of victory? The answer, frankly, is no. But then the DBR1 was very much the underdog back in 1959, and everyone – especially us Brits – loves an underdog. You have to admire the pluck, the spirit and the ambition, but then you have to take the turbodiesel Audis and Peugeots into the equation. The new Aston Martin LMP1 will be racing with the Big Boys this summer. AMR will be punching above its weight.

The car is not absolutely Aston Martin. It is based on the 2008 Lola chassis campaigned by Charouz Racing System, and the new challenger was designed by Julian Sole at Lola. Importantly, it will use the Aston V12 engine which has proved so successful in the lesser categories at La Sarthe, but this year the works team will focus entirely on overall victory in LMP1.

That David Richards and his Prodrive empire are behind this project comes as no surprise. Richards has never shied away from a challenge, whatever the odds, even as the worst recession since the 1930s swirls around him.

"Yes, the world at large has major problems right now, and there's no getting away from that," says Richards. "Aston Martin is not unaffected by this – the factory is working a three-day week – but we take a positive view of what is ahead. We have had the investment from our new shareholders, some great results over the last 18 months, and we have new products on the horizon. So there are many reasons why we feel positive about the future. Le Mans is an indication of this optimism and confidence, and it's highly appropriate that Aston Martin should go there this year."

Understood. But how on earth are they going to resource such an ambitious challenge?

"Well, clearly Aston Martin the car company is not in a position to finance expensive motor racing programmes, and never has been for that matter," he laughs. "But we set up Aston Martin Racing as an independent business and we manage our sponsorship, design costs and operational costs independently from the road car side of things. It's not easy, but going motor racing is never easy."

Assuming the finances are in place, they surely cannot expect to beat the Audis and Peugeots in a straight fight at La Sarthe. ▶

"We do not underestimate the task," says Richards, "but don't forget, we have won the GT1 class for the last two years. Taking on the diesel-powered cars will, we know, be a massive challenge. Logically the odds are stacked against us, and if you look at the performance figures from Sebring there's about a seven per cent differential between us and them. But I believe [organising body] the ACO when they say they'd like to achieve parity between the petrol and diesel cars, and certainly they've made a small step in the right direction this year. If we didn't go to Le Mans then I suspect that commitment from the ACO would not be on the table. So perhaps this year has to be a slightly sacrificial year to hasten the parity between the diesels and the more traditional cars. It's a case of 'you come to the party and we'll adjust things accordingly', and that seems fair to me."

However grim the odds may appear, it is undeniably a superb marketing opportunity for what is advertised as the 'power, beauty and soul' of Aston Martin.

"This is all about the passion and the emotion around the car – and going motor racing has to be one element of that," says Richards. "We can't ignore the chance of returning to Le Mans on the 50th anniversary of the DBR1's victory. Looking back on life and saying 'I wish we'd done that' is not something I intend to do, and it's not something Aston Martin enthusiasts intend to do either. And who knows? Anything can happen in a 24-hour race. I do see this as an opportunity for us to showcase the ingenuity of British engineering talent. Going racing is still at the heart of what we do. Anyway, Aston Martin has always punched above its weight."

This being motor racing, the story is not without its controversy and feuding. This is down to the Lola connection. Is it an Aston Martin, or a Lola? Martin Birrane of Lola and Richards have, let's say, differing views on the pure pedigree of this car.



"I SEE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE THE INGENUITY OF BRITISH ENGINEERING TALENT"

But the official line is that the LMP1 is homologated as a Lola-Aston Martin and will be entered as such at Le Mans in June.

"This is pure semantics," says Richards, "and not really of any great interest to the world at large. The roots of the car are very clearly in the Lola, it is a Lola-homologated car, and has all the Lola crash structures and cockpit. But we have redesigned the car with Marek Reichman at [Aston Martin HQ] Gaydon using styling cues from the road cars."

Designer Julian Sole and his team at Lola's HQ at Huntingdon chose to produce a closed-cockpit car rather than an open sports car which has, in turn, underlined the Aston Martin image. "At the time the ACO decreed that from 2010 all LMP1 cars would be closed-cockpit," says Sole. "So we thought we'd better get on and do one. In fact the two options are pretty close in performance and, with our wind tunnel and CFD facilities, we've been able to do a lot of development on the aerodynamics. The rules are a little more in our favour now but, while diesel is still very much in its early development, the petrol cars have reached something of a plateau. But we're always learning and the car looks very promising."

A statement from Lola Cars makes mention of 'misrepresentation in the media' so, to keep the balance, it should be made clear that Birrane feels Aston has tried to hijack the car for its own purposes. The man who rescued Lola also claims that Aston has done "some cosmetic work on the car", while Prodrive counters that almost every body component has been changed. All is far from sweetness and light.

Following an Aston Martin DBS V12 up the M40 in my humble Renault Modus is a challenge, but one that has to be met in order to examine in more detail the design of this striking LMP1. ►



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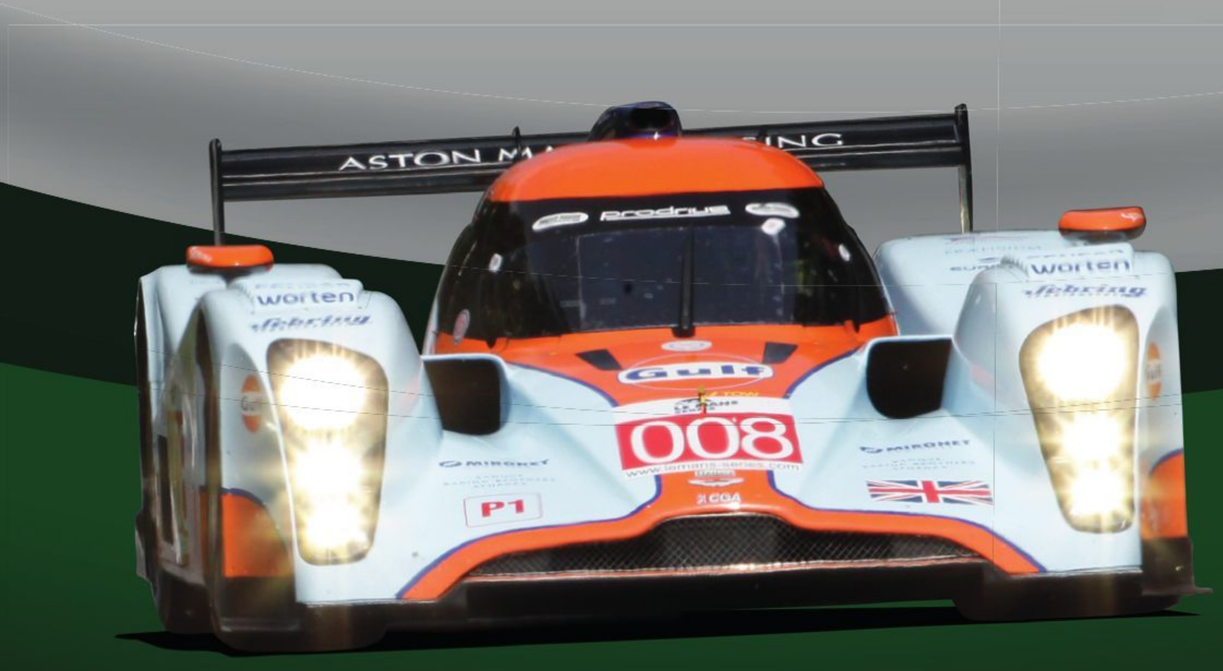
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AUGUST	9/11	AvD Oldtimer Grand Prix	Nurburgring
SEPTEMBER	27/29	Spa Six Hours	Spa
NOVEMBER	1/3	Formula 1 United States Grand Prix*	Circuit of the Americas
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The road ahead: Darren Turner's view from the Lola-Aston cockpit

Marek Reichman is director of design at Gaydon, where he has the enviable task of creating the next generation of road cars. In his 'spare time' he and his team were asked to draw the new racing car in just six weeks. They're not used to those kind of deadlines at Gaydon.

"It's been a challenge," smiles Reichman, surrounded by gleaming new concepts including his breathtaking Project One-77. "Racing forces you to make decisions much faster than us designers are normally accustomed to. For a road car it's about 18 months from the first sketch to selling the car. With the LMP1 car we had about six weeks. It was probably good for us and exciting to be involved in something like this. A very different kettle of fish.

"FOR ROAD CARS IT'S ABOUT 18 MONTHS FROM SKETCH TO ROAD. WITH THE LMP1 WE HAD SIX WEEKS"

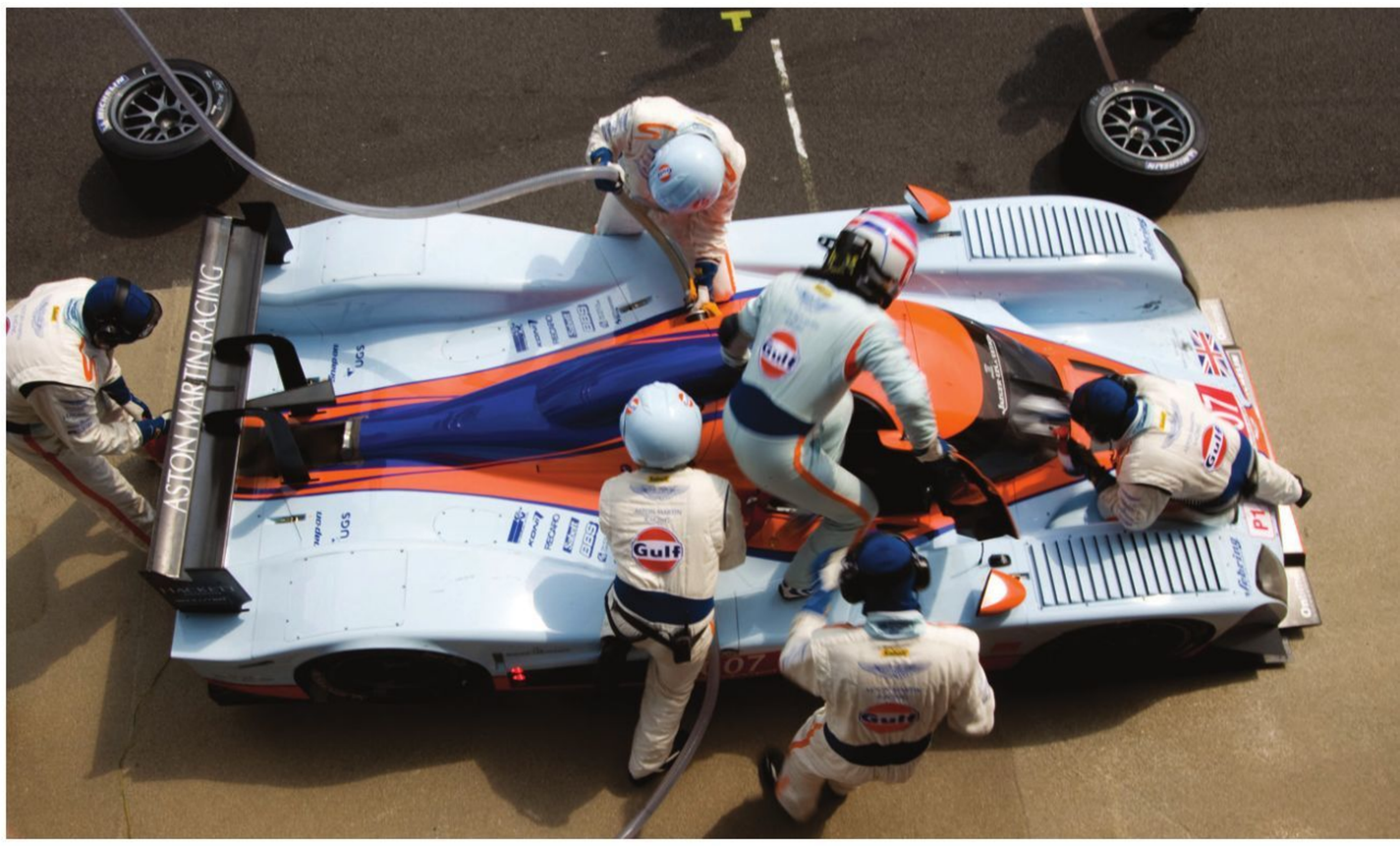
"We had to create the feel of our road cars and that's not easy within the regulations, but I think we've achieved that. We did a lot of work on the front end to give it that Aston Martin look. We've kept the famous copper-coated enamel badge, which is made for us by Thomas Fattorini in Birmingham and weighs 48 grams – so I guess they need to lose that weight from elsewhere…

"If you look at the LMP1 you can see the fluid lines of the road cars, and in the front and rear lights those are the design cues that come straight from the production cars. It's a subliminal thing, but you can see the Aston Martin in there. There's continuity between the surfaces, a natural flow, just as we try to achieve with the road cars. But of course time was tight so we made use of computer-generated models and computer graphics. You can't let colour dictate the design of surfaces, but with the Gulf colours we had a great scheme to work with and it's been exciting to create that Aston Martin look within the regulations. One of the best jobs in the world."

There is a huge amount of work to be done before the cars line up at La Sarthe. Early testing at Paul Ricard went well until one of the new cars was written off by Tomáš Enge, who had a huge high-speed shunt. They could have done without that. But the LMP1 showed pace and reliability, and then enjoyed a winning debut in the Le Mans Series in Barcelona. It's been a demanding schedule for team principal and technical director George Howard-Chappell, who joined Prodrive in 1998 as chief engineer on touring cars. His realistic aim is to be the first petrol car home at Le Mans.

"That is the target, but if you do the maths, you see the challenge," he says. "Last year there was a 17 per cent theoretical difference between petrol and diesel, and now that's down to seven per cent. Looking at the diesels (Audi, Peugeot) and the petrol (Acura) at Sebring, I'd say that was about right. The Audis and Peugeots in particular were very impressive, and of course these are full factory, well funded and well resourced programmes. It's a David and Goliath situation, but anything can happen at Le Mans and we're not deterred by the performance gap. We will need a clean run through the race – that's vital – and that's what we had when we won GT1. That's the way to do well at Le Mans and then who knows what might happen by the end of the race.

"We're a determined group, we've faced the odds before and we will come out fighting having done the best possible job with the resources we have. We know the car – the tub and a section of the front floor are from the Lola, but we've worked hard to make our own improvements elsewhere. I don't want to go into any of the contentious stuff but, if you look at the new car alongside last year's, you'll see there are substantial differences, some of which are more obvious than others." ▶



Rapid pitstop at Barcelona, scene of Lola-Aston's third-place finish on its Le Mans series debut

Aston Martin will soon be running a further 30-hour test in a renewed effort to establish the durability of its 2009 challenger.

"The old days of building a car and nursing it through the last few hours are gone," says Howard-Chappell. "These days we build them to be driven flat out for 24 hours. There's none of this 'use a few less revs' or 'keep it off the kerbs' – the cars are prepared for racing at their maximum performance level for the whole distance. It's a sprint. And this largely comes down to the testing process. Any weakness, wherever it may be, will be addressed. Every component – engine, transmission, suspension – will be tested so that when we get to the race we know we can run flat out. OK, we're not on the scale of Audi who seem to do a 30-hour test every couple of weeks, but we will be thoroughly prepared. And this year, of course, not everything is new.

The engine and gearbox are an evolution of what we ran in 2008 [as Charouz], so we have a lot of knowledge, and it's not like we're going there with something we don't understand."

There is only one British driver on the squad for Le Mans. His name is Darren Turner and he is impatient to get his hands on an LMP1 car. Apart from blasting across aerodromes as a McLaren-Mercedes Formula 1 test driver, this will be the fastest he's ever travelled in a racing car.

"I just can't wait to get stuck in with the Audis and the Peugeots," he says, looking pumped up for the fight already. "Alright, it's a tall order, but if we get wet weather then maybe we can get close to them. The test at Ricard went well, the team has done a fantastic job in a short time and the car feels good. It's a great opportunity for me – I've won [at Le Mans] in GT1, but the LMP1 car is something else again, a big step up from the DBR9.

"Le Mans is all about speed – 200mph plus – and I could only ever get the GT1 up to about 197mph. It always frustrated me! Now it's going to be over 200 and if you're not comfortable at those speeds you shouldn't be doing it. But there are more g-forces, especially through the Porsche Curves, so I've stepped up the fitness, ticked that box in advance. Those corners are very quick, like threading cotton through the eye of a needle, and the barriers are pretty close. That's the great thing about Le Mans: it's a real road-racing circuit. That run down to Indianapolis, through the trees and on to Arnage is a fantastic experience for a driver.

"This year, going there with Aston Martin on the anniversary of the 1959 win and in the Gulf colours, that's really special. I'm not totally comfortable in the car – we've had to compromise to make room for Harold Primat who's over six feet tall – but as soon as you go racing you forget those little niggles. In sports cars you're working with your team-mate, not trying to beat him."

Turner is, I suspect, a racing driver with a sense of history. "I took the DBS V12 road car down to the New Forest for a romantic weekend – there's something about Aston Martins, even cruising along on the road. It feels like a good year, I'm earning my living from the sport I love, and it's been a challenge to get where I am. Now I'm in the LMP1 car for the season. OK, F1 is fantastic and I would've loved the lifestyle, but I've been paid to test grand prix cars and I never imagined that when I started karting as a teenager. I remember when I first tested the Jordan at Santa Pod, Eddie sent me a cheque for £500 – I thought about framing it, but I was skint at the time. Now, here I am, going to Le Mans with an LMP1 Aston Martin."

"LE MANS IS ABOUT SPEED. I COULD ONLY EVER GET THE GT1 UP TO 197MPH. IT ALWAYS FRUSTRATED ME"

Back in the summer of 1959 only 12 cars were classified at the end of the Vingt-Quatre Heures du Mans, with Aston Martin celebrating a remarkable one-two. The Ferraris were faster, but they flattered to deceive. Tactics and reliability won the day, Aston's hare Stirling Moss having set off like a rocket at the start to lure the Ferraris into chasing too hard. Half a century later the race has changed beyond recognition and no such sacrifices are likely to break the Audis and the Peugeots. But this is Le Mans. Anything can happen. ■

Tim Samways
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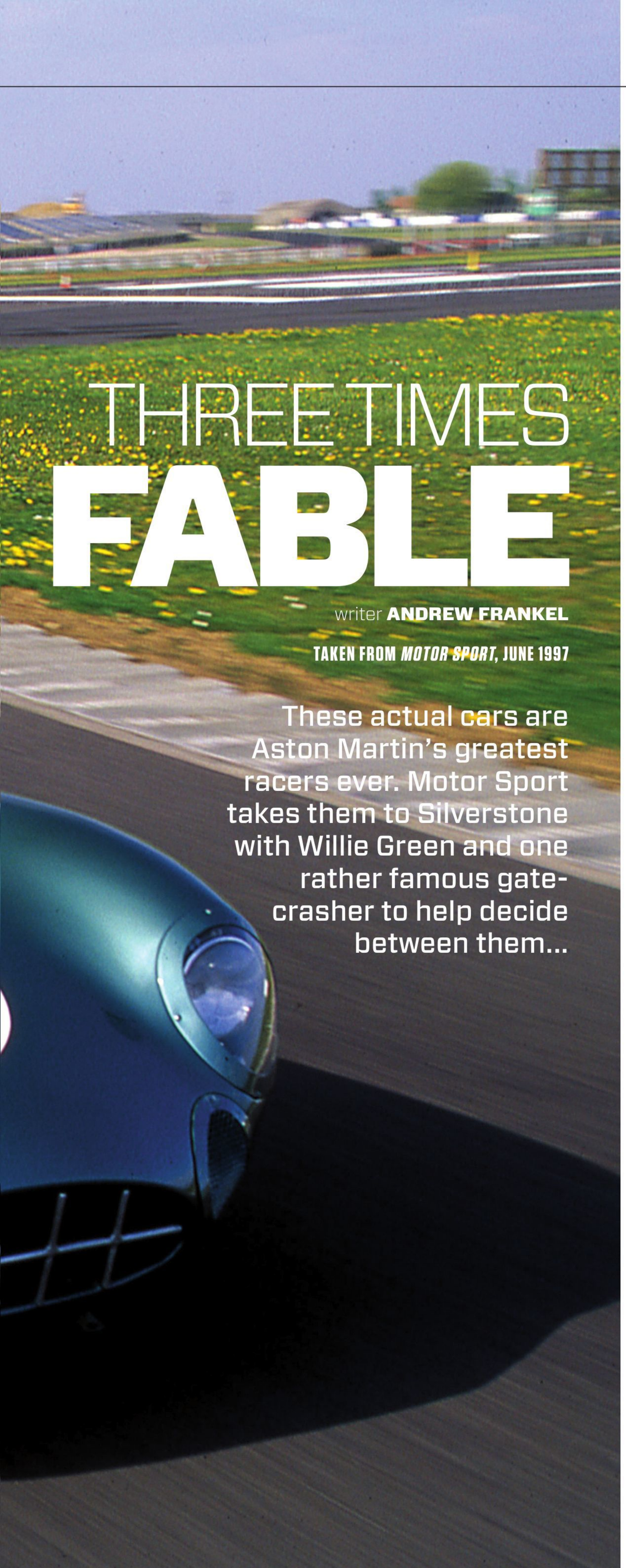


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2 VEV
5
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497



THREE TIMES FABLE

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JUNE 1997

These actual cars are Aston Martin's greatest racers ever. Motor Sport takes them to Silverstone with Willie Green and one rather famous gate-crasher to help decide between them...

We coasted up the pit lane, the Aston Martin DBR1 and I, engine now silent. Helmet in the passenger seat, I listened to the utter silence in my ears that followed 10 laps of unsilenced mayhem as surely as night follows day. This very car won six of the DBR1's eight world championship victories including, of course, the 1959 Le Mans 24 Hours.

I parked it next to the DB3S, registration 62 EMU. It saw the Le Mans podium too, the year before the DBR1, with a fine and fighting second place despite its then five-year-old design. The visual comparison between Aston Martin's two finest sports-racing cars is utterly compelling. Yet now, no-one crowds around either of them. Everyone is standing beside the DB4GT Zagato: Jim Clark's immortal 2 VEV.

"Can I have a go?" came a voice from the throng. On occasions such as this, it is not uncommon for an on-looker to ask if a photograph can be taken with them sitting in the car but the request not simply to climb aboard but to drive away too, around Silverstone, called for more nerve than I'd imagined one man could possess. This I continued to think, right up to the moment I identified the voice and then recognised the face from which it was coming.

It was Damon Hill.

I struggled to decide whether this request said more about Hill or about these, the three greatest Astons of all. His father had not driven any of them and Damon was at Silverstone to test his rapidly improving Arrows-Yamaha Formula 1 car. Yet he had taken time out of his presumably not slack schedule to seek us out on the Stowe circuit and ask if it was all right for him to do a few laps in the Astons.

We concluded that it probably was. He drove the Zagato as you'd expect, swiftly but without drama, returning to the pits genuinely surprised at the speed of this 1961 GT car. Then he slotted himself into the DBR1. Later, in the now sadly characterless Green Man pub, we wondered how long it had been since a current Formula 1 World Champion could have been seen sliding a powerful sports-racer, or anything save their own race car for that matter, around Silverstone, just for the hell of it. We concluded that it must have been years. All I can tell you is the sight was more wonderful than any words resident in my head can describe. Damon seemed pleased too, returning the DBR1, eyebrows raised and observing with a breathless grin: "It's bloody quick, isn't it?" Coming from someone merely minutes removed from a Formula 1 car, this was indeed rare praise.

But then such cars deserve it. Individual slices of Britain's motor racing heritage rarely come thicker than these, and as all three were hurled around Silverstone and spat sideways out of the corners, ▶

straight-six motors howling up to their red lines, each of us was aware that this was indeed a special moment.

Much of the reason for this was the man doing most of the driving. Willie Green has been Britain's pre-eminent classic car racer for a generation and, while officially retired, has been coaxed into driving the fearsome Alfa Romeo 158 Alfetta at Monaco. Willie is not simply an extraordinary driver able to blend almost artistic delicacy behind the wheel with total commitment, he also knows what he likes. Which, in the case of cars, is a large amount of power running through skinny rear tyres.

The Zagato was always going to be first out on to the track. Photographs of Jim Clark slithering around Goodwood in this car have lived in my head for as long as I have had memory and, now that it was mine for a while, I lacked the power to delay our meeting any longer. Besides, with its beautifully presented and trimmed cabin, map holders and ashtray, it seemed an entirely easier way to introduce myself to racing Astons than to attempt either of the starkly brutal open racers.

I wonder whether you will be pleased or disappointed to know that 2 VEV is a remarkably easy car to drive. Anyone with a brain and a driving licence could climb aboard, twist the key, select a gear and rumble off into the sunset. I was surprised. The clutch is heavy and a little sharp, but so laden with torque is its gorgeous 3.7-litre twin-cam 12-plug engine that getting going is never a problem.

The driving experience is dominated by that engine. Despite tinfoil-thin 18-gauge aluminium bodywork that dents as you touch it, the Zagato never feels like a particularly lithe, light car; yet with that motor pouring on the power in one solid shove from 2000 to 6000rpm, it still feels mighty quick. So broad is this band that, in fact, its four widely spaced gear ratios cope admirably, the lever swapping between them with that particular breed of well-oiled precision that is uniquely and unmistakably Aston Martin.

It is, however, not the car I'd imagined. What I thought would prove a pure racer with only a visual doffing of the cap to the niceties of road cars turns out to be a truly sophisticated GT car that would prove as at home barrelling down to the South of France on a sunny day as negotiating the tight turns of the Stowe circuit.

Willie concurs: "The Zagato really is a bit of a compromise as a racing car, being, as it was, a road car which was converted for use on the track. The factory, in fact, was very successful but there were problems. The chassis was never as good as that of a Ferrari 250GTO. The engines were probably a bit more powerful and they certainly had more torque.

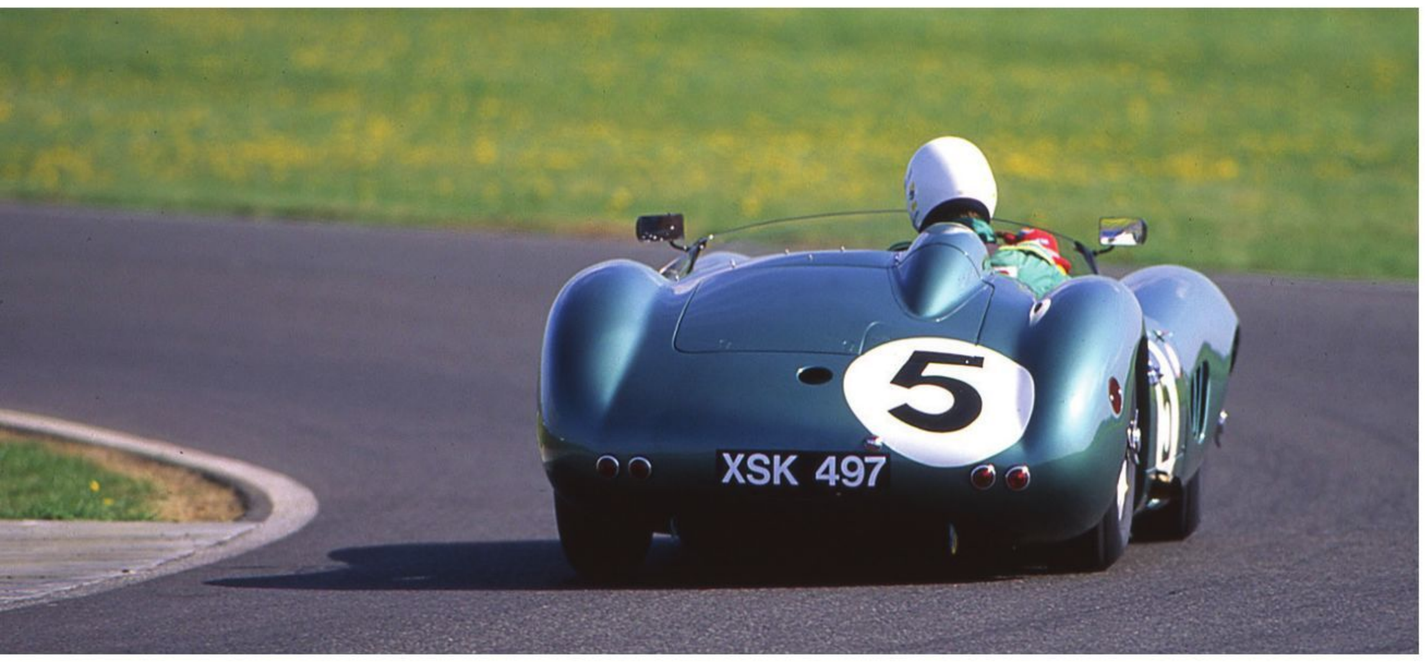
"Even so, it's helped by its Dunlop racing tyres for track work. This car's been set up with a considerable amount of suspension offset that it would not have had when new and it has rather



"PHOTOGRAPHS OF JIM CLARK SLITHERING ROUND GOODWOOD IN THIS CAR LIVE IN MY MEMORY"







more grip at the back, making it push into understeer. I'd like to try it with the same size tyres on at each end, too. I remember those shots of it when it was racing in perfect four-wheel drifts. You couldn't do that in this car as it is."

And so it is. Hurtle up to a corner in the Zagato, note its fine brakes and, as you turn the wheel, you can feel the nose fighting shy of the apex. It can be driven around easily enough with a quick lift followed by a bootful of throttle, a technique which will bring the nose straight back into line, lift a front wheel and kick the tail out. Yet rather than being a natural state, it is one which is to be striven for. It seems scarcely credible that the Zagato and DB3S competed at Le Mans 24-hour races separated by a mere three years. The explanation is that while the sports car was right at the end of its natural life, the GT was just setting out. Conceptually, there is the thick end of a decade between them. As a car to pore over, 62 EMU is the most fascinating of the lot. Though the DBR1 is authentic, it is also an actively campaigned racer, immaculately prepared and maintained in perfect condition; the Zagato has retired from racing now and sparkles, fresh from a total rebuild after an appalling road accident in 1993.

The DB3S is not like this. You will see the 62 EMU registration plate on one of the two DB3S coupés that crashed at Le Mans in 1954 and also the open 3S that came second the following year. However, it now seems that not only were these two entirely different cars but also neither is the car you see before you now, the sports car having been destroyed in a testing accident at the end of 1956 which killed the promising newcomer Mark Lund.

This, however, takes nothing away from the 62 EMU you see here: it is unarguably the car that drove to second place at Le Mans in 1958. From its wonderfully worn interior to its factory-standard engine, the DB3S has a special aura of originality about it and you know that, as you slip behind the wheel and adjust yourself around the tight driving position, the tactile sensations you are now receiving are no different from those experienced by the Whitehead brothers during their epic drive.

How tiny it feels! Latterly we have associated the marque with large cars but the DB3S feels smaller than a Healey. You feel exposed, vulnerable, and wonder what racing for nearly 24 hours in the rain, as this car did at Le Mans, must have felt like. It is beyond imagination. Today, however, the sun shines. Flick on the ignition, press the starter, pull out the twin coil switches and prod the accelerator. With a bang the 3-litre straight six goes to work. This engine, like that in the DBR1, grew from the twin-cam motor Bentley designed for Lagonda during the war, albeit changed beyond almost all recognition. In current form, the DBR1 is probably kicking out all of 300bhp, the 3S more likely about 230bhp. It is enough.

There is a temptation to underestimate the DB3S, especially if its more successful, quicker ▶

Top: despite less power, DB3S is a delight on the track. Above: DBR1 is the outright racer, with both engine and gearbox working better than in 1959. Left: Zagato was shaded by GTOs but Jim Clark wrung the absolute most from it

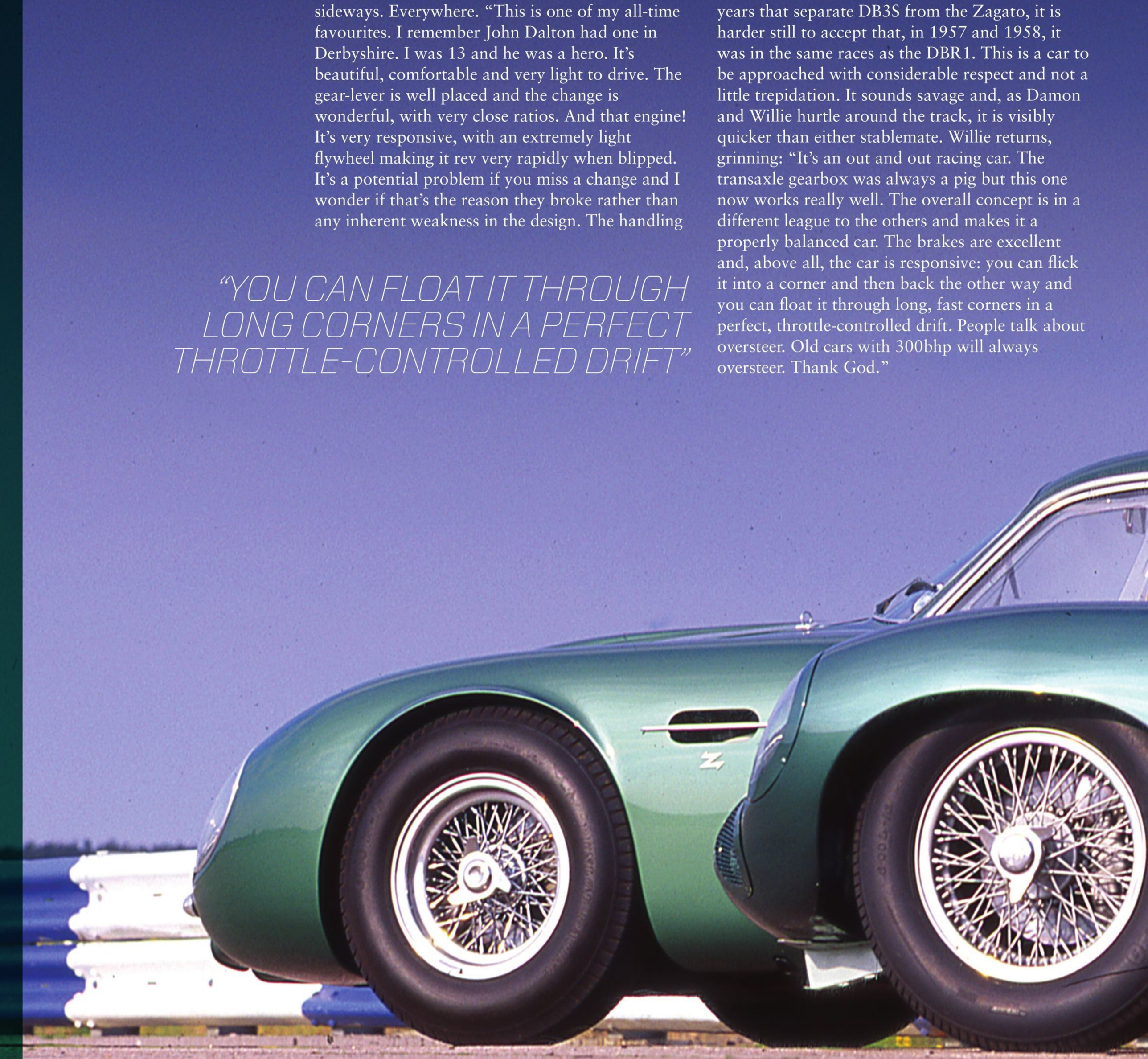
and more visually dramatic kid brother is in the same paddock. There is no justification for patronising it so. The DB3S is a jewel, and a startlingly quick one at that. Moreover, for a racer, it is a delightfully easy car to drive: the 'box has synchromesh to complement its lever's lovely and precise action while the engine, another Aston study in torque, pours it on from 2500rpm to the 5500rpm we are using as a limit today.

Willie is in his element, driving it ever so slightly sideways. Everywhere. "This is one of my all-time favourites. I remember John Dalton had one in Derbyshire. I was 13 and he was a hero. It's beautiful, comfortable and very light to drive. The gear-lever is well placed and the change is wonderful, with very close ratios. And that engine! It's very responsive, with an extremely light flywheel making it rev very rapidly when blipped. It's a potential problem if you miss a change and I wonder if that's the reason they broke rather than any inherent weakness in the design. The handling is very stable, with a lot of castor helping stability on the straights."

"YOU CAN FLOAT IT THROUGH LONG CORNERS IN A PERFECT THROTTLE-CONTROLLED DRIFT"

Unlike the Zagato, it turns in to corners beautifully, rolling a little but staying neutral until instructed otherwise by the throttle. It feels a little soft but will drift and slide in total security until the tank runs dry. And it sounds wonderful. With the sole exception of the brakes, which need bleeding, it's a car to spoil your senses rotten.

But if it seems hard to picture the three short years that separate DB3S from the Zagato, it is harder still to accept that, in 1957 and 1958, it was in the same races as the DBR1. This is a car to be approached with considerable respect and not a little trepidation. It sounds savage and, as Damon and Willie hurtle around the track, it is visibly quicker than either stablemate. Willie returns, grinning: "It's an out and out racing car. The transaxle gearbox was always a pig but this one now works really well. The overall concept is in a different league to the others and makes it a properly balanced car. The brakes are excellent and, above all, the car is responsive: you can flick it into a corner and then back the other way and you can float it through long, fast corners in a perfect, throttle-controlled drift. People talk about oversteer. Old cars with 300bhp will always oversteer. Thank God."



Its performance today remains breathtaking. It takes me rather longer to find my way around the uncompromising five-speed dog 'box, but soon the huge central rev-counter is flicking up to 6700rpm in gear after gear. You may wonder if, say, a Ferrari F355 might keep up with it in a straight line. It would, in fact, stand no chance whatsoever.

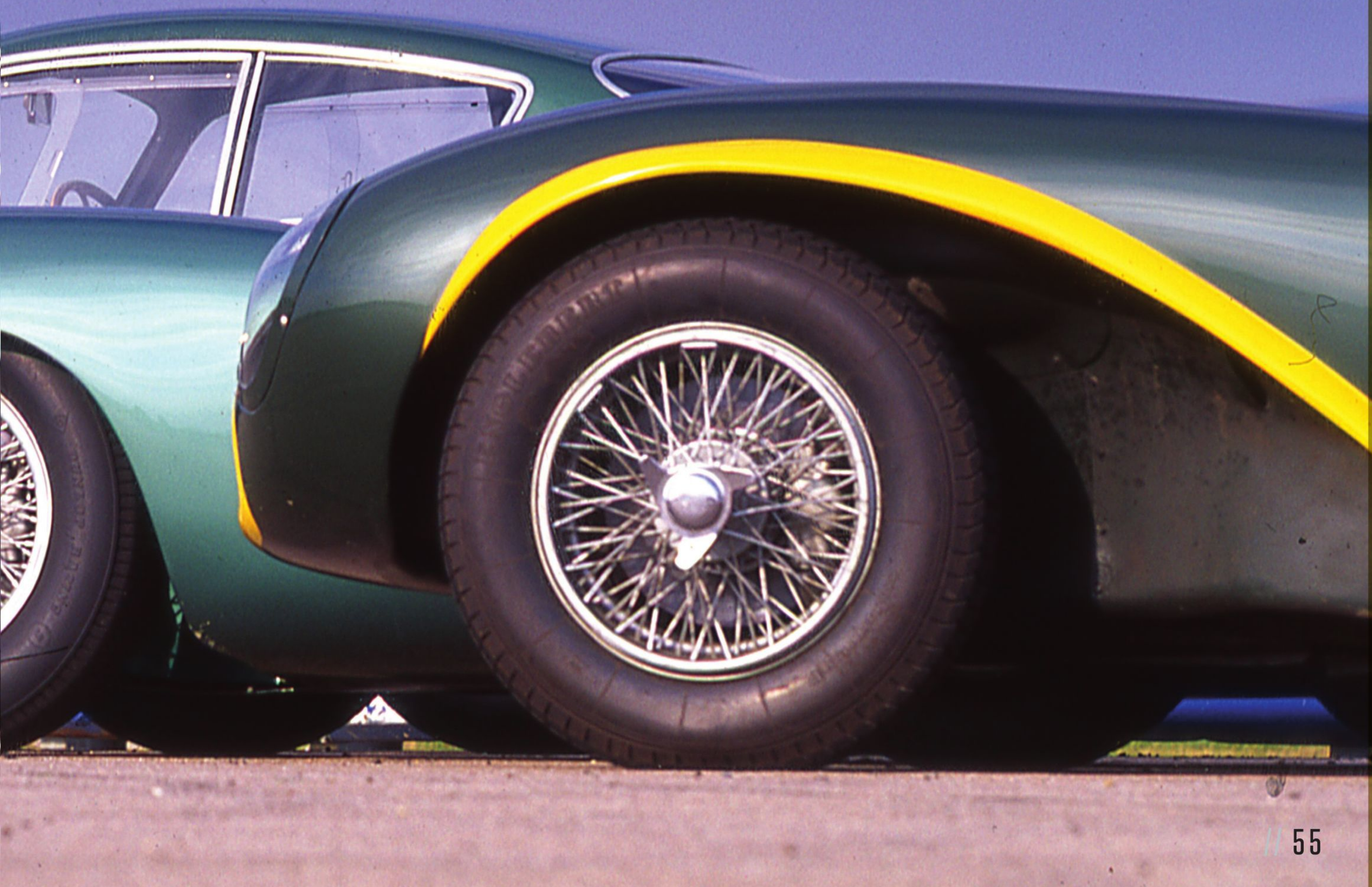
For me, though, its performance brings its limitations, particularly here. It is a car that slides at will and, it would seem, in total security but I would be lying if I said I do not feel at least slightly cowed by hurling around such a valuable and important chapter in this country's motor racing history. It is my first drive in a Le Mans winner and the experience is, frankly, humbling. It is not a car, like the DB3S, that you can simply climb aboard and steer sideways on the first lap. It is a car that's fond of self-determination and it takes time to log on to its ways; more time, to be honest, than we have. Which means that even though I can at least drive it with confidence and without fear, by the time we have to stop, I know I am still in the steep part of the learning curve.

You drive home slowly after a day like this, modern road car doing what it does best: transporting. Willie's words, as we had plunged into a pint after it was all over, rang loud in my head. 'The Zagato is the one I'd drive on the road, the DBR1 is the quickest and the one I'd choose to race, while the DB3S is the one to which I have the greatest emotional tie and I remember from my childhood with most fondness."

I think I'd go along with that. Of the three, only the DBR1 had come close to what I'd expected. The civility of the Zagato took me entirely by surprise; it charmed without frightening, proved swift, but ultimately would be more at home blasting across continents than around a tight racetrack like this.

Like the Zagato, the DBR1 had been driven to the circuit by a man braver than I. It was all I had hoped; brutish yet elegant, manically quick yet eminently controllable, a thoroughbred racing car from one of the greatest stables of all.

And yet, sitting here, days later, it is the little DB3S to which my mind continues to return. It was a car which not only reeked most of its personal history but also one which suited my driving abilities, sadly modest by the standards of Messrs Green and Hill. On the way to Silverstone that day, I had worried about the DB3S and how I might write about it. I feared its charms would be rendered invisible by the speed and glamour of other two. How wrong I was. As I headed back down the M40 to London I knew already that, if life were different and the lottery worth playing, the DB3S would be the one I would have. ■



WORKING WITH JOHN WYER

The legendary team chief had a fearsome reputation, but Doreen Green was better placed than most to judge his methods

writer **GORDON CRUICKSHANK**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, OCTOBER 2013

One of my regular correspondents is Michael Green, whose late father Dick was an Aston Martin race mechanic through the 1950s. Michael has a ton of his dad's tales to tell, but when he told me his mother Doreen was due over from the States, for the Aston celebrations, I had to meet her. Why? She also worked at Aston Martin, as John Wyer's secretary.

We met at a Heathrow hotel, not far from Feltham where this now 82-year-old went to work as a young girl in 1949.

"David Brown had just bought Aston. He had a passion for racing and desperately wanted to compete, but the board [of the family manufacturing group] wouldn't let him. So he was determined to go racing with his own cars. We built the road cars just so we could race, like Ferrari. But early on, if we built three-quarters of a car in a week that was going some."

At first Doreen looked after designer Frank Feeley; then a man called Wyer was added to her duties. "There was no competition department as such – we were racing the DB2 road cars – so John was in the experimental department."

Wyer was famously strict, as Doreen recalls. "He never had a cross word with me, but I heard him telling off others… You just didn't make mistakes. You were fine if you did it right – and you did it quick."

Wyer also required absolute punctuality. Dick Green, who joined Aston in '51, was one of the instigators of the famous episode when at their hotel the mechanics trapped the drivers in their rooms with heavy furniture so they were late for a fuming Wyer's 8am roll-call – and Roy Salvadori escaped down the drainpipe. More revealingly, Dick went in a Lagonda to collect Wyer from his house for a race.

"John came down grim-faced and said 'Let's go'. Dick said 'Where's Tottie?'
'She's late. Let's go.'
'But here she is now.'
'You heard me. Go.' And Dick had to drive off, leaving John's wife standing there. He was furious because she was late. You had to do what he wanted, do it right and be on time."

While Wyer ran the racing, Professor Eberan von Eberhorst arrived. "David Brown wanted the Prof to design a pure racer, the DB3, and there was tension all the time between the Prof and John. John didn't like what the Prof was doing, and Frank was stuck in the wings. He didn't like the DB3 – thought it was the ugliest car ever. And it was a monster to work on. The mechanics hated it – you had to take the whole body off to work on it."

Eberhorst was not very popular, even with Doreen. "He would dictate in his broken English and got annoyed when I typed it up and corrected it. Once body-building switched to Newport Pagnell he moved to the drawing office so there was much less tangling. A relief for both of us."

Von Eberhorst had an eye for a lady. "The mechanics and drivers used to play tricks on each other," says Doreen with demure glee in her eye. "At one continental race the Prof had an attractive lady in his ▶

"DAVID BROWN HAD A PASSION FOR RACING. WE BUILT ROAD CARS SO WE COULD RACE, LIKE FERRARI"



Left: Reg Parnell, David Brown, Carroll Shelby, at 1959 Le Mans.
Above: Wyer, centre, with Parnell and Stirling Moss at Nassau races



"CARROLL SHELBY ALWAYS WORE TASSELLED SLIP-ON SHOES. SHELBY SHOES, WE CALLED THEM"

room – but the mechanics had attached a bell wire to the mattress so all evening chambermaids kept knocking at the door…"

Doreen went to races and test sessions, and once Reg Parnell put her behind the wheel of a DB3S and talked her up to 100mph. She was only a learner at the time. Then they took the new DB3S coupés to Silverstone.

"Roy [Salvadori] got in and was so tall he couldn't see through the screen, so he threw the cushion out and raced on a rolled-up mac. David wanted the coupés because we needed more speed on the straights, and we took models over to Vickers to test in the wind tunnel." Interesting point, since the coupés proved seriously unstable at Le Mans.

Of course Doreen knew the drivers well. "Racing then was just a group of enthusiasts, and we never had Monday morning blues. I had a fancy tea set in my office so everyone would be in there. Peter Collins was my favourite – full of fun, always had a smile and a funny story. John called him 'the boy'. Then in '54 this lanky fellow strolled in. 'I want to see the boss. I want to go racing.' Carroll Shelby. He said he was going to do some local races. I asked if he'd put in entries, and he said no, he was just going to turn up… So I helped him sort out some entries, and got him some starting money and sponsorship. It all seemed a bit vague – two Texans were going to buy him a car, but soon he was driving one of ours, a white DB3S, and Dick looked after him when he wasn't on team duties."

At the end of '54 Carroll brought Doreen a thank-you gift. "A big box of Maltesers – but he sat on my desk and ate most of them." And those famous dungarees? "He sometimes wore them – but he always wore tasselled slip-on shoes. Shelby shoes, we called them. He and Dick went around a lot together and we stayed friends till he died."

In 1955 Dick Green went to be competitions chief at MG, but later reconnected with Aston in the US. His time there with Ken Miles, ill-fated drug runner Tony Parravano, privateer Joe Lubin and entrepreneur Kjell Qvale merits a story of its own. I'll come back to that, with the amazing tale of the motor club in a German POW camp...

But I'll let Doreen finish with the Aston Martin boat. "David Brown liked boats, and he asked Frank Feeley to design one with an Aston engine, which we built. When they came back from testing I asked how it went. They all burst out laughing – it had sunk! So Aston didn't go into the boat business.

"We never knew what David Brown would do. The board was not happy; the other companies made money, and we spent it. We were his hobby."

I left Doreen heading for AMOC Brands Hatch and Kensington Gardens. Though there's now a San Franciscan twang in her voice, Aston Martin is still in her blood. ■

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At first Doreen looked after designer Frank Feeley; then a man called Wyer was added to her duties. "There was no competition department as such – we were racing the DB2 road cars – so John was in the experimental department."

Wyer was famously strict, as Doreen recalls. "He never had a cross word with me, but I heard him telling off others… You just didn't make mistakes. You were fine if you did it right – and you did it quick."

Wyer also required absolute punctuality. Dick Green, who joined Aston in '51, was one of the instigators of the famous episode when at their hotel the mechanics trapped the drivers in their rooms with heavy furniture so they were late for a fuming Wyer's 8am roll-call – and Roy Salvadori escaped down the drainpipe. More revealingly, Dick went in a Lagonda to collect Wyer from his house for a race.

"John came down grim-faced and said 'Let's go'. Dick said 'Where's Tottie?'
'She's late. Let's go.'
'But here she is now.'
'You heard me. Go.' And Dick had to drive off, leaving John's wife standing there. He was furious because she was late. You had to do what he wanted, do it right and be on time."

While Wyer ran the racing, Professor Eberan von Eberhorst arrived. "David Brown wanted the Prof to design a pure racer, the DB3, and there was tension all the time between the Prof and John. John didn't like what the Prof was doing, and Frank was stuck in the wings. He didn't like the DB3 – thought it was the ugliest car ever. And it was a monster to work on. The mechanics hated it – you had to take the whole body off to work on it."

Eberhorst was not very popular, even with Doreen. "He would dictate in his broken English and got annoyed when I typed it up and corrected it. Once body-building switched to Newport Pagnell he moved to the drawing office so there was much less tangling. A relief for both of us."

Von Eberhorst had an eye for a lady. "The mechanics and drivers used to play tricks on each other," says Doreen with demure glee in her eye. "At one continental race the Prof had an attractive lady in his ▶

"DAVID BROWN HAD A PASSION FOR RACING. WE BUILT ROAD CARS SO WE COULD RACE, LIKE FERRARI"



Left: Reg Parnell, David Brown, Carroll Shelby, at 1959 Le Mans.
Below: Wyer, centre, with Parnell and Stirling Moss at Nassau races



"CARROLL SHELBY ALWAYS WORE TASSELLED SLIP-ON SHOES. SHELBY SHOES, WE CALLED THEM"

room – but the mechanics had attached a bell wire to the mattress so all evening chambermaids kept knocking at the door…"

Doreen went to races and test sessions, and once Reg Parnell put her behind the wheel of a DB3S and talked her up to 100mph. She was only a learner at the time. Then they took the new DB3S coupés to Silverstone.

"Roy [Salvadori] got in and was so tall he couldn't see through the screen, so he threw the cushion out and raced on a rolled-up mac. David wanted the coupés because we needed more speed on the straights, and we took models over to Vickers to test in the wind tunnel." Interesting point, since the coupés proved seriously unstable at Le Mans.

Of course Doreen knew the drivers well. "Racing then was just a group of enthusiasts, and we never had Monday morning blues. I had a fancy tea set in my office so everyone would be in there. Peter Collins was my favourite – full of fun, always had a smile and a funny story. John called him 'the boy'. Then in '54 this lanky fellow strolled in. 'I want to see the boss. I want to go racing.' Carroll Shelby. He said he was going to do some local races. I asked if he'd put in entries, and he said no, he was just going to turn up… So I helped him sort out some entries, and got him some starting money and sponsorship. It all seemed a bit vague – two Texans were going to buy him a car, but soon he was driving one of ours, a white DB3S, and Dick looked after him when he wasn't on team duties."

At the end of '54 Carroll brought Doreen a thank-you gift. "A big box of Maltesers – but he sat on my desk and ate most of them." And those famous dungarees? "He sometimes wore them – but he always wore tasselled slip-on shoes. Shelby shoes, we called them. He and Dick went around a lot together and we stayed friends till he died."

In 1955 Dick Green went to be competitions chief at MG, but later reconnected with Aston in the US. His time there with Ken Miles, ill-fated drug runner Tony Parravano, privateer Joe Lubin and entrepreneur Kjell Qvale merits a story of its own. I'll come back to that, with the amazing tale of the motor club in a German POW camp...

But I'll let Doreen finish with the Aston Martin boat. "David Brown liked boats, and he asked Frank Feeley to design one with an Aston engine, which we built. When they came back from testing I asked how it went. They all burst out laughing – it had sunk! So Aston didn't go into the boat business.

"We never knew what David Brown would do. The board was not happy; the other companies made money, and we spent it. We were his hobby."

I left Doreen heading for AMOC Brands Hatch and Kensington Gardens. Though there's now a San Franciscan twang in her voice, Aston Martin is still in her blood. ■

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"A GOOD CAR OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS"

JOHN WYER

The DBR4 could have made Aston Martin a grand prix winner, but its delayed debut rendered it obsolete

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**
photographer **MATT HOWELL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, AUGUST 2009



The winter of 1957-58 must have been an interesting time for John Wyer and David Brown, the men charged with determining the future direction of Aston Martin's racing endeavours. Some might even say that, for the first time in its competition history, Aston Martin actually had a nice problem with which to grapple.

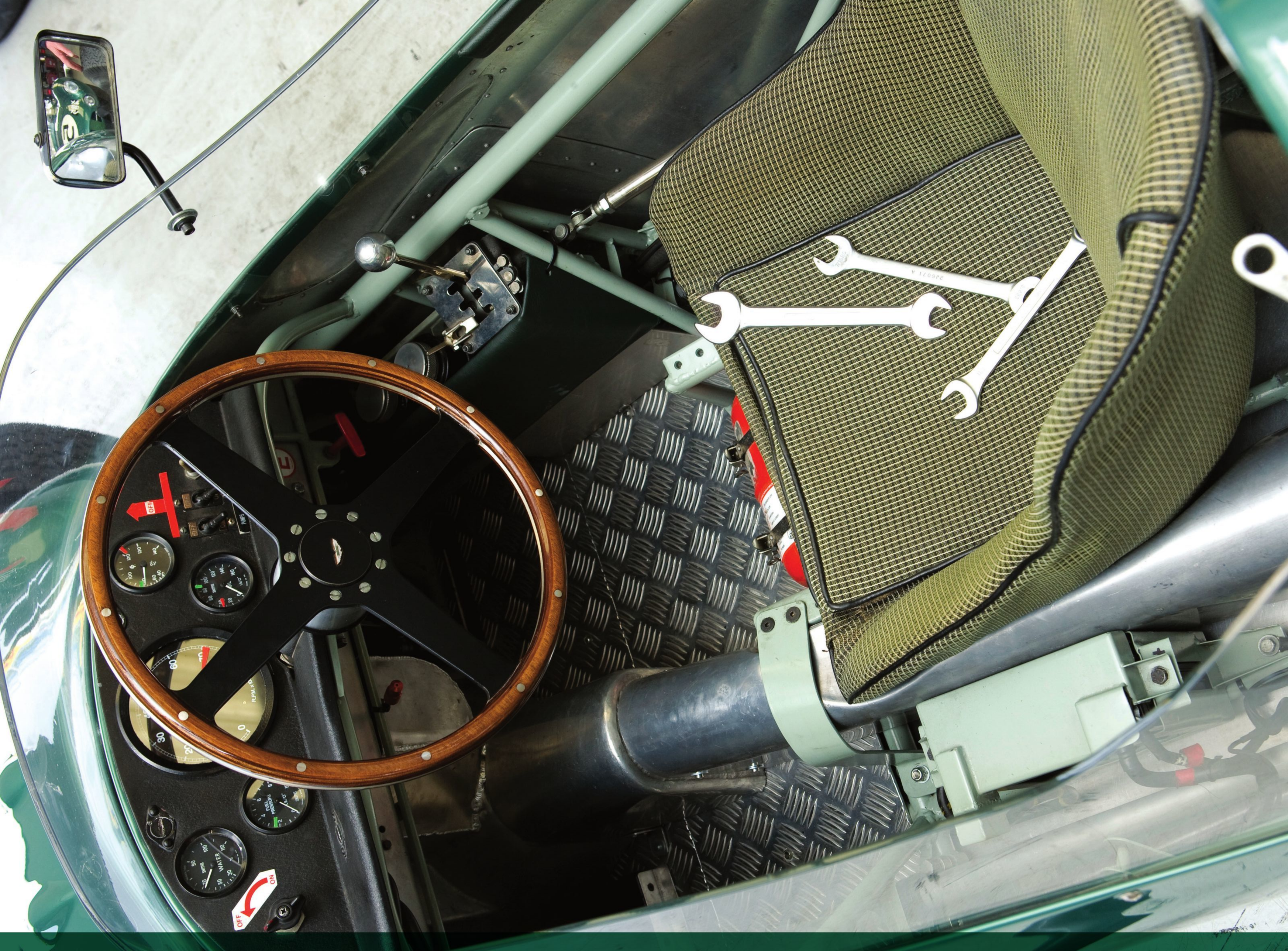
Tradition said it should devote all its efforts to sports car racing. The DB3S had been one of those agonising nearly-but-not-quite cars, but the still-fresh DBR1 was at last showing signs of realising the promise it had contained from the start. The opportunity of at last claiming the world sports car championship from arch-rivals Ferrari was real and evident.

Then again, the forthcoming season also offered the chance for Aston Martin at last to reach the top rung of the racing ladder. It had just built its first proper grand prix car, the DBR4/250, and early testing suggested it to be at least a match for the two class acts of the era, the Maserati 250F which had just won Fangio his fifth world title, and Vanwall which had won three times in 1957 and would in '58 become Britain's first Formula 1 constructors champion.

Which way to jump? Should Aston follow its history in sports cars, pursue an unknown future in F1 despite the fact that in the first seven seasons of the World Championship there had still not been a single GP win for a British car, or attempt both? Resources – or lack thereof – ruled out a two-handed approach, so it was to be sports cars or single-seaters. In the end, and probably understandably, Aston chose the devil it knew.

Quite how much Wyer and Brown would come to rue their decision would be interesting to know, though in the late Chris Nixon's *Racing With The David Brown Aston Martins*, Wyer does accurately estimate the impact of the choice on the potential of the DBR4 as 'fatal'. ►




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ON
WATER
FUEL PRESS

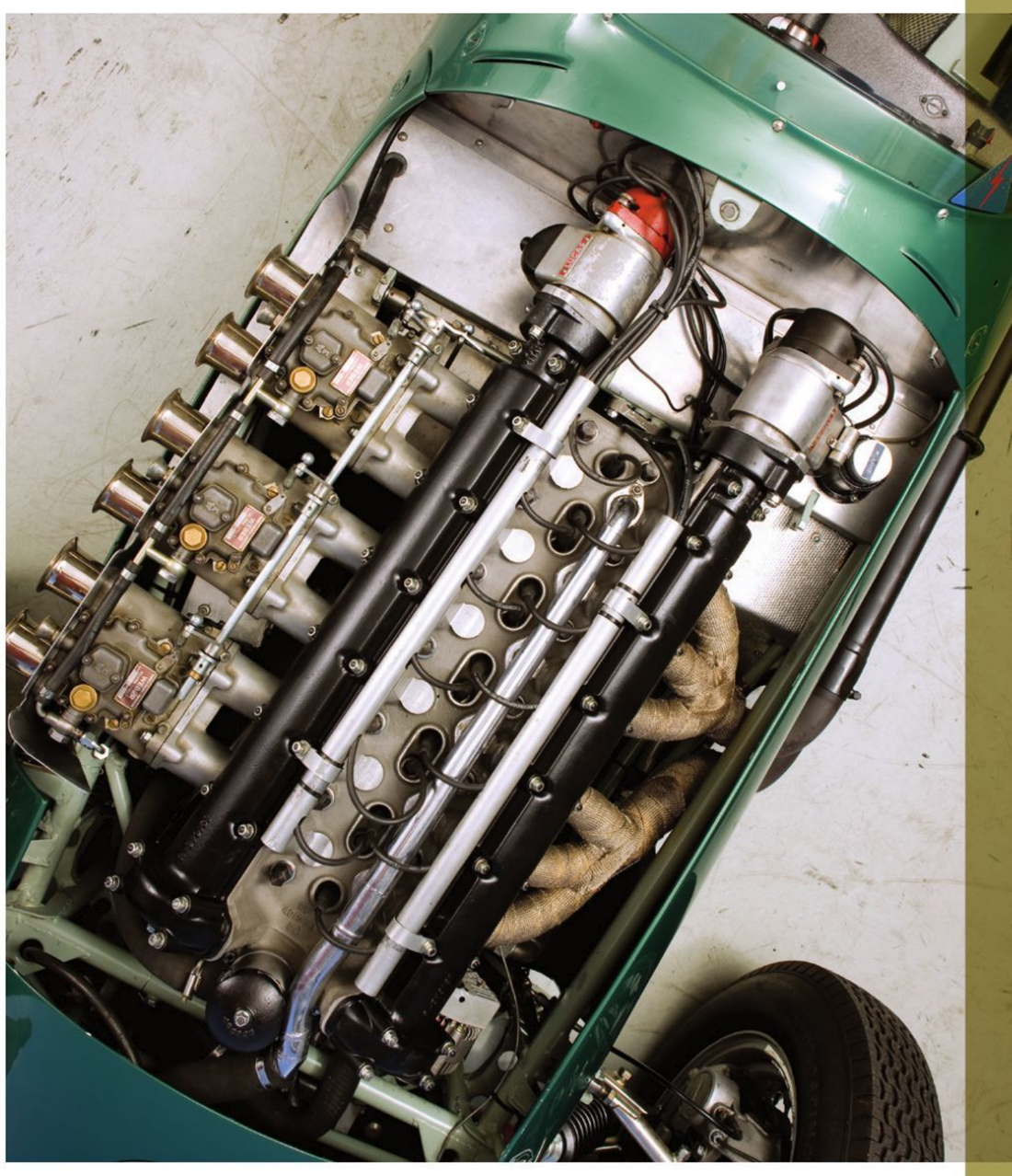
While the DBR1 failed to offer consistent opposition to Ferrari's new Testa Rossa in 1958, the DBR4 sat under a sheet during a season that would change the face of racing cars for all time. True, the front-engined hierarchy held sway – thanks in no small part to the outstanding contribution made by the combination of Tony Brooks, Stirling Moss and Vanwall – but by the close of play all bar the most blinkered of constructors knew horse-before-the-cart architecture had had it. The DBR4 went from being a state-of-the-art racer to something close to obsolescence all in one short season during which it turned not a single wheel in anger.

Of course we are all brilliant with hindsight on our side, and the decision not to race it in 1958 now seems nothing like as curious as the decision to wheel it out instead for '59. By then it must have seemed clear as day that the little mid-engined Coopers would run rings around it.

Ted Cutting's design for the DBR4 was entirely conventional, conservative even. The chassis was of spaceframe construction, as was the norm in the era, and followed closely the principles of the DBR1 sports car. Front suspension was by wishbones and coil springs as you'd expect, while the traditional De Dion rear end (mounted behind the rear axle line instead of ahead like the Maserati 250F) was sprung by torsion bars. The motor was the same twin-cam two-valve straight six developed for the DBR1, but stroked down from three litres to 2.5 to comply with the regulations of the day. Even its Girling disc brakes were no more than you'd expect from a newly developed grand prix car of the era.

Interestingly – and embarrassingly given the fact that Aston Martin was owned by a gear-making company – the slow and awkward David Brown transmission, the only threat to the love affair that tended to develop between the DBR1 and those who raced it, was used at first in the DBR4, but ultimately replaced by a Maserati transmission originally intended for the V12 250F. And like the 'offset' Masers, the shaft emerged from the engine and ran at an angle across the car and beside the driver to the transaxle at the rear, helping lower the driver in the car. Driving duties fell to Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby, for while Aston Martin could call still upon the services of Moss in sports car racing, he was committed to Coopers for F1.

"DBR4 WENT FROM STATE OF THE ART TO OBSOLESCENCE IN ONE SEASON – DURING WHICH IT TURNED NOT A SINGLE WHEEL"



The DBR4 made its debut in the International Trophy race at Silverstone on May 2 and, not for the last time in Aston's racing history, the team fielded a car that flattered to deceive. Not only was it the fastest front-engined car of the field, it was the quickest out there, with Salvadori breaking the lap record and coming home second only to Jack Brabham's Cooper, a combination that would prove the class of the Formula 1 field in '59.

With the car so competitive from the off, Aston Martin must have felt this was the start of something big, little knowing that, in fact, the DBR4 had already had the best result of its life. Engine problems sidelined both cars at Zandvoort at the end of the month, while all that could be mustered during the rest of the season – when the cars raced at Aintree, Monsanto and Monza – were two sixth places for Salvadori, and an eighth and a 10th for Shelby. Compared to Aston's fortunes in sports cars that year, with the now ageing DBR1 coming from behind finally to beat Ferrari to the title, and Salvadori and Shelby sharing that memorable Le Mans victory, the DBR4's activities must have seemed an expensive waste of time.

But worse was to come. Curiously undaunted by the DBR4 episode, Aston Martin prepared a new F1 car for the 1960 season. Smaller, lighter, independently sprung at all four corners but doomed from the start by its engine location and lack of development, the so-called DBR5 raced ▶

just three times and, given that photographs of it exist cornering with all four wheels pointing in different directions, it's a wonder its drivers put up with it for that long. With Shelby back in the US, the veteran Maurice Trintignant was drafted onto the force, coming 10th and 11th at Silverstone and Aintree. Salvadori retired from both races, slamming shut the chapter on Aston's single-seat history. It remains to be seen whether that is about to change with Prodrive's proposed entry into F1 for 2010 under David Richards.

Such is the inevitable fate of all half-hearted attempts to succeed at the top level of any sporting discipline. Even in the 1950s, staying on top both in F1 and sports car racing was beyond all save the very experienced and well-funded Mercedes-Benz and Ferrari racing teams.

The odd thing is that despite its inauspicious front-line career, you'll struggle to find anyone with a bad word to say about the DBR4. Clearly the DBR5 was a dreadful mistake, but what you hear again and again while talking about the DBR4 was that it was the right car at the wrong time – "a good car that was simply overtaken by events" as Wyer described it.

One of the first to drive it was none other than Brooks, who tested it late in 1957 and recalls it today as "much nicer to drive than the Vanwall" which he drove in his F1 day job. "The Vanwall was quick but it was difficult to get the most out of it and it didn't want to drift. The DBR4 felt underpowered but otherwise a good-handling car with strong brakes and nice balance."

Shelby recalls it as lacking in power too and not a title winner even if it hadn't been "two or three years too late". But he liked its handling and reckons it would have fought for at least some wins had it been wheeled out in '58.

Power is the last thing in the world the DBR4 I am to drive is lacking. This is the last of four DBR4s to be built; it was never raced by the works but used as a spare, and was bought by Lex Davison and exported to Australia for the 1960 Tasman series, complete with a 3-litre engine. Davison's second place in the 1960 Australian Grand Prix was the DBR4's most successful outing since its first race.

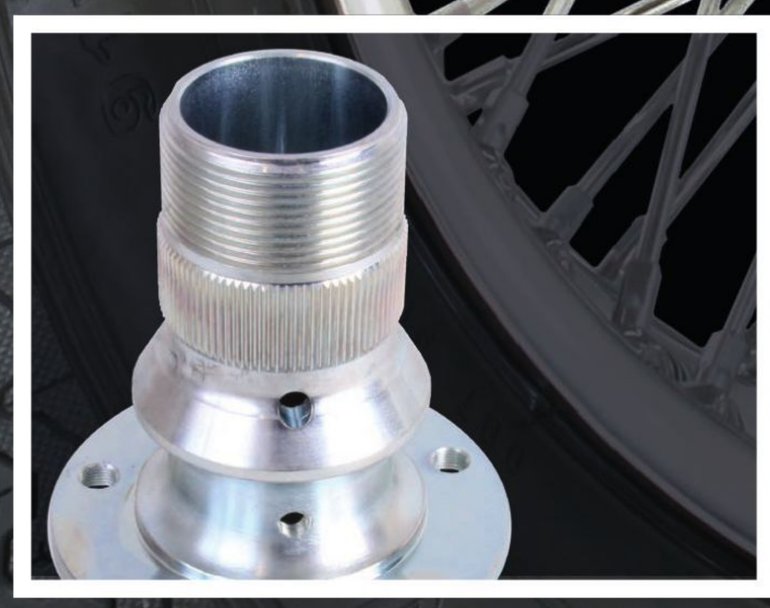
Immaculately prepared today by Tim Samways, the motor in the DBR4/4 is effectively indistinguishable from that in the Le Mans-winning DBR1/2 he also looks after. In 2.5-litre form, the best the works ever saw from this engine was around 260bhp – despite claims of 280bhp – but today the 3-litre is pushing out something rather better than 300bhp. In a car weighing around 680kg, that is always going to gain your attention. It's an HGPCA test day and none other than Richard Attwood has been getting his first impressions prior to racing it. "It feels like a tremendously friendly car. There's a huge ▶



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amount of power but it's delivered so progressively it's easily managed. It handles well too, not like the Ferrari Dino which corners like you're driving around the outside of a 50 pence piece." Needless to say, come the weekend Attwood and the DBR4 would storm to victory.

Appetite suitably whetted, I'd already swung a leg over its high side and taken up residence behind its surprisingly small wood-rimmed wheel. It's a far more spacious car than a 250F and is unusually accommodating for what is meant to be a completely pared down grand prix machine. The controls are more sensibly sited too, with the gearlever within easy reach rather than buried somewhere beside your right thigh. The usual Smiths dials are there – simple, clean and easy to read – and with the flick of a couple of switches and the press of a button, the straight six bursts into rumbustious life.



DBR4 is a well-balanced package of conventional engineering; motor came from DBR1

Its owner had gleefully described the car to me as "an animal" and cruising out onto the track, unbelted, feeling exposed and a bit apprehensive thanks to the sheer level of noise coming from under the bonnet, I could see what he meant.

At least one thing that presented no problem at all was the gearbox, and those coming to the Maserati transmission after David Brown's more agricultural effort must scarcely have believed their luck. Just like the 250F, it snaps from gear to gear with surgical precision, engaging cleanly no matter how fast you move your hand.

Not that you need to change gear much with this engine under the bonnet. It races at 7000rpm but is so flexible it's working hard at 3000rpm and giving the lot by 4500rpm. I'd been asked to keep to 6500rpm, but this proved less of a hardship than it sounds: with that much torque on tap you can change gear almost at will and always be sure you're going to land back in the thick of the power band.

Fifty years ago, drivers may have complained of a lack of power from this engine in 2.5-litre form, but in 2009 and with a beautifully built 3-litre doing the talking, it is its explosive acceleration that dominates the driving experience. Unsurprisingly it feels faster by far than the 250F and, accelerating down the long Club Straight of Silverstone's national circuit, Coopers it was unable to keep up with in period prove no match at all for it.

But they still dance around it through the bends. Before Attwood had driven it, the DBR4 had seemed quite difficult to drive smoothly through corners. It steered and turned in as well as you could reasonably expect of a car with that much ▶



metal in its nose, but had proven unwilling to accept gracefully anything other than a late and gradual introduction of power.

It would start to yaw quite quickly and, while it might have developed into a graceful drift if left unchecked, it might equally have developed into something rather less manageable and, either way, it seemed unlikely to do many favours for the lap time. In the end, all it needed was for Samways' team to soften it off a bit at the back, and suddenly this nervousness was replaced by rather more useful and less alarming traction.

And then it felt rather like a slightly larger, more senior and powerful 250F, which is some compliment. It was easy to place on the road and slid smoothly, neatly and entirely at your behest rather than its own. It still felt quite soft and if you wanted to set it up to enable a hot shot to shave every last tenth off the lap time you'd make it stiffer, sharper and more nervous. But you'd risk losing a nature so wonderfully accommodating that I had no reservation about driving it quickly after only a few laps of acclimatisation.

But even then whatever you gained on the Coopers on the straights you'd more than lose in the corners. The all-disc brake set-up is first class for the era, but the lighter, lower, mid-engined cars can still brake later and more lightly before turning in more quickly and carrying that extra speed onto the straight beyond.

To me it was no more than an interesting phenomenon to observe, but to Shelby and Salvadori it must have frustrated beyond measure, particularly as their DBR4s would not have had the straight-line speed I enjoyed.

But even making allowances for the extra shove of the 3-litre motor, it's not difficult to see why those closest to the DBR4 project reckoned the difference between it being an interesting footnote in F1 history and one of the great and the good was that one missing season. Had the DBR4 raced in '58 and been successful, perhaps the mid-engined car Wyer and Brown discussed but discarded would have been built after all and in time for the '59 season, and perhaps that might have altered the history not just of Aston Martin but also British motor racing at the top level.

Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps. In no sport does time march to a faster drum than grand prix racing, and you can speculate until steam comes out of your ears and still be left with the only salient fact being that the DBR4 simply missed the bus. Happily, and by contrast, in historic racing time necessarily stands still and the DBR4 can be appreciated for what it is: an outstanding example of high-quality British engineering. What's more, with the likes of Attwood at the wheel, it's at last doing what it was designed to do: win races. ■

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ASTON'S HOT WYER PROJECTS

John Wyer's final fling with Aston Martin created the beautiful, fast but frail Project cars. Motor Sport recounts a tale of high hopes and dashed chances

writer **CHRIS NIXON**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JULY 2000

"In the first week of February 1962, John Wyer called me into his office on the Monday and said, 'I want to go to Le Mans with a new car.' You're joking!', I said. 'No, I'm serious. What can you do? And I don't want just a DB4 tarted up. I want a five-speed box, so use the S532; I want a de Dion axle with outboard brakes and I want it at least three weeks before Le Mans so we can test it.'"

And that is how Aston Martin's Chief Designer, Ted Cutting, recalled the birth of the Project Cars. This was, in fact, prompted by some of Aston Martin's dealers, who felt a successful racing programme would help them sell Astons, although demand for the sensational DB4 was already way beyond the company's capacity.

Owner David Brown was none too keen on the idea but John Wyer, formerly racing Team Manager and now General Manager of Aston Martin Lagonda Ltd, decided to bite the bullet, despite the fact he still had the enormous task of getting the DB4 into proper production. Also, throughout 1961 he had been at loggerheads with

"THE NEW CHASSIS WAS STRICTLY ILLEGAL BUT WE DID NOT THINK ANYONE WOULD LOOK TOO HARD, AND SO IT PROVED"

Brown, who insisted a DB4-based four-door Lagonda be produced as well. A racing programme was something Wyer could have done without but, having committed Aston to it, he had to see it through. It was from the new Lagonda saloon (designed by Tadek Marek, also responsible for Aston's new 3.7-litre engine) that Ted Cutting took the de Dion rear axle for his new racer, to be known as Design Project 212. He added both the torsion bars and the trailing links from the DBR2 and put them together on a shortened DB4 GT chassis powered by a 3996cc wet-sump version of the 3.7-litre engine. The 212 was not ready for the 1962 Le Mans Test Weekend, but an undeveloped version of the engine was fitted to an ex-John Ogier lightweight Zagato.

On the test bed this unit produced 278bhp at 5000rpm with megaphone exhausts, 25bhp up on the standard system. This increase was reflected in lap times at Le Mans, for Jacques Dewez recorded 4min 12.8sec; in the 1961 race, the same Zagato's best time had been 4min20sec, with a 3.7-litre unit. Ted Cutting had been responsible for virtually the whole design of the glorious DBR1 sports-racer, including the elegant bodywork. He now made some sketches for 212 which he took to Newport Pagnell, where sheet-metal worker Bert Brooks and draughtsman Steve Stephens turned his ideas into metal. Two weeks before the race, the 212 was tested at MIRA with no problems. These arose in practice, when drivers Graham Hill and Richie Ginther complained of excessive oversteer and roll, a general lack of adhesion and instability at speed on the straight. Changes were made to the front springs and front and rear shock absorbers, and the next day Hill recorded the fourth-fastest practice time with 3min 59.8secs. The 212's 4-litre engine was now producing 330bhp at 6000rpm, enough to propel the Aston to 175mph on Mulsanne.

Graham made a superb start and led the first lap, but he and Ginther retired on lap 79 with a holed piston. Despite this failure, John Wyer was sufficiently impressed with the 212's potential to plan two new cars for 1963, DPs 214 and 215.

With these in mind, 212 was tested in MIRA's wind tunnel in September and it was discovered that the difference between a full and empty fuel tank was a 270lb decrease in load on the rear wheels and a 60lb increase on the front. More worrying was the aerodynamic lift, at 170mph, of 548lb. In light of these tests the 212 was reshaped, with a longer, lower nose and a Kamm-type tail with a spoiler.

Over the winter Aston Martin built two 214s and a 215, but they were playing games with the regulations, as John Wyer recalled in *Racing With The David Brown Aston Martins*.

"Project 212 had been based upon a cut-and-shut DB4 platform chassis which was too heavy... Both Project 214 and 215 had extremely light box-section girder frames. Because the Project 214 cars were to run in the production class, the new chassis was strictly illegal, but we did not think anyone would look too hard, and so it proved. For the same reason these cars were fitted with 3.7-litre engines, although a loophole in the regulations allowed us to increase the bore from 92mm to 93mm and the capacity from 3650cc to 3750cc."

Another problem on the 212 was that its weight was too far forward, so on the 214s the engine was moved eight inches back (illegally), giving much better weight distribution.

The 215 was unready for the 1963 Le Mans Test Weekend, so the 214s were accompanied by the modified 212. The fastest 214 time was set by Bruce McLaren in 3min 58.7sec, and Jo Schlesser

did an impressive 3min 56.2sec with the 212. The 214s, fitted with combined water and oil coolers from the DBR1, suffered high engine temperatures; the 212 had no such problems as it used the radiator from (whisper it!) a Jaguar E-type and a separate alloy oil cooler. Another problem was with the Salisbury 7HA lightweight rear axle, which failed on one of the 214s, so the DB4-based 4HA was used instead.

Shortly after the Test Weekend, John met his great friend and 1959 Le Mans-winner Carroll Shelby in Los Angeles which led to an introduction to Ray Geddes of Ford. Geddes persuaded Wyer to stop off at Dearborn where he talked with Don Frey, Assistant General Manager of Ford. Then, in May, Geddes met with Wyer in England and told him that, as the proposed buy-out of Ferrari had fallen through, Ford had decided to go racing on its own, making it clear that Don Frey wanted John to be involved in the competition programme.

All this time, work had progressed on the 215

Hill and Bianchi's DP215 stops during 1963 Le Mans race. Though Hill put up an amazing practice time the gearbox failed, putting them out

which, although virtually identical in looks, was quite different to the 214s, as Ted Cutting explains. "The 215 was conceived as a vehicle on which we could test some ideas which, we hoped, would eventually be found in a V8 production car. We decided upon all-independent suspension. Our idea was to develop from this a suspension for the production V8, with an inboard-mounted spiral-bevel unit developed from the one originally designed for the V12 Lagonda. We decided to use the DBR1 combined gearbox and final drive in the 215 and, instead of coupling it to a 3-litre engine, we went for broke and used a dry-sump 4-litre." Aston had suffered endless troubles with the transaxle on the 3-litre DBR1, so quite how it could work with an even more powerful engine has never been properly explained. A taste of things to come saw the 215 jump out of gear while testing at MIRA. The revs went sky-high and it bent all the valves... The 1961 World Champion and three-time Le Mans winner Phil Hill joined Aston Martin for the '63 race, he and Lucien ▶



Le Mans 1963: Innes Ireland/ Bruce McLaren DP214 was leading the GT class until a piston failed. Opposite: Aston trio at start, with 215 behind the pair of 214s

Bianchi being entrusted with the 215. The 214s went to Bruce McLaren/ Innes Ireland and Bill Kimberly/Jo Schlesser. Hill recorded a remarkable 3min 52.0sec, just 1.1sec slower than the pole-sitting Ferrari 330P of Pedro Rodriguez, while Ireland's 214 lapped in four minutes exactly. Also, Hill and Ireland were credited with the fastest speed of all on the Mulsanne Straight at 300kph/187.5mph, the first time any car had been recorded at 300kph.

Phil Hill led the cars away from the start, but lay fifth after four laps. On lap 6 he crested the rise after the Dunlop Bridge to find a René Bonnet upside down in the middle of the road. He managed to avoid it, but ran over some debris and so stopped at the pits. Bianchi, who took over at the 26-lap mark, returned immediately to the pits with transmission failure, as several teeth on the input bevel gear had broken. The McLaren/Ireland 214 was leading the GT class, sixth overall, when a piston failed after five hours. The conrod went through the side of the engine, depositing three gallons of oil at the kink on the Straight, causing a four-car crash and, tragically, the death of a driver.

The Kimberly/ Schlesser car was third overall until just after 2am on the Sunday morning, when it retired with another piston failure. It seems that Hepworth and Grandage had designed the pistons as forgings but had made them as castings, due to lack of time. They were simply too light.

"That error cost us the race," said Ted Cutting. "I really believe those 214s could have finished very well up; they were really excellent cars and two of the best I've ever done." Shortly after the 1963 Le Mans 24 hours, John Wyer told David Brown (but no-one else) that he would be leaving the company in September to join Ford. He had enjoyed a long, successful and very happy association with DB and Aston Martin but was by now disenchanted with both. This was not only due to DB's insistence on producing the Lagonda, but also to the exasperatingly poor relationship between the company and the unions.

At the end of June, the 215 was entered in a

support race for the French Grand Prix at Reims, its specification unchanged from Le Mans. Jo Schlesser's constant trouble selecting gears resulted in a missed change, which bent two exhaust valves. He still put the car on the front row of the grid, but more missed gearchanges bent the valves again. The 214s were entered for the Tourist Trophy at Goodwood, a happy hunting ground for Aston, so great things were expected of the cars driven by Innes Ireland and Bruce McLaren. Then John Wyer's chickens came home to roost: the 214s failed scrutineering, not due to the illegal chassis, but because they were on the wrong wheels, as Wyer explains in *The Certain Sound*.

"We presented the cars [to the scrutineers] on wider rims than those with which the DB4GT had been homologated. We had, in fact, changed the production specification but had omitted to change the homologation sheet. The cars had been accepted in this form at Le Mans, but the RAC Scrutineer, Procter, refused to allow them to run at Goodwood with the wider rims. There were two absurdities about this decision. The first was that, with the only narrow rims that we had available, the rear track was reduced by four inches below the figure shown on the homologation sheet. In neither state, therefore, did the cars conform with the homologation, yet Procter was prepared to ignore the reduction in track, but not the wider rims.

"The second point was more fundamental. The cars had been homologated as variants of the DB4 GT, but the chassis frames bore no resemblance to that car. The engine was also eight inches further back in the chassis. All these changes were sufficiently obvious and if Procter had used them for his ruling instead of relying on a technicality he would have been on firm ground. In the event we ran the cars with the narrow rims, but they were almost undriveable."

Almost, but not quite. Innes Ireland put up a bravura display in the race, but he could not overcome the Aston's appalling handling.

"It wasn't the inch off the rims which killed us," he said, "it was the 4-inch narrower track, which meant that car just wouldn't handle. I was absolutely furious. I could have won that race standing on my head..." Innes eventually finished a valiant and angry seventh, but McLaren retired with a bent valve. Happily, the Project Cars' racing programme ended with a terrific victory at Monza in September. Roy Salvadori rejoined the team he had served so well in the 1950s for the 3-hour Coppa Inter-Europa (which preceded the Italian GP) and had the most tremendous duel with Mike Parkes in a Ferrari GTO. Initially, Parkes led by almost 14 seconds but, by the time the Ferrari refuelled, Roy had whittled this down to 4.3sec and, due to a shorter pit stop, rejoined the race in the lead.

Parkes overtook him, only to be repassed almost at once, and from then on the lead changed continually until Roy won one of the finest races of his career by 100 yards. The 214s had one more race, finishing first and second at Montlhéry against feeble opposition, but John Wyer stunned his team by announcing his departure for Ford and the David Brown racing programme came to an end.

It obviously seemed like a good idea at the time, but Aston Martin's return to competition was, in reality, doomed to failure. The marque had covered itself in glory in 1959 by beating Ferrari and Porsche to the Sportscar World Championship (winning the Nürburgring 1000 Kms, Le Mans and the Tourist Trophy in the process) with the superb DBR1, only to undo the hard work by persevering with a disastrous grand prix programme in 1960. Apart from the fine win at Monza, the Astons had no success and the programme was undeniably weakened by David Brown's lack of interest and John Wyer's preoccupation with other things. In effect, John was Aston Martin racing and, without his whole-hearted commitment, the Project cars had no real chance. ■



ASTON MARTIN

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



ONE HELL OF A COMPANY CAR

Aston Martin owner David Brown drove this DB2 to work every day – after it had finished third at Le Mans and won its class in the Mille Miglia. And nobody's messed with it since

writer **ED FOSTER**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, NOVEMBER 2009

The Aston Martin DB2 is often overlooked as a successful competition car, which isn't surprising given the existence of the DB3S, DBR1 and more recently the DBR9. But it's the DB2 that got Aston's post-war Le Mans quest in gear, leading directly to the zenith at La Sarthe with Salvadori, Shelby and the DBR1 in 1959.

With this in mind I set off to drive the most successful DB2 in existence – in 1950 and '51 it won its class at Le Mans and in the Mille Miglia, and also won the 1951 Alpine Rally outright. Remarkably, it hasn't been altered since 1957 when Aston Martin company owner David Brown was using it as his everyday car. The paint is original –various dents and scrapes give away its age – the interior hasn't been touched and the scrutineering pass from the 1951 Mille Miglia still hangs around the steering column.

The steering is heavy – I'm amazed that anyone could drive the car for 24 hours – and I'm asked not to rev the engine too high, but it doesn't matter one bit. VMF 64 might be a little rough around the edges, but this is a real piece of Aston Martin history: most of the parts on the car today were there when it finished third overall at Le Mans in '51.

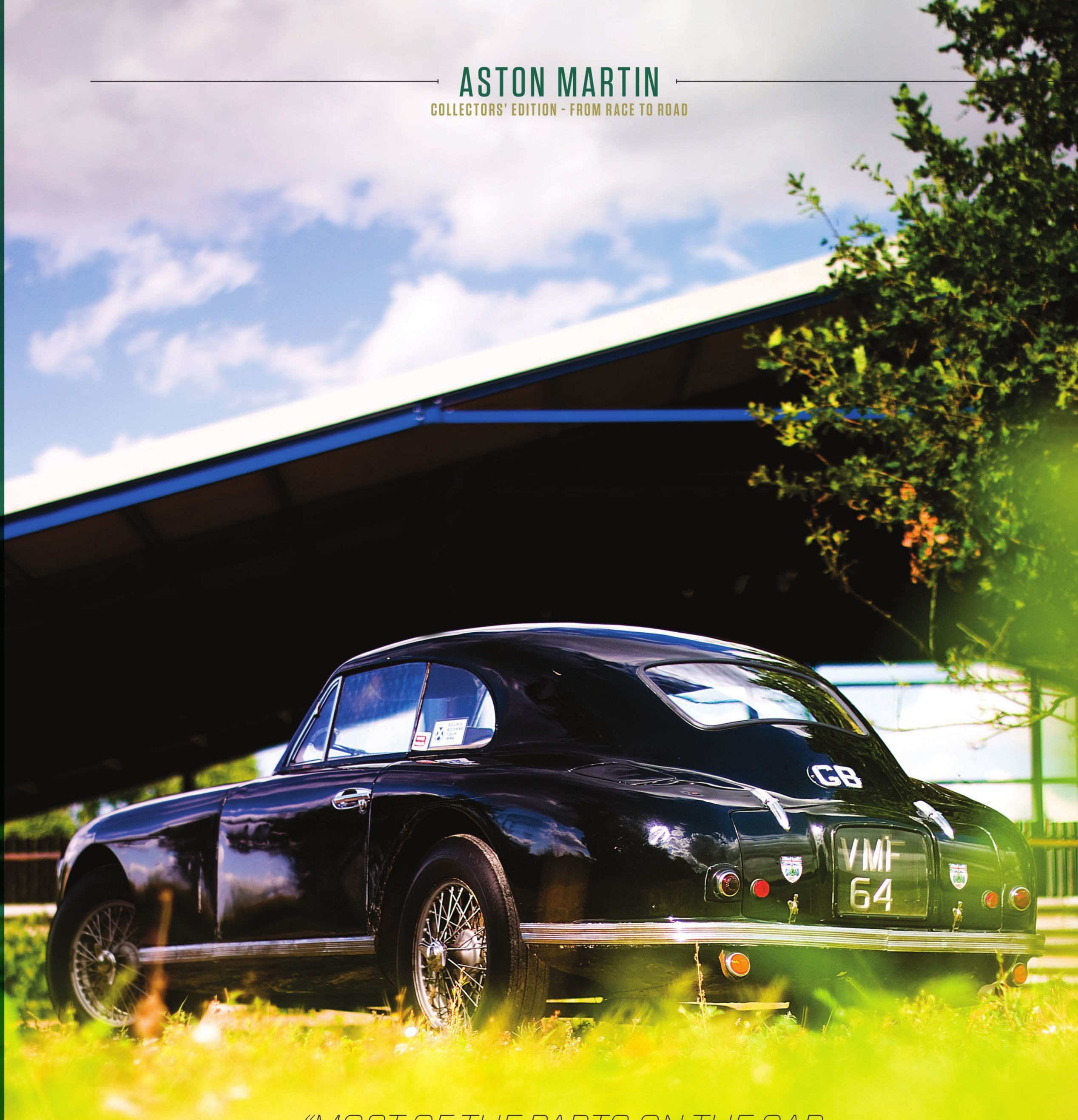
During World War II Aston Martin stayed afloat by making Wellington bombers and control columns for training aircraft, but in 1944 a direct hit on the factory by a V1 flying bomb coupled with worn out machinery left the car manufacturer in serious financial trouble. That year Gordon Sutherland bought his father's shares for £5. Three years later David Brown, who had made his money building gears, gearboxes and tractors, saw an advert in *The Times* for a 'High Class Motor Business', which he duly bought for £20,000. It was a pricey sum when you consider that Aston Martin had only one current model – the experimental Atom – which had been designed before the war. Undeterred, Brown went on to buy Lagonda the following year for more than double the price.

Reluctant to interfere with the job of actually producing a car, Brown was nevertheless persuaded to enter the 1948 Spa 24 Hours as a way of showing the world that Aston Martin was still in business. However, his initial coolness soon turned into an unparalleled enthusiasm, as remembered by DB2 driver Eric Thompson: "He never interfered, he always left everything to [team manager] John Wyer. But in the background he was enormously enthusiastic, always at the races."

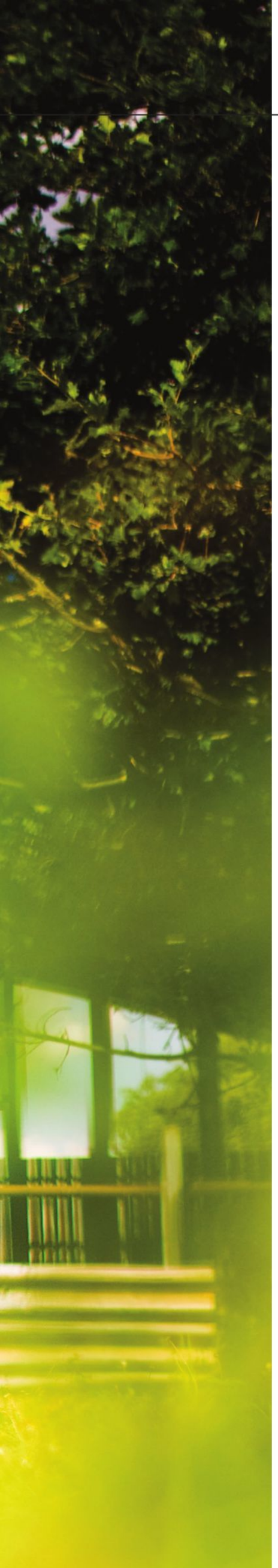
Four cars were sent to Belgium equipped with an Atom-based chassis, an Aston Martin four-cylinder engine, David Brown gearbox and a tourer body with cycle wings. Against all odds, and formidable opponents, the car driven by St John Horsfall and Leslie Johnson covered the greatest distance – even if there was no official winner due to the results being based on a class ▶

ASTON MARTIN

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD



"MOST OF THE PARTS ON THE CAR TODAY WERE THERE WHEN IT FINISHED THIRD OVERALL AT LE MANS"



system. It didn't take long for Brown to decide to run a works team the following year.

By 1949 the Aston Martins looked vastly different from the previous year's tourer-bodied racer. The DB2 featured a saloon body with a chassis slightly shorter than the DB1, its 2-litre engine wrapped in a more curvaceous body than the Spa 'winner'. The matt green cars, understood to be prototypes for a 1950 production model, did not have a particularly satisfying debut at Le Mans, with two DNFs and a seventh-place finish. Only two cars were sent to the Belgian 24 Hours Touring Car Grand Prix – one running with Lagonda power, the other with an Aston four-cylinder – but here the DB2s fared better. The Lagonda-powered car driven by Johnson/Charles Brackenbury covered the third-highest distance, while the Aston-powered car, driven by St John Horsfall, finished fourth.

As planned the DB2 went into production, but designer Frank Feeley had only a few months to ready the first cars. So little time in fact that the car was built from full-scale drawings rather than small-scale models. VMF 64 (LML/50/8) was the second car off the production line – Aston had decided to take the first three cars to Le Mans in June. All three had 2580cc production engines with slightly larger-bore SUs and larger fuel tanks (32 gallons), producing 125bhp as opposed to 105bhp in the road cars. Tragedy struck when Jack Fairman crashed LML/50/9 en route to Le Mans, badly injuring his wife. The fact that he turned up at the circuit still wanting a drive only maddened the easily ruffled Wyer. Thompson, however, has fond memories of the boss: "He was exacting and had a wonderful dry sense of humour. He was meticulous in everything he did. A great man to race under." Fairman didn't drive for Aston again until 1959.

Thompson, the other driver for LML/50/9, was placed in the 1949 six-cylinder car alongside John Gordon, but on the eighth lap the crankshaft broke and Thompson never got to race. This was also the year that Brown himself tried to race one of his cars. "He had ambitions to drive in 1950, but the RAC turned him down," recalls Thompson.

VMF 64 (or '64' as Thompson calls it) rescued what had been looking like a dismal outing for the works team. The car, driven by George Abecassis (who would marry Brown's daughter Angela in 1956) and Lance Macklin, was delayed briefly on the Sunday morning due to a sticking throttle but went on to finish fifth overall, first in the 3000cc class and, most surprisingly, tied in the Index of Performance with a Monopole Panhard. The last car (LML/50/7) came home a respectable sixth.

When Macklin was injured, Wyer brought in grand prix star Raymond Sommer to drive '64' in the Silverstone Production Sports Car race that August. Never one to go anything but flat out, the two-time Le Mans winner politely told Wyer – now employed full-time by Aston – that there was no point giving him signals to either speed up or slow down as he could not do the former and would not do the latter. The Frenchman duly finished second in class.

From there the car went to Northern Ireland for the RAC Tourist Trophy at the 7.14-mile Dundrod circuit. The recovered Macklin drove it to third in class behind the other two Aston works cars. To round off its first season, Charles Brackenbury took '64' up Shelsley Walsh in 50.46 seconds and finished sixth in class.

The DB2 might have been gaining results, but Wyer knew that to score an overall victory a proper sports car was needed. Brown engaged the services of Professor Robert Eberan-Eberhorst of Auto Union fame for the job. But if it was a rush to get the DB2 ready for Le Mans in 1950, preparing the DB3 for the '51 race was a step too far. Wyer fell back on the DB2 and had two special lightweights built with 200kg shaved off, thanks in no small part to getting rid of the standard seats, each weighing 20kg.

Tom Wisdom had taken '64' to 11th overall and first in the over 2-litre Vetture Veloci class (six minutes ahead of Salvatore Amendola's Ferrari) at the 1951 Mille Miglia before it too was prepared for Le Mans. '64' underwent a similar weight loss process (it had been 1149kg with full tanks after the previous year's 24 Hours) and was taken as a back-up. As well as reducing the weight, Webers replaced SUs, more power was eked out of the engine and the axle ratio was raised to make the most of the Mulsanne Straight.

Macklin and Thompson drove '64' this time, maintaining a higher average speed than Rosier's Talbot which had won Le Mans in 1950, even though on race day the weather was atrocious. The car outraced not only the other lightweight Astons, but also most of the rest of the field.

It finished first in class and, amazingly, third overall. Thompson: "We certainly made up some places thanks to the weather, because it rained through the night. The previous year the other two cars came in fifth and sixth, and Wyer aimed at hitting a bit higher, which we did.

"The car was stationary for 11 minutes in the whole 24 hours – it took longer to change the tyres those days – and we were only 9km or so behind the second-placed car, so the race went remarkably smoothly. I absolutely loved doing it – three-, four-hour stints at a time. There was also a great atmosphere in the team, although one never really saw Macklin because he was usually with a bird…"

From its Le Mans success '64' went on to victory in the Alpine Rally, winning four stages in the hands of Wisdom and his wife Elsie, better known as 'Bill' – a nickname she'd earned from her six elder brothers for being a tomboy. ►





The following year three cars were entered for the Mille Miglia, including '64'. Co-driver Anthony Hulme was taken ill and replaced by Fred Lown – one of the mechanics who took the cars out to Brescia – but Wisdom still finished 12th overall and first in class. The last time the car competed was later in 1952 at the Alpine Rally, where it finished 15th overall and fifth in class with Wisdom driving once again.

In September 1955 the Hon Gerald Lascelles – who worked in the Aston Martin purchasing department in the early '50s and later became president of the BRDC – approached Brown in order to buy the car. Gerald's son Henry still has Brown's reply, which includes the following: "Up to now we have felt that we should keep this car as a sort of museum piece. Therefore, at the present time I see no possibility of our disposing of VMF 64." However, in July 1957 Aston seemed to change its mind about the importance of heritage and sold it to Lascelles for £500. The car has remained in the family but hasn't been raced since. "My father had no intention of racing her, as he felt she'd earned an honourable retirement," says Henry.

Squeezing my 6ft 7ins frame into '64' was a struggle, but the car is extremely accommodating once the wheels are turning. Although the steering is at best vague in a straight line and very heavy when cornering, Thompson doesn't remember it being much different from other cars of its era: "In those days one was used to heavy steering, it wasn't anything exceptional. '64' was a wonderful car to drive and really excelled in the long-distance events."

Although the interior is in road trim, one can see why the car made such a good long-distance racer. "It didn't have a weak spot at all," says Thompson. "John Wyer gave us a rev limit for most of the race – but for the last 12 hours he lifted the limit by 500rpm, which helped us along the way." Now back on more tractable SUs, the engine still pulls well and you can imagine what the exhaust must have sounded like when the car was in race trim, something that Gordon Wilkins described as a "sonorous scream between 4000 and 5000rpm" when he road-tested it straight after Le Mans in '51.

VMF 64 is one of the most historically important racing Aston Martins. Whether or not you agree that it had "earned an honourable retirement" when Lascelles bought it, there's no questioning its originality. It's not often you find a car that has been so unmolested, and rarer still that it should also have such a successful and interesting past.

Back in 1955, when obsolete racing cars were disposed of without a thought, David Brown considered '64' important enough to keep. It was history's good fortune that when he did decide to release it, this significant car went to a buyer who had the good taste not to 'improve' it. ■

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ASTON MARTIN VOLANTE ZAGATO, 1989 – 6,700 MILES

Salisbury Blue Metallic / Magnolia HIDE. 1 of just 37 cars, Torqueflite automatic gearbox, Limited Slip Diff, Connolly hide interior with bucket seats and tilting squabs



ASTON MARTIN DB6 MK 2 VANTAGE, 1970 – 74,800 MILES

Sage / Beige HIDE. Correct matching numbers, chassis No. DB6MK2FI /4224 /R and 400/4537FI, 5 speed ZF gearbox, 1 of 46 produced



ASTON MARTIN DB6 VANTAGE MK1, 1967

Dubonnet metallic / Black HIDE interior Chassis No. DB6/3202/R, Fully restored by Aston Martin Heritage, Borg & Beck clutch



ASTON MARTIN DB6 COUPE, 1967

Dawn Blue / Connolly Grey HIDE. Chassis No: DB6/3241/R Engine No. 400/3313, Borg Warner automatic gearbox, factory power steering and front headrests.



ASTON MARTIN V8 VANTAGE (V580), 1985 – 8,600 MILES

Cheltenham Beige / Magnolia HIDE. Left Hand Drive, electric sunroof, manual gearbox, recent works at RS Williams Ltd and a Factory Heriage Service Centre



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ROAD TEST

ASTON MARTIN V12 VANTAGE RS

Right now it's a stunning one-off concept car, but Aston Martin has a chance to turn the V12 Vantage RS into its best ever road car

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, MAY 2008

To the driver of the Aston Martin DBR9 Le Mans car, it must have been a bewildering not to mention somewhat frustrating experience. As he swept through the fast left flick that led onto the race track's massive straight, the sight of the Aston road car at its exit barely registered. With his slick tyres and huge wings he was cornering at a speed quite beyond that of the little Vantage coupé and simply swept past, 600bhp V12 race engine howling with approval. But at some stage during the next 1.8 flat-out kilometres he would have looked in his mirrors and seen a sight he did not expect. Instead of the road car being a mere pin prick in the distance, it was right behind him. And if he looked closer still, a fathomable thought might enter his mind: could it be that it was gaining on him?

This tale is not that of a modern Mitty but a real event that took place on the famed Mistrale

straight of the Paul Ricard circuit. I know this, because it was me who happened to be in the road car. I'd like now to say that, in turn, I duly shot past the DBR9, broke the lap record, got the girl and rode off into the sunset, but sadly that would bear little relation to the truth. Nevertheless the very fact that an Aston road car could cling even briefly to the shirt-tails of a GT1 class-winning Aston race car suggests that there is rather more to this Vantage than is immediately apparent.

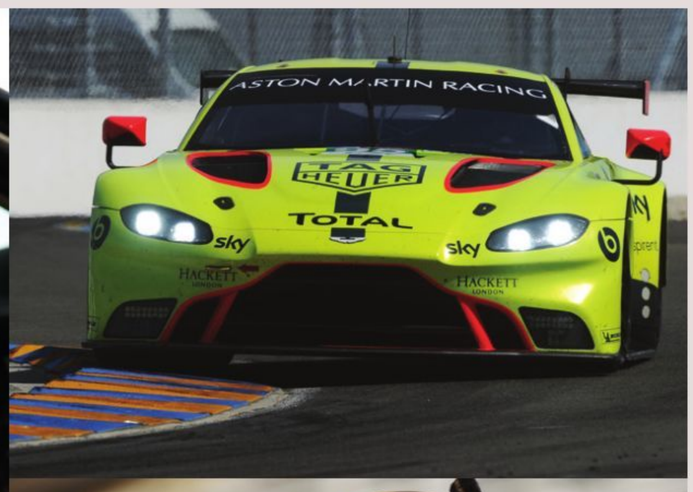
And so it proves. This is the Aston Martin V12 Vantage RS and though it will go into production next summer, for now this is the only one in the world. The louvred bonnet is not difficult to see but I wonder if you also spotted the carbon-fibre splitter at the front, or the slightly more dramatic kick to the lip spoiler on its tail. You certainly won't have been able to ascertain that the bonnet, bootlid and door inners are carbon fibre, nor that, unlike any normal Vantage, behind those 19in wheels lie massive carbon-ceramic brakes.

But none of these really played much of a part in that oh-so brief moment of glory in the slipstream of the DBR9. It was helped for sure by all those ▶

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Vantage RS prototype is close to production versions – though the huge ceramic brakes are unlikely to be a standard fit

wings on the race car seriously limiting its acceleration above 170mph, but most of all by the fact that the Vantage also has a 6-litre V12 engine under its bonnet pumping out the same nice round 600bhp.

But these numbers, mighty as they are, fail to do justice to the way this, Aston Martin's most exciting road car since at least the DB4GT, goes about its business. For a start it's not only massively more powerful than a normal 4.3-litre V8 Vantage, it's also lighter to the tune of 130kg. But the real revelation is that engine. It's not to the same specification as the ultra-exotic DBR9 motor, but then again nor does it need to be in order to produce similar power because it has no need to breathe through inlet restrictors. The engine is, in fact, from the GT3 category DBRS9, but fitted with a dry sump and free to gulp in as much fresh air as it likes. Which is about 600bhp's worth.

Aston chairman David Richards was at Paul Ricard for the test and it was he who confirmed to me that the car, which until now has appeared only as a static 'concept' exhibit at the Geneva Motorshow, would become a production reality. "I don't think we'll make many," he said, "but perhaps a couple of hundred a year for three years or so." Price? "Around £150,000 sounds about right to me." Production begins next summer.

If I had the money and knew that the production car would be as viscerally exciting as this, I'd already be in the queue. Its closest rival, both in concept and price, is likely to be Ferrari's 430 Scuderia, but having driven both now I am confident the Aston is quicker and at least as much fun.

Perhaps its most impressive aspect is how right it already feels despite having had little or no development time. When I climbed aboard, its engineers were keen for me to understand that it was just a starting point and the process of refining the chassis was not even started let alone completed, so allowances would need to be made.

But they were wrong. I've driven a load of one-off concept cars in my life and, until now, every one of them has come with a speed limit imposed by its manufacturer of 50mph or less and all have felt dreadful. But not this one. It's true ▶





With the smaller, stiffer body of the V8 combined with a hotter version of the famous V12 motor, Vantage RS is a real driver's car

that some aerodynamic work is needed because the nose starts to wander enough above 150mph for you to be quite glad by 170mph that the straight is coming to an end, but that will be easily cured in the wind tunnel. Likewise the disconcertingly inconsistent response of the brake pedal will vanish once they have ducted some more cooling air to the front discs. Set these issues aside and what's left is fundamentally well balanced and predictable despite the presence of all that power, the absence of any driver aids, the shortness of its wheelbase and the early stage of its development.

And it's going to come at exactly the right time for Aston Martin, for next year it will also introduce the Rapide, its first four-door model since the infamous Lagonda. It will be large, luxurious and almost guaranteed to spark a certain constituency of die-hard Aston fan to conclude the company has gone soft. There could be no better rejoinder than the most exciting car Aston Martin has produced in almost half a century.

I should, however, attach a small health warning to this, for it remains to be seen exactly how diluted the V12 Vantage RS becomes while being prepared for production. At the moment it weighs just 1500kg but undoubtedly some weight will have to be added, not least because right now the car has neither airbags nor air conditioning. There will be a temptation simply to take the Vantage and equip it with a standard V12 engine like the 470bhp unit just announced for the latest version of the DB9. That would be cheap to develop, quite quick and an entirely missed opportunity.

With volumes as low as Richards envisages, the potential to create a stand-alone, truly specialist Aston Martin is clear, one that focuses as much on the removal of weight as the provision of power. No, it won't come to market with a full race engine, but something with 530-550bhp should be easily possible in a car weighing less than 1600kg. With a properly honed chassis and a few of the most basic creature comforts, there is no reason at all to suspect that the result would be anything less than the greatest-driving Aston Martin road car the company has ever produced. And from the company that has already given us the Ulster, the DB2, DB4GT and the original V8 Vantage, that is truly saying something. ■

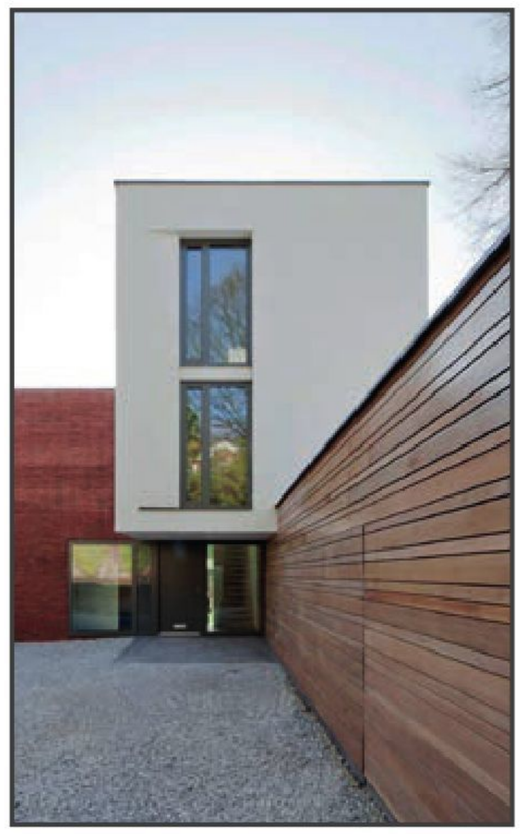
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ASTON MARTIN'S DARK STAR

The DB3, Aston's first pure-bred racer, was hardly a success story. In its day it lacked grunt, but happily it still knows how to handle a circuit

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL** photographer **STUART COLLINS**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JULY 2011

It is fair to say history has not been kind to the Aston Martin DB3. Relative to expectations then, and seen now in the light of what was to follow it, you might even call it a failure. Certainly among the racing David Brown Aston Martins it is perceived as a poor relation. For even if cars like the DBR2, DBR4 and DBR5 were less successful still, they were at least knee-tremblingly beautiful. With the best will in the world, the wide-mouthed DB3 could scarcely even claim that.

But 2011 marks the 60th anniversary of its race debut so perhaps the time is right to revisit the DB3, strip away the benefit of hindsight, assess it on its own merits and, of course, see what it is like for ourselves. For this we are indeed indebted to Martin Melling for allowing us access to the most successful of all the 10 DB3s that were built (five works, five private), and letting me loose in it around the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit.

Debate the success of the DB3 all you like, but you cannot really argue its importance. Not only was it the first Aston to be built from the ground up as a pure racing car, it set off a chain reaction that would lead directly and without interval to Aston Martin winning not only Le Mans, but the world sports car championship eight years later.

The conception of the DB3 itself dates back to 1948. David Brown had bought Aston Martin 'on a whim' in 1946, but in terms of possible new ▶



product, all it had was the Claude Hill-designed Atom chassis and a rather gutless pushrod 2-litre engine. Against his better judgement he allowed the car that only retrospectively became known as the DB1 to enter the 1948 Spa 24 Hours – which to everyone's surprise in general, and Brown's in particular, it promptly went and won.

Bolstered by this success and the arrival of the twin-cam straight-six motor that W O Bentley had designed for Lagonda, Aston Martin installed it under the bonnet of the new DB2 and decided to take its racing a bit more seriously. But Le Mans in 1949 was a disaster, Pierre Marechal becoming to date the only person to lose his life in a works Aston Martin. Even so the pace was clear and the following year the team was back. Now with the steady hand of a certain John Wyer on the rudder they cleaned up: fifth and sixth overall, first and second in the under 3-litre class.

Suitably enthused, Brown asked for an all-new, purpose-built racer for Le Mans in 1951 and commissioned Robert Eberan von Eberhorst, the Viennese who had worked with Professor Porsche on the D-type Auto Unions, to design it.
Enter the DB3. Or at least that was the idea.

Unsurprisingly, there is more than a whiff of Auto Union about the DB3. Similarly designed around two longitudinal tubular chassis members, it featured trailing arm suspension with a De Dion rear axle located by a Panhard rod, with transverse torsion bar springing fore and aft. Before the day of the disc massive drum brakes were installed, those at the rear located inboard where they would reduce unsprung mass, but also help heat the hypoid drive differential to intolerable levels and introduce Aston to the law of unintended consequences.

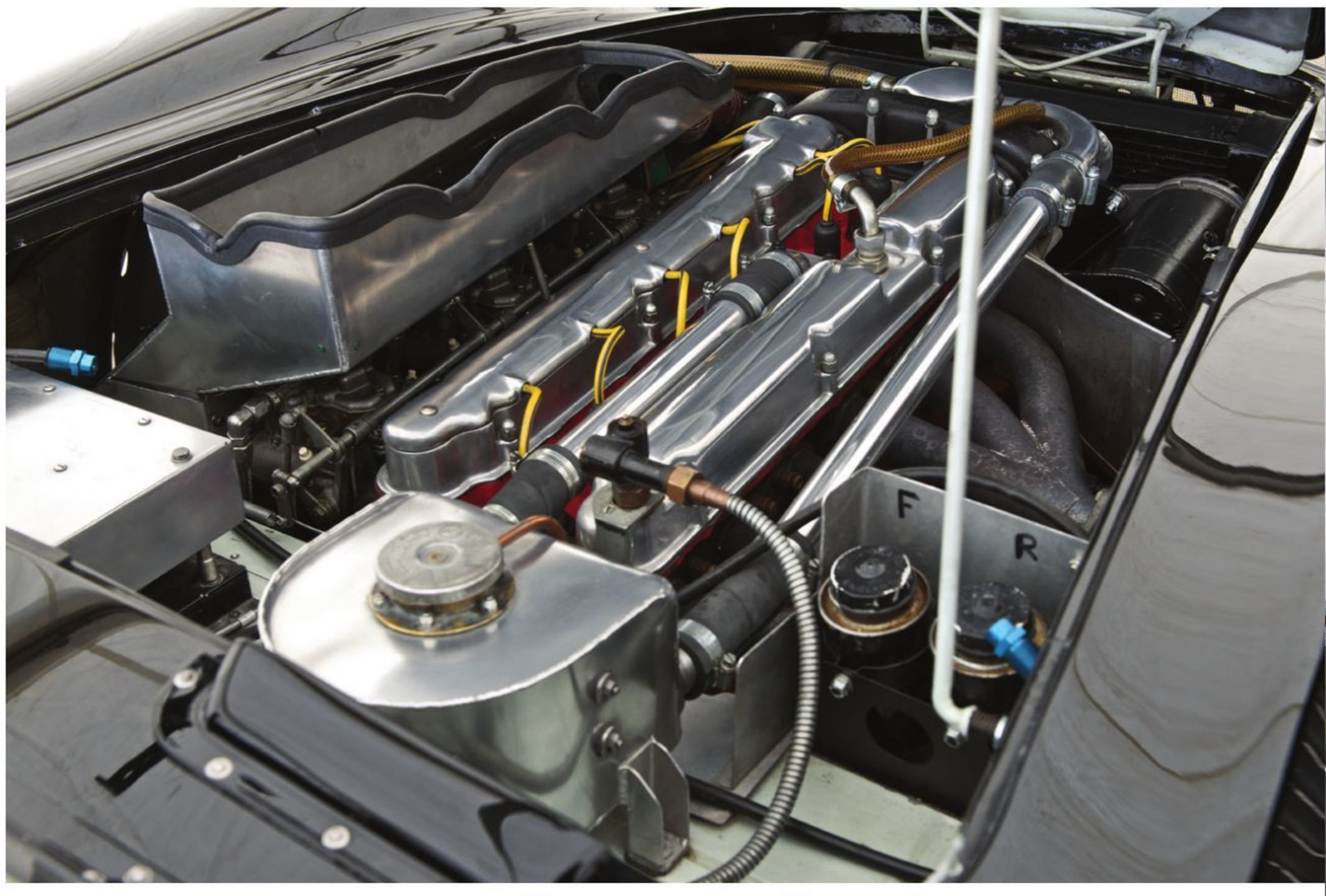
Wyer, writing in the late Chris Nixon's essential *Racing with the David Brown Aston Martins*, made no secret of the tensions and arguments between the team's manager and its designer. While Wyer needed a car he could test, Eberhorst was a stickler for detail, procedure and design and went about his work, according to Wyer, 'at a snail's pace'. In contrast Eberhorst always laid the blame at the lack of funds made available for the project. After the almost unimaginable amount of money thrown at the Auto Unions before the war, the sums available from a struggling Aston Martin must have indeed seemed inadequate.

Wherever the blame lay, it did not affect the essential truth which was that the DB3 was no more going to make it to Le Mans in 1951 than fly to the moon, so reluctantly the DB2s were sent back to France – and promptly exceeded their previous best and every expectation: three entries, three finishes, the first three places in the class, and third, fifth and seventh overall. If that's what a race-prepped road car could do, what would a purpose-built racer achieve?

Fall flat on its face, that's what. Only one DB3 was ready to race at the last event of 1951, the TT in Dundrod, from which Lance Macklin was to retire with engine failure.

Look through the results from 1952 and the letter 'R' for 'retired' stares right back at you with an uncomfortable frequency. The only DB3 entered for the Empire Trophy retired, as did two out of the three that went to compete in the only Monaco Grand Prix to be held for sports cars. Three went to Le Mans and three failed to finish. Three entered the inaugural Goodwood Nine Hours, only one saw the flag.

A disaster, then? Not quite. Good results may have been few and far between, but they were there: at Silverstone the DB3s came second, third





and fourth, wrapping up the top three places in the 3-litre class. And while only one did indeed finish at Goodwood, it was in the position that matters, registering the first-ever major victory for a purpose-built Aston Martin racing car.

That car is this car, the fifth of five works cars, DB3/5, which won the Nine Hours with a 20-year-old Peter Collins and Pat Griffith sharing the driving. Nor was that its only moment in the sun: in 1953 it crossed the Atlantic to race at Sebring, coming second overall, missing outright victory by a single lap after 12 hours of racing despite having to stop for lengthy repairs after being crashed by Reg Parnell. Without that, it would undoubtedly have won.

Even so, few and far between though the DB3 successes were, I fear I must pour just a little cold water upon them. For the truth is that Aston Martin must have known even before the DB3 started racing that it was not going to deliver the successes hoped for it. Watching Le Mans in 1951 must have been a glum process for Wyer and his team: for while the DB3 sat on the drawing board, Jaguar's impossibly sleek and slippery C-type, with its larger and more powerful engine, swept to an utterly convincing victory, putting nine clear laps between itself and the second-placed Talbot-Lago. Wyer would have known already that the DB3's best chance would be when the Jags either didn't turn up, or simply broke.

And at Goodwood he got lucky: Collins and Griffith drove faultlessly, but with just three of the nine hours remaining they were still way back in third, watching two far quicker Jaguars seemingly en route to another imperious win. Until they broke. The Aston won, not because it was the fastest, but because it lasted longest.

Not that there is any shame in that: indeed it is the secret of endurance racing. But the bald facts were that the DB3 was too heavy and lacking in power even after the 2.6-litre motor had been expanded to just over 2.9 litres, a task made difficult by the engine's siamesed cylinder pairings, requiring their bore centres to be moved further apart. Even then, it gave a full half litre and the thick end of 50bhp to the Jaguar motor. Under the circumstances, perhaps the surprise is not that it didn't do so well, but that it didn't do a lot worse.

Of course the world moves on and the DB3 has moved with it. Immaculately prepared by Hall & Hall, the motor in DB3/5 now produces around 240bhp, some 60bhp up on what it would have had in its day and more power even than a standard C-type of the era, not that there are too many of those around these days.

Even before you drive it, the DB3 has a vintage feel to it. The cockpit is wide and airy, not small and snug as even sports cars from the middle to the end of the same decade became. The instruments are tiny Smiths dials which are hard to read at a glance and could very easily have come from a pre-war car. You can see why the car was perceived to be simply too conservative in design, right down to the gauge of the metal used, which in the interests of safety Eberhorst had kept thicker and stronger than strictly necessary for racing.

As you acclimatise to the car, you first become aware of its very mechanical feel. The engine's power delivery is beautifully linear and its four-speed gearbox, if not the fastest, is wonderfully precise. The sense is of Old English heavyweight over-engineering at its finest, as if the influence of W O Bentley had extended beyond the engine bay and into the very fabric of the car.

Drive a little faster, however, and another side of its character emerges, one I was not expecting. ▶

Cockpit has vintage feel; straight-six motor now 60bhp up on period; four-speed gearbox is wonderfully precise



Somewhere near race pace, it changes its identity. I wasn't surprised that it was so fast in a straight line for I have raced against this very Aston many times over the years and know the younger Ferrari 750 Monza I am lucky to drive has only a slight edge over it in a straight line. What I had not expected was for the DB3 to handle so well.

I'm not sure why I had such preconceptions – perhaps because I knew it was a heavy car and maybe because it just doesn't look like the most wieldy thing on the grid I had failed to accord it the respect it deserved. What I can tell you now is that it's the kind of car that leaves you brimful of confidence after just a couple of laps and, in that respect, is the polar opposite of the Ferrari.

It's one of those cars that makes it clear to you from the very first corner that it's there to help, and is on your side come what may. It grips surprisingly well and when it does slide, it is never to excess at either end. Well-signalled slip angles develop progressively, leaving you the choice to keep your foot down and ride it out or lift a little to trim your line to suit.

The only part of the car I did not learn to trust was the brakes. There seemed to be precious little complaint about them in period (apart from the ability of those at the rear to overheat the diff) but I never got confident with them or the feel of the pedal, and found myself braking needlessly early just to be on the safe side. I was probably being too gentle on them.

After I'd handed it back and gathered my belongings and thoughts, I headed home and dug out what books I could find to shed some light on the car and its character. And I came across one illuminating nugget of information.

At the Goodwood Nine Hours, the DB3s were up against three works C-type Jaguars. On paper and even around what was then amazingly considered to be only a medium to fast track, the Astons didn't stand a chance. Yet after the first hour of racing, two of the top three cars were Astons, including the one in the lead.

Had the Astons finally found all that horsepower they lacked? No, rather more simply, it was raining. There is no greater leveller than a wet track and, unable to use their power advantage, the Jaguars fell into the clutches of some clearly rather fine-handling Astons. Only when it dried out did the Jaguars streak off into the lead before finally failing just before the finish to allow the steadily driven DB3/5 through to win.

So does the DB3 deserve its status as the dark star in the Aston Martin firmament? Only if you place an unreasonable burden of expectation on its shoulders. True, it broke more often than it should, but when it finished, it finished well for a car with less than three litres under its bonnet. No, it couldn't keep up with a well-driven works C-type (in the dry), but given their relative engine sizes it would have been a miracle if it could.

No, I think what's really done for the way the DB3 is perceived today is the DB3S that followed it. Lighter, more aerodynamic and powerful even before its twin-plug cylinder head had been developed, in its first season it won both the Nine Hours and the TT, achieving more major wins in a fortnight than the DB3 managed in its career. Five years later it was still strong enough to come second at Le Mans for the third time. It was also indescribably gorgeous and capable of making its drivers quite besotted with it.

But none of this was known back in 1952, and as I mentioned at the start, what I have tried to do here is look at the DB3 without being too informed by hindsight and what came next. Do that and you can conclude that in fact the DB3 was far from a disaster, even if you don't compare it to some of the true turkeys in the Aston racing stable. It was a well-engineered racing car hindered slightly by having to carry too much weight but held back significantly only by the lack of raw power to do justice to the rest of the car. Not so much outmanoeuvred then as outgunned. And there is no shame in that. ■

"DB3 HAS A VINTAGE FEEL. THE SENSE IS OF OLD-ENGLISH HEAVYWEIGHT OVER-ENGINEERING AT ITS FINEST"



Looks can deceive: DB3 may not look agile, but proves to have fine handling

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ASTON MARTIN VS ECURIE ECOSSES

Tony Brooks wins the Goodwood Trophy at 88.19mph

writer **BILL BODDY**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, OCTOBER 1956

The last big BARC Goodwood Meeting of the year was held on one of the few fine days, September 8th. Unfortunately, the fare provided did not live up to that of previous years, for only a handful of out-dated racing cars competed - with one exception, Salvadori's works prototype F2 Cooper - and otherwise this was sports car racing, with the same drivers and cars appearing in race after race. This, and football, flying display and beach attractions, resulted in one of the smallest crowds we have seen at Goodwood.

The first race was for the Madgwick Cup, over five laps from scratch, for sports cars not exceeding 1100cc. MacDowel and Hall fought a fierce duel out in front of the other 16 runners, Hall's Lotus-Climax taking the lead from the Cooper-Climax on lap four. Allison's Lotus-Climax was hanging on to the leaders until it lost ground in a minor incident at Madgwick.

So to the 10-lap Woodcote Cup race, for cars, in any trim, up to 2000cc. The race was mainly a display of high-speed artistry on the part of Salvadori in the works F2 Cooper, which led from start to finish and won by no less than 15.2sec. from Chapman's Lotus-Climax, which fought to keep ahead of Leston's Cooper-Climax.

The 10-lap Sussex Trophy for any type of automobile up to 1500cc was another Salvadori benefit, the F2 Cooper leading all the way, except for the run to the first corner, where Leston headed Salvadori, who started badly. This time Chapman was rather closer, but 12.2sec separated his Lotus from the Cooper at the finish and Salvadori lapped at 90.57mph, only 3.14mph slower than Fangio's class lap record in the supercharged V16 BRM.

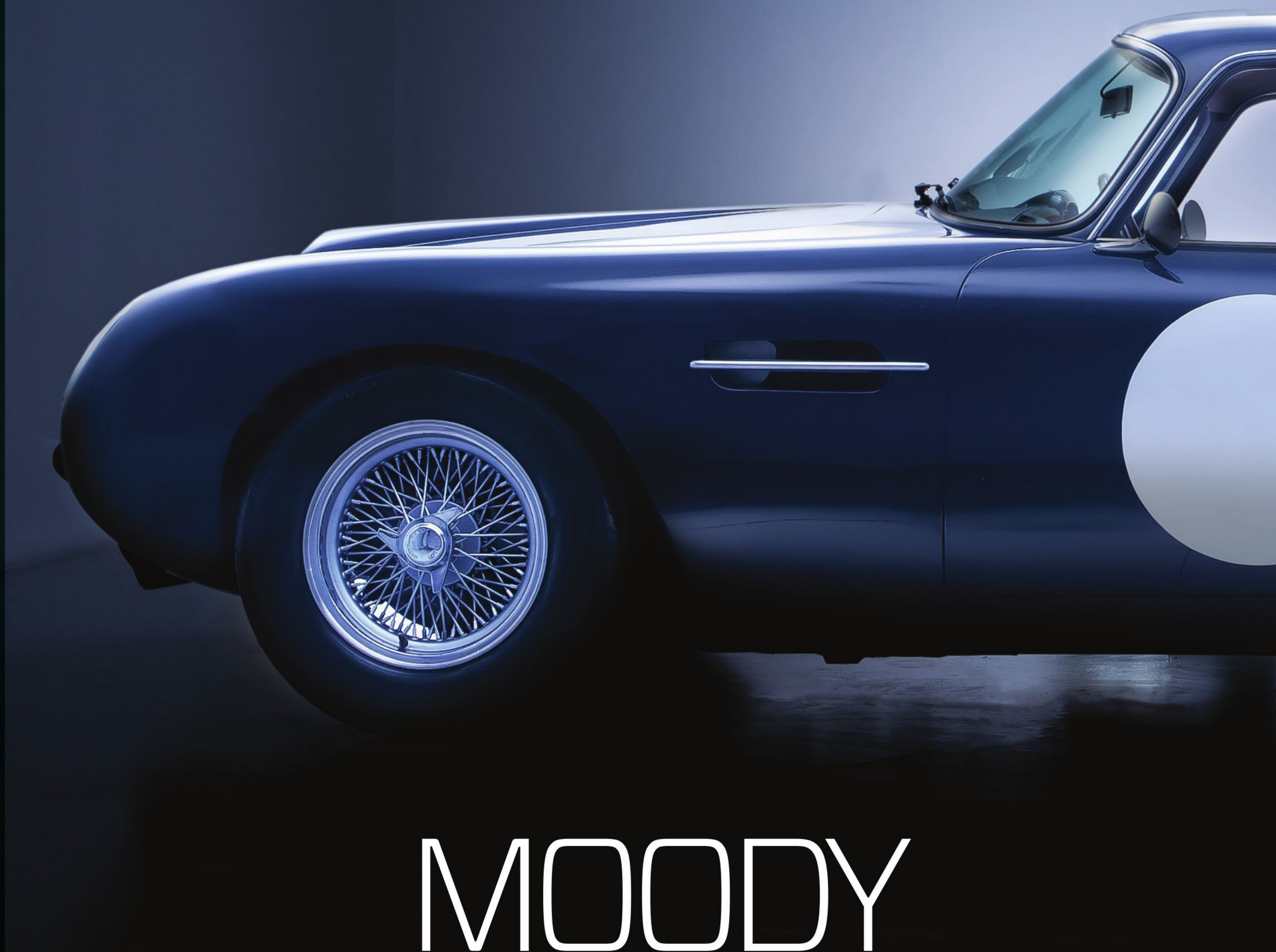
So to the important race of the day, the 21-lap Goodwood Trophy, for non-supercharged sports cars exceeding 1500cc. Ecurie Ecosse fielded Flockhart, Sanderson and Lawrence in their famous Jaguars and Mr David Brown had two DB3S Aston Martins to do battle with them, in the care of Brooks and Salvadori, A N Other - who might have been Moss in a third Aston Martin - being an absentee. Brooks had the Aston Martin which finished fourth at Rouen and Salvadori the newer car in which Moss drove at Le Mans.

Brooks, in his effortless, impeccable style, soon showed that not only was he able to leave the Jaguars well behind but that the older Aston Martin, in this driver's hands, could leave even Salvadori and the latest example of the make well behind - 16.8sec separated them at the finish. Flockhart, trying very hard in the tail-finned Le Mans-winning Jaguar, was third, hard pressed in the closing stages by Cunningham-Reid's HWM-Jaguar, which was quicker than Protheroe's HWM in spite of having a less suitable axle ratio. This HWM, so well driven, split up the Ecurie Ecosse, Sanderson being fifth, and making fastest lap, followed by Lawrence. Berry, back in racing after his Goodwood accident, had lost none of his skill, and chased Blond's blood-red D-type Jaguar, going by down Lavant Straight on lap 11.

This longer race caused casualties, Richardson's Aston Martin-Jaguar, once a coupé, leaking engine oil after five laps, Lund stopping *sans* oil pressure on lap six in Anthony's Lotus-Bristol, Whitehead's Aston Martin DB3S losing power after 13 laps, Ogier's Tojeiro-Jaguar retiring after seven laps, and Kyffin's 12-plug Aston Martin DB3S suffering engine trouble after 14 laps. Hans Davids seemed a bit overwhelmed in his Dutch-entered 12-plug Aston Martin DB3S and, alas, the Lister-Maserati didn't start because Archie Scott-Brown hadn't returned from his fruitless visit to Monza.

This meeting showed again the speed we can expect from F2 racing cars next year and no doubt such machines will do much to return Goodwood to its former glory, although to render this a certainty the BARC will have to offer sufficient starting money to attract Continental entries. ■





MOODY BLUE

Taking a slice out of its road car gave Aston Martin a moment of glory on the track, but it also shaped the marque's styling approach for a decade

writer **RICHARD HESELTINE** photographer **MATT HOWELL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, FEBRUARY 2015



When viewed through the cold gaze of the sceptic, there can be only one firm conclusion: the Aston Martin DB4GT wasn't a great racing car. The history books will tell you that it won straight out of the box but was soon eclipsed by Latin rivals; that it was too heavy and abusive of its tyres to be a front-runner. It's a model that matters more because of what it led to – the critically canonised DB4GT Zagato and the mighty Design Project cars – than for what it actually achieved. As such, it's a relative footnote in marque history, you might argue.

However, when viewed in a studio, it's a different matter entirely. The car pictured here is arguably the most famous example, the much-campaigned ex-Moss, ex-Sears, ex-people who matter chassis 0151/R, still resplendent in the familiar indigo blue and white livery of Ecurie Endeavour, which fielded the car in period. It is truly striking, a glamorous alchemy of beauty and potency. But while the outline may appear familiar, that's only the half of it. This wasn't just a road car, it was a blunt instrument. A surprisingly versatile one, too.

Thanks to its reduced length and smoother nose the DB4GT's profile appears more taut and compact than a regular DB4. Touring of Milan's Federico Formenti created a sublime outline, retaining the regular car's elegance but infusing it with muscularity. The Perspex headlight covers, sizeable bonnet scoop and air intakes offer all the desired racer reference points, the reduction in length over the standard DB4 being mostly evident in the shorter doors. Much like a Ferrari 250GT SWB, the Aston's outline looks just as enticing denuded of bumpers and other trinkets as it does with brightwork. While it's easy to mistake it for a DB5 – the frontal treatment ensures this – the DB4GT undeniably has a character of its own. And dispel all thoughts of James Bond and Goldfinger; the DB4GT beat its descendant to the big screen, featuring in the wonderful Peter Sellers vehicle *The Wrong Arm of the Law*.

The Aston's cabin, by contrast, appears to be from another era altogether. It feels as hand-wrought as any Newport Pagnell product should. The outline of the ►



main instrument surround mirrors the shape of the grille, the classic white-on-black Smiths gauges proffering the desired old-school thoroughbred vibe. Three GTs received token rear seats in period, but with the boot packing a 32-gallon fuel tank and a full-sized wheel/tyre mounted on top, you really need the extra space for luggage. And while shorn of anything you might consider frivolous, what with this being a racer and all that, it really is a lovely office.

The DB4GT was conceived with the aim of maintaining the marque's relevance in the GT category. It would also double-up as a range-topper in the road car line-up. Chief engineer Harold Beach took the existing Touring-penned DB4, which had been introduced at the 1958 Paris Motor Show, and removed five inches from its wheelbase. The new variant retained the existing Superleggera (super light) method of construction, but here with a Rizla-thin 18-gauge magnesium-alloy skin rather than the regular car's 16-gauge. Other weight-saving measures included fixed Perspex quarter windows and frameless door glazing. Distinct from the 'lesser' DB4, the GT also featured a sleeker new frontal treatment that would become styling shorthand for subsequent Astons to the end of the following decade and beyond.

Beauty here was more than skin-deep. A new cylinder head was developed for the existing Tadek Marek-devised 3670cc straight-six, with two plugs per cylinder, timed by a pair of distributors, and the same 92mm bore and stroke. Triple Weber 45DCOE carbs were also added along with reprofiled cams (with different valve timing) in addition to a 9.0:1 compression ratio, polished conrods and other tweaks. The net result of all this was a useful hike in horsepower to 302bhp at 6000rpm, up by 62 over the standard car, although many marque experts claim this figure is at best optimistic: 280bhp would be closer, and even then only in racing trim. Transmitting the power to the road was a four-speed David Brown 'box, although contrary to popular belief this wasn't used only in the GT and Zagato. It had the same non-overdrive four-speed unit as a regular DB4, but with close-ratio gears. It was

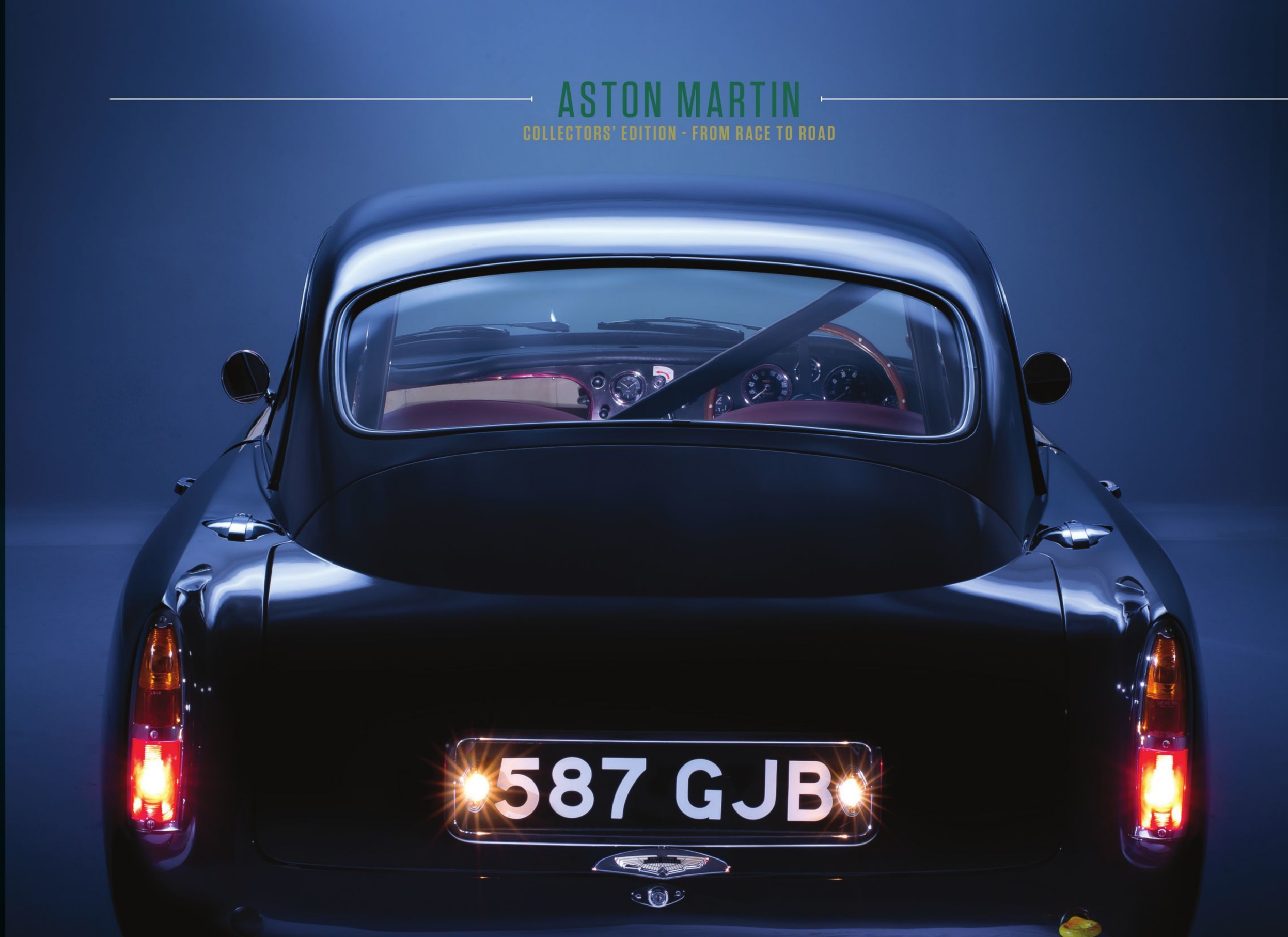


“THE RACE PROVIDED MOSS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY OF SHOWING JUST HOW FAST THE DB4GT IS”

allied to a twin-plate clutch and Powr-Lok diff. Save for revised spring rates and dampers, the suspension was carried over wholesale from the regular DB4, so unequal-length double wishbones and coils up front, and solid axle with a Watts linkage, parallel trailing links and lever-arm dampers at the rear. The rack and pinion steering was also carried over without modification. Bigger brakes – Girling discs front and rear – were fitted, although there was no servo assistance. However, despite being shorn of 185lb over the regular DB4, it still abused the scales at 2798lb.

The prototype, chassis DP199/1, was entered in the 12-lap Grand Touring Car race that kicked off the May ’59 International Trophy meeting at Silverstone. The car had yet to be homologated but, regardless, it was fielded for Stirling Moss against an assortment of four-door saloons and production sports cars, with only Roy Salvadori in John Coombs’ Jaguar MkII offering even token opposition. *Autosport* reported: “From pole position, Moss took an immediate lead in the DB4… There was considerable jockeying for position as the field swept under the bridge into Copse and, although no one actually shunted, there were many near misses. By the end of the first lap Moss had pulled out a considerable lead over Salvadori, and as they came through Woodcote the 3.7-litre Aston was very steady, while the smaller Jaguar was cornering almost on the door handles, accompanied by a characteristic ululant howl from it tyres… Moss continued to build up his lead, getting further and further away from Salvadori on each successful lap. He set up a record for the class on his third tour when he returned an electrifying time of 1min 55.8sec. Moss’s margin of victory over Salvadori was 16.8sec.”

A month later, the same car was entered in the Le Mans 24 Hours equipped with a 3-litre ‘six’ borrowed from the DBR3/1 sports-racer. Swiss privateers Hubert Patthey and Renaud Calderari were only the second driver pairing to retire from the race: while the factory DBR1s famously scored a 1-2 finish, the coupé ran its bearings just 21 laps in. Following the demise of his DBR2, Moss found himself back in a DB4GT during ►



the end-of-season Bahamas Speed Week. On November 29, he beat Salvadori's Austin-Healey 100S to take a class heat win in the Nassau Tourist Trophy.

The DB4GT had been unveiled in production-ready form at the Earls Court Motor Show a month earlier and its makers reckoned it was the fastest production car then on sale. What's more, while the horsepower figures may have been massaged a little, the factory's performance claims were more than mere PR hype. This was a graceful gentleman's express that could reach 152mph and complete the 0-60mph dash in just 6.4sec, with driver/manager Reg Parnell cracking 0-100mph-0 – for so long Aston Martin's promotional party piece – in just 20.8sec at the MIRA proving ground. He also set a personal best 0-100mph time of 14.2sec. This was just the ticket, therefore, for the moneyed amateur racer looking to trade in his workaday double-breasted pinstripes and bowler hat combo for a powder blue 'romper suit' and Herbert Johnson pudding basin helmet come the weekend.

And it would be left to amateurs – gentleman drivers in modern parlance – and privateer teams to maintain the marque's relevance in motor sport after Aston Martin officially withdrew from sports car racing at the end of the year. Save for its stop-start grand prix programme, its involvement in motor sport would, for the time being at least, be of the tacit variety. All told, 75 DB4GTs would be made, five 'lightweight' – or 'Build Sheet' in factory speak – DB4GTs being built in 1960. 'Our' car was one of them. Precise information about this run within a run for favoured customers remains sketchy. Chiefly, there is a degree of confusion about how much additional weight was saved and from where. It would appear that the quintet were built with the same gauge of aluminium skin as the standard GT, savings being made by means of drilling the chassis, installing ally floor panels and removing what little trim remained.

Chassis 0124/R was supplied new to Tommy Sopwith, who entered it in the April 1960 Oulton Park Spring Meeting, but it failed to arrive. Intriguingly, two other DB4GTs were due to compete in the same Closed



Car race and they too were no-shows. The Ecurie Endeavour car was then entrusted to Moss for the Goodwood Easter Monday meeting. The Aston was once again the dominant force over a field of saloons and small-capacity sports cars. *Autosport* reported: "The Closed Cars race was something of an anti-climax, providing Stirling Moss with the opportunity of proving just how rapid the GT DB4 is. Yet Roy Salvadori put up a splendid show with a perfectly normal Jaguar 3.8, and managed to keep ahead of Jack Sears in the Equipe Endeavour car, the blue 3.8 being stable-mate to the newly-acquired DB4."

And the DB4GT was rapid; demonstrably so. Sears drove the car – then registered AM400 – in the April '60 Aintree 200 meeting where it once again steamrollered the opposition. According to *Autosport*: "Sears, despite a somewhat juddery start owing to axle tramp, immediately took the lead and narrowly missed being rammed from behind by a Lotus Elite. He was chased by Dick Protheroe's veteran XK120, now with a 3.8-litre Jaguar engine, and John Wagstaff in a works Elite." He proceeded to "establish a clear lead, lapping in around 2min 15sec, to the horror of Tommy Sopwith who almost 'did his nut' in the pits, giving him various slow down signals".

A week on, Sears savoured further glory, this time at Oulton Park where he comfortably defeated Lotus Elite man Tommy Dickson in the GT race, despite the inconvenience of an unsecured bonnet obscuring the Aston's windscreen under braking. Then at his local Snetterton circuit he claimed his personal hat-trick and the Aston's fourth win on the trot: on May 22, 'Gentleman Jack' romped home clear of Lotus ace Chris Summers, the field including cars as diverse as an Austin A40 and a Daimler Dart. Just to rub it in, the DB4GT also collared its fourth consecutive lap record.

Fast-forward to the August Bank Holiday of that year, and Sears picked up where he left off at Brands Hatch during the BRSCC's Silver City Trophy meeting. While Jack Brabham would emerge victorious in the headline race for Formula 1 cars, Sears blasted the Aston clear of the opposition in the 10-lap ►



"SEARS LED FROM START TO FINISH, AND THE ASTON MADE MINCEMEAT OF THE LAP RECORD"

Wrotham Trophy opener. He led from start to finish, comfortably beating Mike Parkes in Sir Gawain Baillie's Lotus Elite (also entered by Ecurie Endeavour). And, just as night follows day, the Aston made mincemeat of the existing lap record.

There appeared to be no stopping the march of the Sears/Aston pairing. However, they faced fresh opposition on a return visit to Brands at the end of the month for the Kentish 100 meeting. Pitted against them in the Redex Trophy race for GT cars was Moss in the Rob Walker/Dick Wilkins Ferrari 250GT SWB; the same car in which he had vanquished the John Ogier/ Essex Racing Team DB4GTs of Salvadori and Innes Ireland in the Tourist Trophy – by a lap, while famously listening to Raymond Baxter's radio commentary of the race. In its TT report, *Autosport* unaccountably proclaimed that "From the result, the DB4GT can stand comparison with the Ferrari 250GT."

It couldn't. At Brands, Moss and the Ferrari were once again in a class of one. They came home first after 27 miles of racing at the Kent venue, some 18sec clear of 'Gentleman Jack' and the blue and white DB4GT. This result marked the end of 0124/R's front-line competition career, Ecurie Endeavour concentrating on its successful Jaguar saloon campaign to the end of the season ahead of a Ferrari and E-type campaign the following year.

The DB4GT's brief spell running at the front was over. Aston Martin pushed ahead with the Ercole Spada-styled DB4GT Zagato evolution, results for the existing car being somewhat mixed thereafter. Jim Clark and Bruce McLaren retired Ogier's entry in that year's Nürburgring 1000Kms, Ireland managing fifth in the Tourist Trophy aboard the same car.

Once its Ecurie Endeavour career came to an end, AM400 was re-registered 587GJB and passed through assorted owners, competitive outings being limited to a few hillclimbs and speed events. In the mid '70s the car was acquired by David Ham, a man better known for his spirited handling of a Lister-Jaguar. Ham raced the Aston on occasion before selling it to historics veteran John Harper, who in turn moved it on to Pink Floyd's

Thanks to Michaels at www.hexagon classics.com



manager Steve O'Rourke. In 1978, the car was dispatched to Richard Williams for sorting, the engine and gearbox being rebuilt (the twin-cam 'six' was reputedly producing 295bhp at this juncture).

The car was acquired by Hexagon Classics' principal Paul Michaels in 2005 via broker David Clark. The former F1 team chief then entrusted David Jack of Aston Engineering with preparing the car for competition, and has since employed a roll-call of past masters to steer it. The car's most memorable victory in historics – the Royal Automobile Club Tourist Trophy race for Pre-1963 Grand Touring Cars at the 2011 Silverstone Classic – was achieved by former Le Mans winner Richard Attwood and motorcycle GP racer turned touring car star Stuart Graham. "I consider it a great privilege to have been asked to race it," Graham says.

"I always found the car to be fun to drive, with pleasant and forgiving handling. The Aston Engineering team prepared it well. We had very enjoyable times with it, especially at Goodwood, which suited the car well."

Just don't expect to see this old warhorse venturing trackside any time soon. 0124/R retains its original coachwork and its keeper is keen for it to stay that way. Given the robust driving that has come to typify historic racing in recent seasons, and taking into consideration its seven-figure value, Michaels is no longer prepared to risk it in competition. The Aston is currently in the throes of being made more tractable: it will continue to be exercised, just not at ten-tenths.

While the DB4GT had its moments, its time in the limelight was fleeting. It may have been lighter than a regular DB4 but it was heavier than a Ferrari 250GT SWB – about 25 per cent heavier. It was driven by some legendary names from the period and won races, but few of any real consequence. But that's only part of it. This glorious machine has looks to die for and an engine note that could wake the dead. It's a GT car in the accepted sense rather than a competition tool with only token concessions to road-going usability. It's big-boned and brawny, but also intense and entertaining. It's everything an Aston Martin should be, and more. ■

That's what Aston Martin works driver David Brabham thinks of the men who won the 1959 Le Mans 24 Hours. As the DBR9's attack on the race gets ever closer 'Brabs' samples the victorious DBR1

"THEY MUST HAVE

writer **DAMIEN SMITH** photographer **MALCOLM GRIFFITHS**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JUNE 2005



BEEN CRAZY”


"I GET ON MULSANNE, FLAT OUT IN SIXTH, I CAN'T SEE A THING... NOTHING!"



What do you think of when you hear the words 'Aston Martin'? If you're under 40 James Bond might spring to mind. A little older and it's more likely to be the cars themselves: maybe the DB4 – so elegant, so stylish, yet so aggressive. If you're a touch older still, Aston Martin will go hand in hand with the phrase 'Goodwood on a summer's day', pea-green sports racers drifting through Madgwick driven by Roy Salvadori or Stirling Moss.

But whatever your age there is something else about Aston Martin. Something so very... British.

Dig a little deeper than first image association and eventually you will come to Le Mans. The 24 Hours was an obsession for the men of Feltham during the 1950s, a quest that became ever more desperate with each failed attempt. It was only at the very end of the decade, in 1959, that Aston Martin would be satisfied. Without that victory the marque's sports department would have been written off by history as a failure, despite the list of wins elsewhere. That's how important Le Mans was – and still is.

Since then 46 years have passed, 46 years of chequered road-car production, of small-fry privateer racing projects, of a brief return to Le Mans as a factory (in 1989 with the AMR1 Group C project). But now, finally, Aston Martin is going back to the 24 Hours. Not for overall honours with some alien, sculpted prototype. No – fittingly it's with a GT, in the same pea-green colours sported by DBR1/2, race number 5, in 1959.

The new DBR9's senior driver is only too aware of the heritage he will represent at Le Mans this June. And he's fair game for a taste of a vintage year: that very car on which the Aston Martin reputation is built. So can David Brabham, youngest son of Jack and crack sports car ace of the here and now, open his mind and transport himself back to Le Mans 46 years ago – to a narrow, tree-lined circuit that promised unknown dangers over every flatout brow? To a raw, thin-shelled car that left its vulnerable pilot utterly exposed? To a day-long race that would unnerve the bravest of souls in an era when courage was always a given? To a time when motor racing was still a true blood sport? "No," he fires back. "I can't imagine racing these things. Full stop."

Brabham's love affair with sports car racing and Le Mans had already begun when his grand prix dream ended after a traumatic season with Simtek in 1994. Having starred in TWR's Jaguars in '91, he made his debut at the 24 Hours with Toyota's potent Group C TS010 the following year. That first



experience would have put lesser men off for good...

"I hardly got any laps in practice because we had problems, so I didn't know the circuit or the car," he recalls. "My first stint in the race was at night– thick fog and it was bucketing down. I was sharing with Geoff Lees and before I went out I heard him tell the team, 'You guys aren't paying me enough for this.' Geoff was getting paid good money at the time, so I was thinking, 'Christ, it must be pretty bad.' On my first lap I didn't get out of third gear. I could not see a thing – nothing. All I saw were the white lines in front of me. I'm thinking, 'The pace car's got to come out, surely.' I finished the lap – no pace car, so on I go. I get on the Mulsanne, I'm flat-out in sixth, I can't see the barriers on either side, I have no idea if there is a slower car in front of me –I was shitting bricks!"

Since his harrowing debut, 'Brabs' has raced at Le Mans for two iconic British makes: with Jaguar he won the GT class in 1993 before the car was excluded; with Bentley in 2003 he finished second overall. Aston Martin completes a perfect set.

Le Mans is a race he adores, but one his father never liked. "It was one of his least favourite races," says David. "As far as he was concerned it was beyond dangerous, beyond the levels he could ever be comfortable with. I look back at his time and just think, 'Christ, they must have been crazy.'

Fortunately, conditions are dry at Silverstone today. That wasn't the case earlier this morning though, when DBR1/2's faithful restorer Tim Samways gave me the ride of a lifetime in the car, with a blast through the back lanes from his base near Bicester to the circuit. My hair still won't lie down.

As official media duties go, this is better than most for Brabham. Old Formula Vauxhall Lotus rival and regular DBR1 racer Peter Hardman offers him a passenger ride around the Grand Prix circuit to show him what's what. Surprisingly, 'Brabs' accepts, but is quick to warn Peter, "Don't show off." Peter ignores him and spins at Club Corner! ▶

Fortunately (for the sake of this article as much as anything), they make it back to the pits. Now it's David's turn. Time for a blast into the wheel tracks of the old man – for young Jack Brabham was an Aston Martin works driver himself. He played a part (eight laps) in Stirling Moss's epic Nürburgring 1000Km victory in 1958, driving DBR1/3. The wide open spaces of über-safe Silverstone in 2005 might not be quite a match for the old 'Ring, but no matter. The glorious six-cylinder rasps into life, David needs both hands to fiddle with the first gear lock-out mechanism, drops his visor, blips the throttle and pulls away.

A hat trick of Aston Martin wins at the Nürburgring was great, but it wasn't Le Mans. That was always the view of team patron David Brown. After so many disappointments, expectations were high in 1959.

A trio of works DBR1 s were entered for Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby (DBR1/2), Stirling Moss and Jack Fairman (DBR1/3), and Maurice Trintignant and Paul Frère (DBR1/4). Despite a lack of mechanical development, the cars had undergone a significant aero facelift. The bodywork at the front drooped part way over the wheels, the rear bodywork was raised and quick-release spats covered the back wheels down to the hubs. A plastic cover was fitted over the passenger seat to further aid airflow.

As far as Salvadori was concerned the biggest revision was the rerouting of the exhausts through the rear of the car rather than out beside the driver. He'd no longer get deafened, but he would get his feet burnt. "I used to wear boxing boots and I've still got the scars on my feet now," he says. "Really, those boots weren't up to the job. It was very painful throughout the race, but you just had to get used to it. You had to cope."

It wasn't a problem for Shelby– "I was wearing



asbestos driving shoes" – but he was still badly handicapped by a stomach bug: "I just drank Coca-Cola all through the race - I couldn't keep anything down."

The pair shared a philosophy on how to win Le Mans. Shelby: "Le Mans is a sprint race now. Back then it was a matter of attrition. We knew the engine and the brakes weren't strong enough to run fast all the way, so we relied on some luck."

But Salvadori adds it wasn't as simple as that: "We had to drive carefully because of our height. We're both over six foot and we weren't comfortable in the car. In any case, we couldn't have lapped as fast as Stirling – he was just in a class of his own."

Indeed. At Moss's request his car was fitted with a more powerful engine and he put it to good use, taking the fight to the faster Ferrari 250 Testa Rossas. From the start he took the lead, but was soon in a battle with Jean Behra's Ferrari, the darling of the French crowd typically on a mission after stalling twice at the start.

The battle between the lead Aston and the Behra/Dan Gurney Ferrari would end with Moss's retirement before 9pm. The oil pressure had dropped, the engine lost power and the car was retired. But as the Aston 'hare', Moss had done his bit...

Meanwhile, Salvadori and Shelby stayed out of trouble, keeping to a strict pace laid down by general manager John Wyer. They were by now lying third, Salvadori showing restraint as he ran in close company with lnnes Ireland's Jag D-type. The first problems for Ferrari occurred around midnight when the gear lever of Gurney's Testa Rossa came off in his hand. The car was also overheating after being pushed so hard early on and was soon out. One down...

The Aston led, but that would soon change: Salvadori hit trouble. A tapping sound developed ▶



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and he called into the pits to report. After a quick checkover nothing could be found and he was sent on his way, only for the vibration to return. Another stop, and again he was sent back out to slowly complete his 30-lap stint, at the end of which he could be refuelled. When the car was finally jacked up it was discovered that a large chunk of rubber was missing from the offside rear tyre.

Quite reasonably, Roy had suspected a problem with the gearbox, DBR1's Achilles' heel. Team manager Reg Parnell was unimpressed that Salvadori had not pinpointed the problem. "He was very sarcastic and it did annoy me," Salvadori says. "John Wyer was very good and smoothed things over, but we had lost a lot of time." Around 12-15 minutes had been wasted, as Phil Hill and Olivier Gendebien's Testa Rossa built a sizeable lead into the night. David Brown's dream looked to be slipping away once more.

"It's a bit of a culture shock," grins Brabham as he steps out of DBR1/2.

From those first moments trundling down the Silverstone pitlane he has left behind the mindset of 'David Brabham, DBR9 driver'. Everything he knows from his 10 Le Mans starts will prove utterly useless here. "You feel so exposed: the way the gear lever sits, the brakes, the lack of head protection – you feel vulnerable. But that all disappears as soon as you get out of the pits because all of a sudden you have to focus."

At least he has some previous experience to draw on: "I drove an ex-Duncan Hamilton Jaguar C-type at the Coys Festival a few years ago, so I had some idea what to expect.

"One of the things you notice is how much movement goes on at the rear. Going down the straight on full throttle these things don't have an awful lot of horsepower, but even so things are not as light as you are used to. You can feel the rear moving, but once you experience it you get used to it and stop thinking about it. In the corners you are constantly correcting, putting on and taking off lock." In other words, he's having fun.

The early morning rain has left the track damp, and with so many cars of varying speeds sharing the circuit Brabham has plenty to think about – not unlike Le Mans, in fact. But Silverstone is drying fast and Brabham grows in confidence as he pulls away for a second run. "We made a change to stiffen the damping and that did make quite a difference on the drier track," he says. "It was interesting to feel the change. Also, when you slide you learn that with too much angle the car just dies – it doesn't move forward. You can overdrive them pretty easily."

"In the corners you are not travelling that fast and you don't feel you're on edge that much. It's so forgiving you can really throw the car around. You can go in with a bit of oversteer or a bit of understeer – it really depends on how you want to do it."

So the key question: if the car is so forgiving, has Le Mans actually got harder for drivers over the past 46 years? "Difficult one to answer. I think perhaps it was harder then. Not so much physically, although you do work hard at the wheel in a '50s sports racer. The concentration levels would be the same, I reckon."

At 5am Hill and Gendebien held a three-lap lead over the number 5 Aston. Comfortable. Like Salvadori and Shelby, they had sensibly avoided the 'grand prix' duels of the early hours to run at their own pace. But still the Testa Rossa would prove fallible. Through the morning the water temperature rose and the oil ▶

pressure fell; Gendebien retired just after 11am.

Salvadori and Shelby were back in the lead, ahead of the sister car of Frère and Trintignant and well clear of any opposition. The dream of victory had been revived – but a DBR1 had never made it to the finish of Le Mans before... "This was the hardest part of the race," says Salvadori. "When you throttle back to save the car you hear all sorts of noises and you can lose concentration too. It was the most dangerous part of the 24 hours."

Time ticked slowly by. But as four o'clock approached Shelby kept on rolling and duly delivered David Brown his long-awaited victory. The boss was ecstatic, the rest of the team simply relieved it was over. Salvadori, nursing his burnt feet and a heavy cold, didn't even make the official presentation. "It didn't mean much to me at the time, I hardly thought about it," he says. "Now of course I'm very proud." For Shelby it was "the highlight of my career". A year later he would retire from driving after being diagnosed with angina pectoris, but that Le Mans win gave him clout back home as he turned his hand to becoming the most famous independent car manufacturer in the US.

As for Aston Martin, a shot at the World Championship was now on. At the Goodwood TT Moss would crown a wonderful year for the marque with a dramatic victory, taking over Shelby and Fairman's car when his own caught fire in the pits with Salvadori at the wheel. And the car he seconded? DBR1/2. Some race history.

Anyone who thinks Le Mans is easy these days compared to the past is surely fooling themselves. But David Brabham admits that some things have improved the Le Mans drivers' lot. "Two drivers a car – I don't know how they did it," he grimaces. "The cars might not have been so physical, with the loads and g-forces we deal with, but you have a lot less mental rest between stints with two drivers rather than three."

You could argue that the intensity of two drivers per car rather than three is cancelled out by the pace at which the 24 Hours is now run. When Moss ran in sprint mode in '59, few were surprised his DBR1 didn't last. These days that sort of pace is essential. "It's no longer just about driving the car so that it gets to the finish line," says Brabham. "Technology has come on a long way, with components lasting much longer, so they can be pushed a lot harder. We have to push more to the limit on every lap than they used to.

"Then again, you are only in sprint mode to a degree. You don't take the risks with passing that you might in a sprint race. If you hit another car you could lose a few laps in the pits, and to win Le Mans these days – whether it's a class or overall – you can't have problems. Once you could spend an hour in the pits and still win. Not any more."

So much has changed, so much time has passed



– it's almost incomparable. But not quite. The circuit has evolved: once it was simply long straights connected by five true corners: the Esses, Tertre Rouge, Mulsanne Corner, Indianapolis and Arnage. Now a left-right-left sweeper takes you under the Dunlop bridge (Brabham: "It's great, but I preferred it the way it was"); the Mulsanne Straight is broken by two chicanes, inserted for 1990; the Porsche Curves have added to the spectacle on the run from Arnage; and the Ford chicanes slow everything down before the start/finish line. But in spite of all this Le Mans has retained its character. Yes, there's more gravel run-off, more corners and the Mulsanne has been diluted – but it's still a great race circuit.

Le Mans remains rooted to its past. "I love it," says Brabham. "The thing is the atmosphere is probably still the same between then and now. There is something special about it, you can't really describe it – you have to feel it."

For men like David Brown Le Mans was always the biggest race. But there were so many great tracks and races to rival it in the 1950s. That's not the case now. Le Mans is an anachronism; still dangerous despite the changes, still the ultimate challenge – especially on a banzai qualifying lap. "Le Mans has remained unspoilt in a sense, which is why the atmosphere is still there," Brabham smiles. "It still has all the magic ingredients." ■

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ROAD TEST

ASTON MARTIN VANTAGE

At last, an Aston that appeals to both heart and head

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, OCTOBER 2018

When the history of Aston Martin is written, people will look back and name the DB11 as the car that started the most recent and, so far, most profitable chapter of this enigmatic brand. And they will be both right and wrong to do so. Right, because the DB11 marked the starting point of what is known as 'the second century plan' which has already turned around the long-term loss-making history of the company; wrong because it was conceived and underway before the current administration, led by Dr Andy Palmer, arrived in Gaydon.

So the first new Aston to be delivered in its entirety on his watch is the car you're looking at, the new Vantage. Palmer describes it as "The most exciting car that I've launched in my 34 years in the business."

It is, of course, derived from many of the same modules that make up the DB11, but when Matt Becker – the former Lotus chassis guru now responsible for determining the way every Aston drives – was recruited, not a single functioning ►

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Vantage existed. So, and for the first time, here is an Aston that is exactly as its creators intended it to be.

Longer in wheelbase, softer of spring and heavier too, with a turbocharged 4-litre engine and a conventional autobox in place of the previous Vantage's snarling normally aspirated 4.7-litre motor and its robotised manual gearshift, you might think this a gentler, more touring-orientated Vantage. Not so, say Becker and Palmer: despite the evidence to the contrary, this is a hard-core driving machine and far more sporting relative to the DB11 than was the old Vantage to the DB9.

To prove their point we've been brought to the wondrous Portimão circuit in the Algarve, where not only is the track available but also as punishing a road route as I've ever driven in a 500bhp sports car.

Make that 503bhp, from its Mercedes-sourced V8. Don't lament the lack of an Aston Martin engine in here – truth is Aston hasn't sat down to design an engine of its own from scratch in more than half a century, so let's park that thought and move on. The Vantage weighs about 1630kg, perhaps 20kg more than the last, which isn't much given it is a physically bigger car with twin turbos at one end and a big ZF autobox at the other. It also has an electronic differential with the ability to go from fully open to fully locked in the blink of an eye, and that weighs a bit, too.

The interior is plush but perhaps less so than you'd expect of a car costing £120,900, some £25,000 more than the car it replaces. Yes, its Mercedes architecture means it all works seamlessly and intuitively enough, which is an enormous step forward over the old car (I've been tempted to throw a brick at its operating system in the past), but there is too much recognisably parts-bin stuff in here, as there is in the DB11. It's spacious though, more so than the old Vantage, and to those of six feet in height or more that's going to be important.

Usually I'd prefer to familiarise myself with a new sports car on the road before trying to fling it around any track, let alone one as tricky and technical as Portimão, but today that is not an option. Literally three minutes after pressing the throttle for the very first time – the amount of time it takes to do a slow out lap, I'm driving it as fast as I am able. The engine may not snarl any more but, my goodness, it thunders. Aston has to take the motor off the AMG peg, but it can tune the exhausts itself and the engine sounds as wonderful as you could hope given it must breathe through turbochargers. And it makes the car feel fast too, faster by far than the old car – not just because it has an extra 73bhp, but mainly because it develops more torque at less than 2000rpm than its predecessor did at its 5000rpm peak. Given that this is the starting point for the Vantage and later models will have more power still, it's very promising.

The autobox works reasonably on the circuit, though is a little slow on the downshifts: track jockeys will definitely want the manual version Aston will announce later this year. But the stand-out feature is the chassis that offers exactly the right blend of involvement and stability. Outstanding grip is summoned from its Pirelli tyres, despite the fact they are standard Zeros (albeit developed specifically for this car) and not the track-orientated Corsa or Trofeo R versions, while the car's inherent balance and electronics keep it admirably neutral and accurate all around the lap. ▶

FACT FILE

ENGINE 4.0 litres, 8 cylinders, turbocharged
TRANSMISSION 8-speed auto, rear-wheel drive
0-62MPH 3.6sec
TOP SPEED 195mph
PRICE £120,900 **POWER** 503bhp@6000rpm
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Aston is quicker than the previous Vantage – and not just because of the extra power from AMG

Turn everything off and unsurprisingly it will slide freely at both ends. There's a little too much high-speed understeer for my liking, perhaps because it develops significant rear downforce at speed but still has a touch of front-end lift, but you'll need a circuit as devilish as Portimão to find it. For those who just want to skid about, few cars with this much grip were ever also this easy to drift.

Out on the road comparisons with the similarly priced, slightly heavier, but more powerful Porsche 911 Turbo are hard to avoid. Drive the Porsche hard for an hour or two and it will leave you dumbfounded with its point-to-point pace, and the Vantage never quite manages that. The Aston is quite a bit wider and much longer in the wheelbase, so it is less easy to thread down the road, less eager to angle into the apex and, with its engine up front and only two driven wheels, its traction is merely good rather than other-worldly. On the flipside it has a more intimate chassis feel, more communicative steering and provides its driver with more options just because you can overwhelm the grip in a way that's rarely possible in the 911. The Porsche is faster, the Aston funnier: you take your pick.

It's important to understand what Aston Martin has created here. There will be those who'll tell you that for whatever it's gained in performance and practicality, the turbos, automatic gears and too-obviously Mercedes-influenced interior of the new Vantage mean it cannot have the character of the old. It is not a view I dismiss. It doesn't have the same charm as its predecessor. But to me it's just different, not degraded. The noise is just as good, the performance, grip and on-limit behaviour far better. It is a more indulgent, more easily exploited and to my mind, therefore, a better driving machine. And you can fit into it and operate it as easily as a Mercedes-Benz, which for those who will use their Vantages every day is probably the best news of all.

"MY GOODNESS, IT THUNDERS. ASTON HAS TO TAKE THE MOTOR OFF THE AMG PEG, BUT IT SOUNDS AS WONDERFUL AS YOU'D HOPE"

The new Vantage is not perfect, but what Aston ever was? Its appeal to the heart is undiminished while its proposition to the head has been transformed. Enough to justify such an ambitious hike in its list price – and then some. ■

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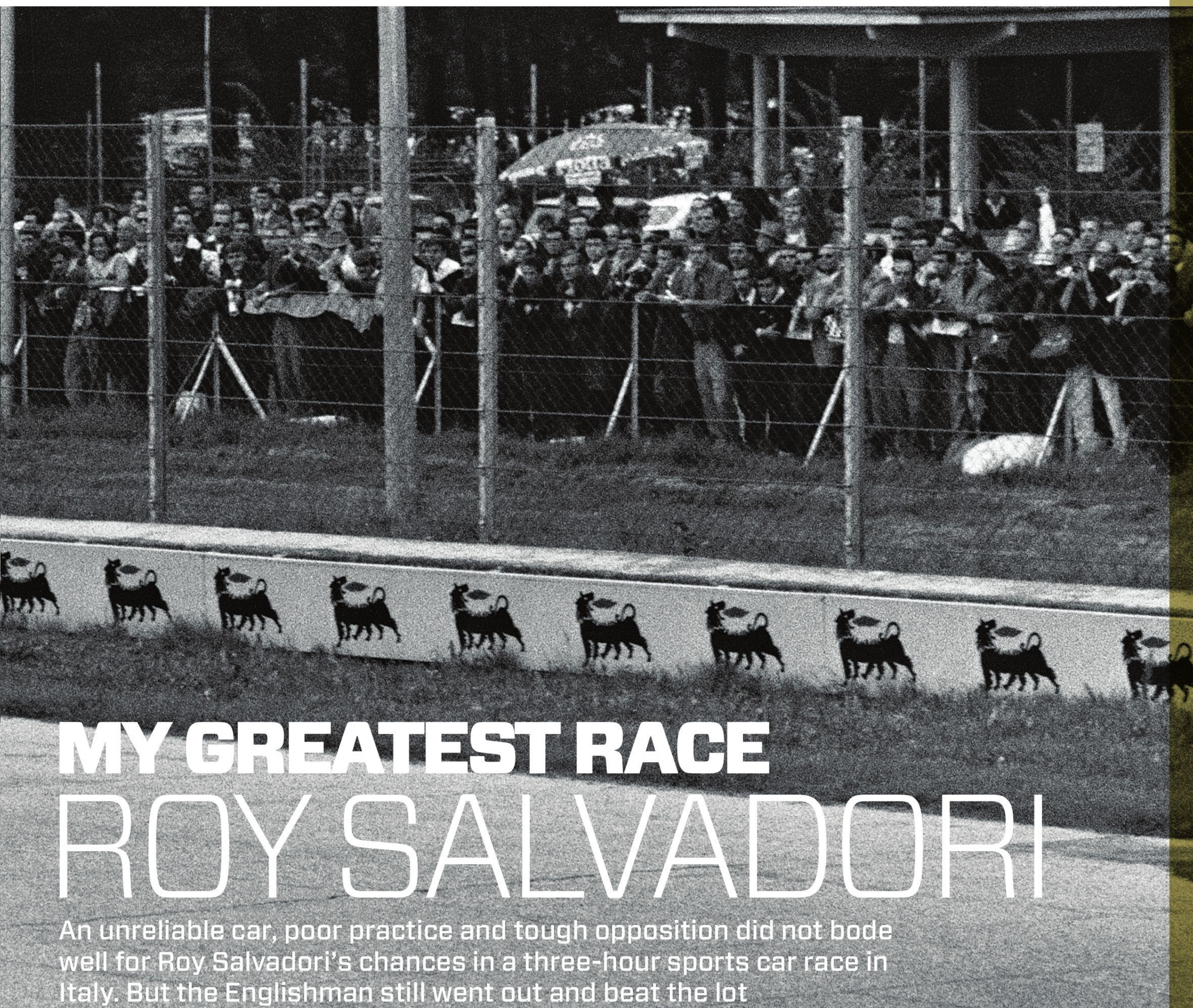
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Roy Salvadori wins the Coppa Inter Europa in a DP214 Aston just yards ahead of Parkes' GTO



MY GREATEST RACE

ROY SALVADORI

An unreliable car, poor practice and tough opposition did not bode well for Roy Salvadori's chances in a three-hour sports car race in Italy. But the Englishman still went out and beat the lot

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, APRIL 1998

Aston Martin played a very important part in my career. I drove for Astons for about eight or nine years consistently, and then they pulled out of Formula 1 and played around with the GT car. I drove with Jimmy Clark and Innes Ireland for John Ogier, which was really a works team, and I also drove with Jimmy in the Border Reivers car, which was always sponsored by the factory.

Then I had a lapse of about a couple of years when they weren't racing or they were only racing at Le Mans. It wasn't until 1963 that John Wyer said, "Look, we're getting the GT in sensible form, will you drive at Monza? It's our last race."

It was the Coppa Inter Europa, a three-hour race supporting the Italian Grand Prix, and I agreed to do it. So I came back to the team for a one-off after a couple of years away. Prior to that Bruce McLaren, Phil Hill and Graham Hill had driven the car, but it was breaking an awful lot.

We had very little practice, and that was in the wet. We hadn't shaped up terribly well, and the Ferrari GTOs were considerably quicker, at least three or four seconds faster. Although we knew we could go faster, that wasn't too encouraging. It was a very rushed effort and there was a lot of guesswork. We were very lucky with the gear ratios – John Horsman had a guess at it, and he was practically right, although we were over-revving.

With Astons, whatever we seemed to have, apart from the grand prix car, we had a maximum of 6000rpm. When I started with them on the DB3S it was 6000rpm and when I left them it was 6000 bloody rpm! John Wyer used to drum it into us that that was it. When you've got these long straights and you see the thing at 6000rpm virtually on the start of the straight, you don't want to look...

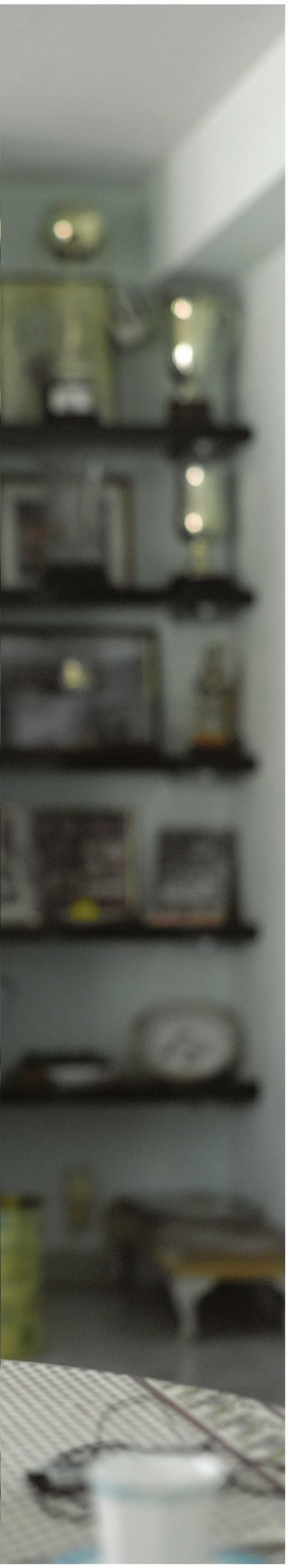
The race was just before the grand prix, and we did have quite a few of the drivers watching with interest. The lap times were very quick, and if you have a look you'll probably find that we would have been way up on the starting grid for the F1 race. [In fact Roy's fastest race lap would have put him 17th out of 28 in F1 qualifying. – Ed]

At the start Mike Parkes took off in one of the GTOs. Mike was a very quick driver. I think he could have given Stirling a run – he was a fantastic driver. Meanwhile I was worrying about the revs. We were meant to keep to 6000-6100rpm, but it was useless. I was touching 6300 on the straight down to Parabolica. It was the only place where we had the advantage over the Ferrari.

I didn't like using 6300rpm, so at first I was a little timid; then I realised that if I was going to tackle Parkes, I was going to have to use all my revs. Only then I was able to close up on him. We had a few seconds help from the pit stop, and then it was maximum revs the whole time – I wouldn't even look at the rev counter on the straight. And that just equalled out the performance.



Stacked trophies prove Salvadori had plenty of success, yet he rated his Monza dice with Parkes a career highlight





The Ferrari was quick on acceleration, and the only way we could tip him was at the end of the back straight. We could just sneak by, and then it was a matter of braking. But with my four-speed 'box I was clobbered, because with five speeds he would just pick me up and could overtake me just going over the finishing line. That was the three-hour worry – where could I lose him?

We were braking very late, but we were being very sensible with each other. It got to be a little close, and we would make signs to each other. Nice signs. I'd tell him when he could overtake, which side of the road I was going to hold. It's what we'd do sometimes; just let them know you'd leave it clear for them if they wanted to have a go although you were hoping that they wouldn't make it.

The lead changed many times, and I knew that if I could get him to put a foot wrong, and stop slipstreaming me, that I'd be first past the post. I had to make my move in traffic, but for some reason the Italians seemed to be behaving. I'd tried on or two occasions, and I think it was pretty obvious what I was trying to do!

On the particular occasion that I caught him on the hop, I made it look like I was going to follow them through. I backed off a fraction and then got on it again, and just managed to whistle past before he could.

I don't think it was more than about four or five laps from the end. I'd left it very late. In a three-hour race there's plenty of opportunity, and there were a reasonable amount of cars in the race. I thought I should have been able to lose him earlier, but at Monza you can pick up a tow from a quite a way back.

It was a nice, exciting win. When I crossed the line everybody got excited, and the Italian Aston Martin agent got so excited that he jumped off the pitwall and broke his ankle. Later in the season I got a trophy from the BRDC for the best performance by a British driver racing abroad, an ERA Trophy of some sort.

Another memorable person that weekend was Fangio. Jimmy won the GP and I won the sports car race, and he was very kind to both of us afterwards. He watched it and enjoyed himself. He was always a wonderful guy; we didn't speak his language but you could always communicate with him.

The funny thing about these races is that you'd never talk about them afterwards. You just go away from the circuit and immediately it's something in the past. I would love to have talked to Parkes, especially after this sign business, and said, "We had a jolly good dice." But never in those days did we have the opportunity. It was – arrive, do what you have to do, and then it was completely forgotten.

Looking back on it now, I think he may well have thought that I had something up my sleeve – "Roy's got all this planned out." In fact I was absolutely flat the whole time. I've got a copy of the report on the condition of the car at the end of the race. It was just about on its uppers. We only had a few laps left on the brakes, and a few laps left on the tyres.

The other thing I remember is David Brown saying before the start, "Well, if you win the race, Roy, you can have the car." I knew he wasn't serious! Mind you, in those days those cars weren't worth that much, but it would have been nice… ■

ASTON MARTIN AMR-1

A brave attempt to contest the Gp C field, the Protech project looked promising, until...

writer **MICHAEL COTTON**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JANUARY 1990

Victor Gauntlett looked the happiest man in the world at Brands Hatch on July 23, after seeing David Leslie and Brian Redman drive the Aston Martin AMR-1 to fourth place overall in only the car's third World Sports Prototype Championship race. Initially the Max Boxstrom-designed Group C car had not created a good impression on its first outing at Dijon in May, but the subsequent 11th place at Le Mans was better.

"But fourth! I never dreamed we could do so well, so soon" exclaimed Aston Martin's chief executive, who is also the team's keenest supporter.

Maybe he is the second-keenest supporter, because the title should go to Peter Livanos, a director of Aston Martin Lagonda Limited, who pledged £26 million to Aston's World Championship programme over a period of five years – longer in fact, than any other manufacturer has committed itself. Gauntleft and Livanos were side-by-side for an hour as they leaned over the pit rails at Donington in September, putting up with the thunderous noise in a way that some other motor magnates might avoid. ►


19
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GOODYEAR

Their interest is all the more surprising, perhaps, since they are minority shareholders in AML, with 12½ per cent apiece. Ford, the majority shareholder with 75 per cent, has spent no money at all on the racing project although, clearly, the principals of the team hope to have real support in the form of a 3½-litre engine in time for the 1991 season. Many people remember the Aston Martin Nimrod all too well, the privately sourced project having been born at the beginning of Group C in 1982, and abandoned with a terrible accident at Le Mans in 1984. It was overweight and underpowered, although Richard Williams and Ray Mallock, who were deeply involved, will not have it that the Nimrod was a failure.

Nimrod is, in any case, history. The AMR-1 was overweight, too, by 80kg when it first raced at Dijon-Prenois in May, and pressurisation of the oil tank gave the impression that it was a hazard on every lap. Testing had been badly hampered by a crash at Donington, the first composite tub being badly damaged in a crash that followed the loss of a wheel.

The omens were not, at that early point, very good at all, but it's necessary to remember how the red, white and blue Mobil-sponsored car was back in May, to understand how far it had progressed over the next three months.

"WE ALL KNEW IT WOULD BE BLOODY HARD, BUT IT WAS EVEN WORSE THAN WE EXPECTED. WE WORKED OURSELVES INTO THE GROUND"

"We all knew it was going to be bloody hard," says Protech's managing director and team manager Richard Williams, "but it was even worse than we expected. We worked ourselves into the ground; I feel guilty for the employees because we've done a year's development work in six months. "We have incorporated literally hundreds of modifications into the original design, some quite major, such as fabricating new front uprights because we suspected that the magnesium castings weren't stiff enough. We were right, because for the first time the Craner Curves at Donington were flat, which they certainly hadn't been before." Like Victor Gauntlett, Williams thrives on hard work. They are both regularly at their desks at 6am, Williams at the space-age Protech premises in Milton Keynes, Gauntlett a few miles away in the old-fashioned Aston Martin factory in Newport Pagnell. Both work until the day is done, typically at 8pm, and will work through weekends when the schedule demands.

"I love being the first into work in the mornings" says Williams, 43, who wound up his thriving Aston Martin restoration business to accept his new post at the beginning of 1989. "In fact, I'd hate it if someone was there before me. I've always wanted a job like this, and I sometimes can't believe it has happened."

Ray Mallock is Protech's engineering director, now responsible for all the development, and his twin priorities in the weeks after Dijon were to reduce the Aston Martin's weight and to improve the suspension characteristics. Just how successful he has been is indicated by the fact that chassis 05, which was completed on the morning of Donington pre-qualifying, was weighed at 906kg with steel discs, not carbon which would be 10kg lighter still, and the AMR was one of the best-handling cars on the difficult circuit, surprisingly qualifying faster than the nimble Spices. Another key member of the team is former journalist Michael Bowler, a director of AML, who is Protech's operations manager. The Aston Martin was designed by Swedish-born Max Boxstrom, who helped with the development of the Ecosse C2 car in 1986 when it won the World Championship for C2 Teams powered by the Metro/Rover V6 engine. In fact the Ecurie Ecosse connection has been very strong throughout, through drivers Ray Mallock and David Leslie, and manager Richard Williams. Now, Mallock represents Hugh McCaig and Ecurie Ecosse's 12½ per cent share of Protech.

On behalf of Ecurie Ecosse, McCaig approached Aston Martin straight after his team had won the C2 Championship and a year later he was awarded the contract, and a budget, to design and develop the AMR-1. The V8-engined car was ready to run at the beginning of December 1988 and was tested extensively at Silverstone and Donington, although generally four or five seconds off a decent pace. Suspicions grew that the car wasn't any good. and the Dijon performance didn't allay these fears. The write-off at Donington in March set the team back further than it was prepared to admit. Protech braced itself and paid the mandatory fine of $250,000 for missing Suzuka (they tried a plea of force majeure but that was rejected by FISA), and months of testing time was wasted.

"Morale got very low," Williams admits. "We lost wheels, crashed, lost oil, worked all-nighters… That's how it was for weeks on end. We really were in the fourth division when we looked at first-division teams like Mercedes."

Then on June 2 Prince Michael opened the spacious new premises in Milton Keynes (unusually there were no journalists present, "so it was a family affair which raised the morale a bit") and then the team went to Le Mans and got one car home in 11th place.

"It was our fourth place at Brands Hatch which did the trick," says Williams. "That changed everything overnight. Everyone's spirits picked up



A two-car finish at Donington in 1989, in sixth and seventh, helped erase memories of the bad testing crash there

tremendously, and suddenly we felt as though we'd shot up to the top of the second division. We haven't looked back since, and we know that next year we'll be of age, we won't be the new boys anymore." Boxstrom was clearly under great pressure at Dijon, and a few days later it was announced that he'd left the team to concentrate on his Dymag wheels business. "He took on too much," says Williams. "He thought that he could do both jobs on a part-time basis but it just wasn't possible. When it became clear that development of the Aston Martin would be a full-time job, and then some, there was really no choice." Both Williams and Ray Mallock closed their own businesses to work with Aston Martin, but for Boxstrom, Dymag was his first priority.

Development of the chassis has been far more intensive than that of the 6-litre four-cam Virage engine which has been the responsibility of Reeves Callaway in Connecticut. Starting with Aston Martin's 5.3-litre V8, Callaway increased the capacity and designed, developed and installed a chain-driven four-cam system to drive the 32 valves, releasing a lot more power.

Callaway Engineering was commissioned to produce the Virage engine for the latest road model, just into production, but Livanos and Gauntlett were not slow to realise its potential in racing.

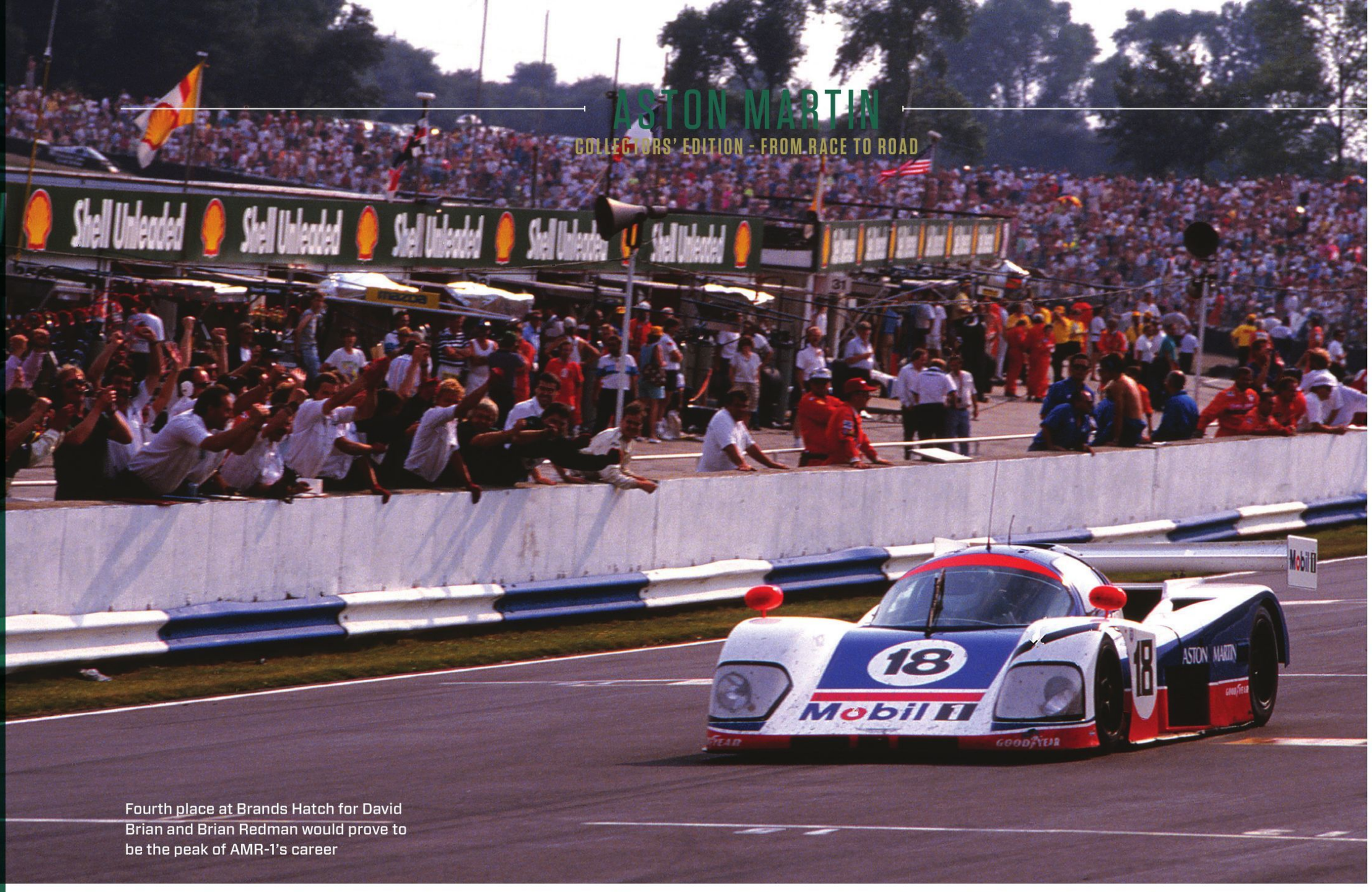
The 16-valve engine had developed a claimed 580bhp when prepared by Tickford (though Chuck Graemiger doubted that figure when he started his own preparation) but the 32-valve produces "over 650bhp" with credibility, and rivals on the track now find the AMR-1 fully competitive in all departments.

"I'm terribly pleased with what Callaway is doing," says Williams. "The engine has been very reliable and gives plenty of power. Up to Le Mans we wanted reliability more than anything, but since then Reeves has been concentrating on a 'Series 2' which we'll run in Mexico; we'll need it, at that altitude." The S2 will have more power, lower frictional losses and better economy, work having concentrated also on the cylinder heads, porting and camshaft timing, and on new mapping for the Zytek engine management system. The total weight of the 4-cam V8 is 500 pounds (226kg), about what one would expect when compared with the 240kg of Jaguar's TWR-prepared racing V12.

The most remarkable progression was seen on the AMR-1 between the Brands Hatch test days on July 5/6 and the race on July 23. On the test days, Michael Roe was unable to break 1:22 around the former grand prix circuit and was the unfortunate launch pad for the Toyota driven by Johnny Dumfries. Race weekend, however, opened another chapter for the hard-pressed Protech team as David Leslie qualified in 14th place at 1min 17.961sec, and both he and Brian Redman were able to race consistently at below 1:20 to a very worthy fourth place.

A complete transformation was seen in the Aston Martin team, and performances at the Nürburgring, Donington and Spa have shown that this wasn't a one-off improvement. Ray Mallock denies that everything was done in a fortnight. "Although the car looks similar on the outside, a huge amount of work has been done over a period of six months and there's no one thing that accounts for the performance at Brands Hatch. We have always believed in the integrity of the monocoque, in the whole car, but we started with safety-related problems, the crash while testing at Donington due to a wheel falling off, and then concentrated on aerodynamics and suspensions.

"We realised we had ample downforce but too much drag, which meant that we ran to a maximum of 212mph (341kph) at Le Mans instead of the 230mph (370kph) that we'd expected. There was too much kickback through the steering and the road holding was poor; we realised that the suspension travel was far too limited as the car had been designed for the perfect race circuit, which doesn't exist of course, one which has no bumps! ▶



Fourth place at Brands Hatch for David Brian and Brian Redman would prove to be the peak of AMR-1's career

"We had a suspension failure on one car during qualifying which was cured by a small modification, but there was a different failure on Brian's car on Sunday morning which involved more development work. Because of a wiring fire at the start of the race, David Leslie's car ran without a rev-counter, and that eventually resulted in over-revving and a bearing failure between numbers 7 and 8 cylinders."

The young Aston Martin team went for a finish with the car driven by Redman, Michael Roe and Costas Los, and was duly rewarded with 11th position in the classification. Since then the engine, thought to be 'bomb proof', has been looked at anew and modified: capacity has been increased to 6.3 litres from the original 6.0 and in tests at Donington, it proved to be 1.2 seconds a lap faster.

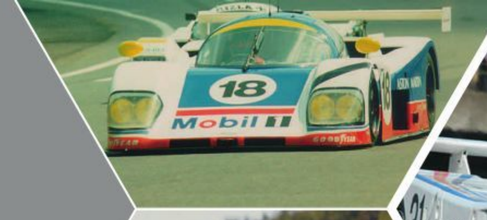
Generally the development work has concentrated on increasing the suspension travel, front and rear suspension geometries which have secured "huge improvements", a rear anti-roll bar has been added, and the entire spring rate/roll stiffness ratio has been developed. Although the placing of the water radiator across the tail, underneath the wing, is judged to be an interesting idea, it's likely to be located at the front of the car in 1990, in the interests of better weight distribution. One feature of the car is the special gearbox casing, designed by Boxstrom around Hewland VGC internals to maximise the underbody aerodynamics, and Williams is particularly warm in his praise for the transmission, which is "a great credit to Max".

Ray Mallock, who competed at Le Mans but claims not to miss being a racing driver, assumed overall responsibility for the AMR-1's development in May, but the search is being stepped up for a leading designer for the 3½-litre AMR-2 which must be ready by the end of next year, and the appointment has now become "a pressing problem".

David Leslie, Michael Roe and Brian Redman have already signed contracts for 1990, Redman though for a limited programme which will include Le Mans, and Williams is most anxious to get Stanley Dickens' signature after his drive at Spa. The future for Aston Martin's Protech team seems a lot brighter now than it did in the early months of 1989, when the euphoria of forming the team was soon replaced by a realisation of the task ahead. Realistically, Richard Williams admits that the AMR-1 has not been a potential winner, but believes that the S2 engine will make the car much more competitive in 1990. Above all, though, the team's sights are set on reaching the top of the first division in 1991. ■

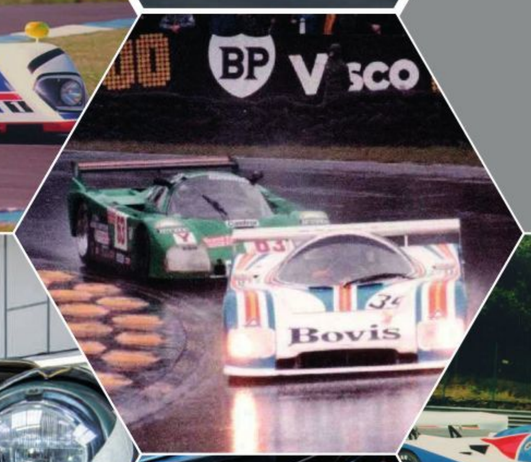
"THE FUTURE FOR ASTON MARTIN'S PROTECH TEAM SEEMS A LOT BRIGHTER THAN IT DID IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1989"



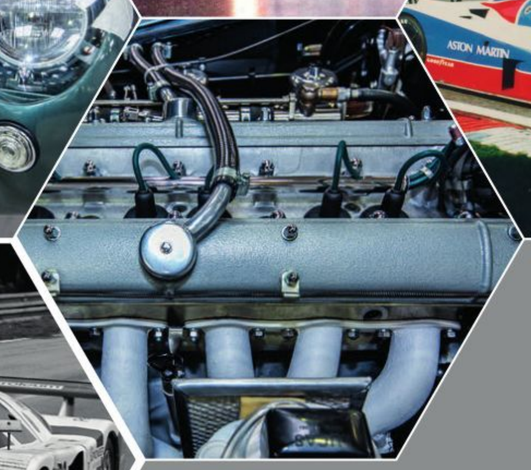








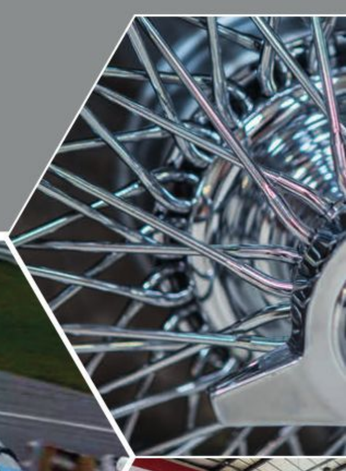




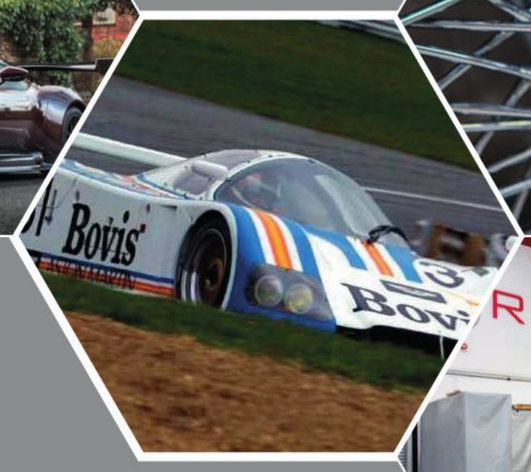




















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ROAD TEST

ASTON MARTIN DB2 DHC

An original road test from the *Motor Sport* archives

writer **BILL BODDY**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, FEBRUARY 1951



Ever since we took a short run in one of last year's Le Mans Aston Martins we have been eager to road-test the production version of this technically absorbing car. An opportunity arose when we had the memorable experience of using the prototype drophead coupé to cover the Exeter Trial and for some subsequent fast motoring. In writing of a car so superlative it is difficult to know where to begin. You see, the DB2 merits praise under so many headings. It is exceedingly fast, capable of 115mph. The engine is never very hard-pressed, yet is exceptionally smooth, willing and durable, the road-holding, steering and handling out of the ordinary, the comfort factor high, yet this DB2 will amble along at 10mph in top gear. It has such a foolproof gearchange and such light controls that any 'bobby-soxer' would get the hang of it in a few miles, and experienced drivers can hardly help averaging at least 50mph over longer journeys. A superlative machine.

The engineers responsible have been wise in selecting a WO Bentley-inspired 2½-litre engine, for this provides remarkable performance. Similarly, the choice of a closed body is sensible, because open two-seaters have but limited appeal to the world's markets and aerodynamically the closed model offers greater performance, albeit the drophead coupé Aston Martin makes the best of both worlds.

The DB2 inspires confidence at first acquaintance, but some miles go by before its full significance is appreciated, for at first it is difficult to believe that this softly-sprung car will handle safely at speed. When derestricted roads are reached first impressions need to be hastily revised, for the handling qualities are really superb, and the more remarkable because the car is so well sprung, while very few automobiles will reach the seventies, eighties and nineties so rapidly and unobtrusively.

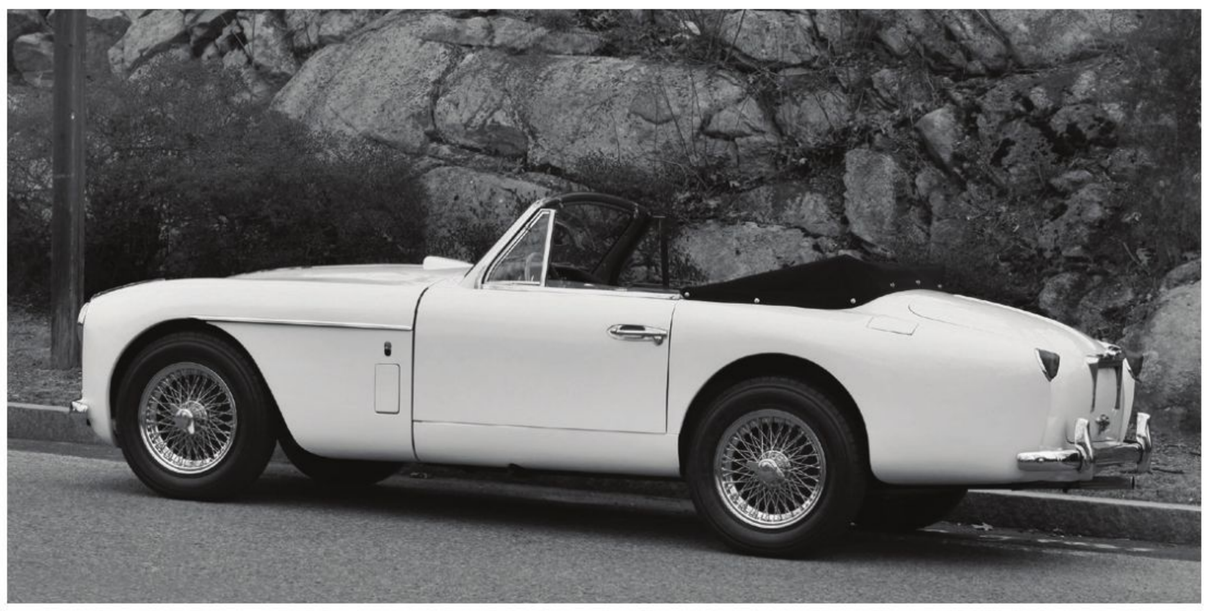
Perhaps speed is the aspect that should be dealt with first. The 'century' has a strong fascination, and writing this shortly after driving the AM at 100mph over slippery roads, we are more than ever willing to admit this. In top gear the highest speed recorded was a genuine 109mph, though it is from 50 to 100mph that the surge forward is quite remarkable — and useful, emphasising the outstanding facility for regaining a high cruising speed following a check. On the other hand, the DB2 will run down to 500rpm and pick up cleanly, the power coming in at 1500rpm or just over 30mph, so that grandpa can go motoring to quite some purpose with only a modicum of gearchanging.



consequence driving it is an epicurean pleasure.

If the modern Aston Martin is imposing in action it is a very covetable possession even when stationary, for it has that unmistakable air of good breeding that characterises the high-quality British car. The beautifully contoured aerodynamic body is built, upholstered and finished at Feltham, its doors shut firmly and the bucket seats are deep and comfortable.

The DB2 is advertised as a two- to three-seater and you can either carry the 'odd man out' on the front seats or on the un-upholstered luggage shelf behind the seats. Headroom is limited in the latter position, though this 'emergency seat' is not impossible. However, providing they know each other reasonably well there is no objection to placing two slim passengers beside you, even when the optional central gearchange is fitted. Once the reverse-alligator bonnet is opened the engine and suspension are laid bare in a quite immodest manner. The good aerodynamics of the body are confirmed by the absence of noise, air leaving the radiator via grilles on each side of the scuttle, on which the vulgar might be tempted to strike matches. There are small but deep door pockets, a visor to shield the driver's eyes from dazzle and another for his lady to powder her nose in, side and folding central armrests and twin fuel fillers beneath lockable flaps in the tail. The only serious criticism we have is that a certain amount of rain entered the body, but it must be emphasised that this was a prototype; we are confident that elimination of leaks will be of the highest priority at Feltham, where many practical motorists are numbered among the development staff.



The steering column gearchange is one of the best of the stalk-pattern gearchanges we have tried; equally certainly we prefer the beautiful little central remote-control gear lever that is available as an alternative. Quite as impressive is the DB2's handling. The thin-rimmed three-spoke wheel is decently geared, and though the width of the bonnet diminishes faith in one's ability to get through restricted places, the accuracy of the steering restores much of it. The supple suspension is well damped and, by some magic we do not profess to understand, the Aston Martin engineers have endowed the car with well-nigh perfect cornering and roadholding characteristics. That such splendid road-holding has been achieved with coil springs so soft that the nose dips under braking must be rated one of Feltham's greatest achievements. Corners can be taken at 'racing speeds' even on snow-bound surfaces, and this DB2 must rank as one of the safest cars it has been our good fortune to try. In

FACT FILE

PRODUCTION (DB2, 2/4, MKIII) 1951-59
POWER 105-190bhp
0-60MPH 11.2sec
MAX SPEED 109mph

Perhaps the best way of summing up the DB2 is to say that it offers the performance, stability and joy of motoring associated with the sports/racing car, while remaining a completely docile, comfortable, practical and economical high-grade touring car. These qualities have been so skilfully blended in the DB2 Aston Martin that to the layman it becomes a veritable 'magic carpet', ideally suited to shrinking the motor roads of Europe. The enthusiast expresses the matter more briefly, terming the DB2 "a real motor car". With both sentiments I heartily concur. ■

GLORIOUS AMBITION

Aston Martin's Project cars were intended to return the company to the forefront of GT racing. We drove a recreation of 214 at its spiritual home, Goodwood

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL** photographer **IAN FRASER**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, SEPTEMBER 2007



Sometimes things just don't turn out as they should. If you had been in the grandstands at Le Mans one lap into the 24-hour race of 1962, you'd have had every reason to believe you were witnessing the birth of a new and glorious era for British sports car racing in general and one of its most revered marques in particular. For out of the chicane, past the pits and into the curve that led to the bridge came Graham Hill's Aston Martin with the rest of the field – Ferraris, Maseratis, Porsches, the lot – nowhere.

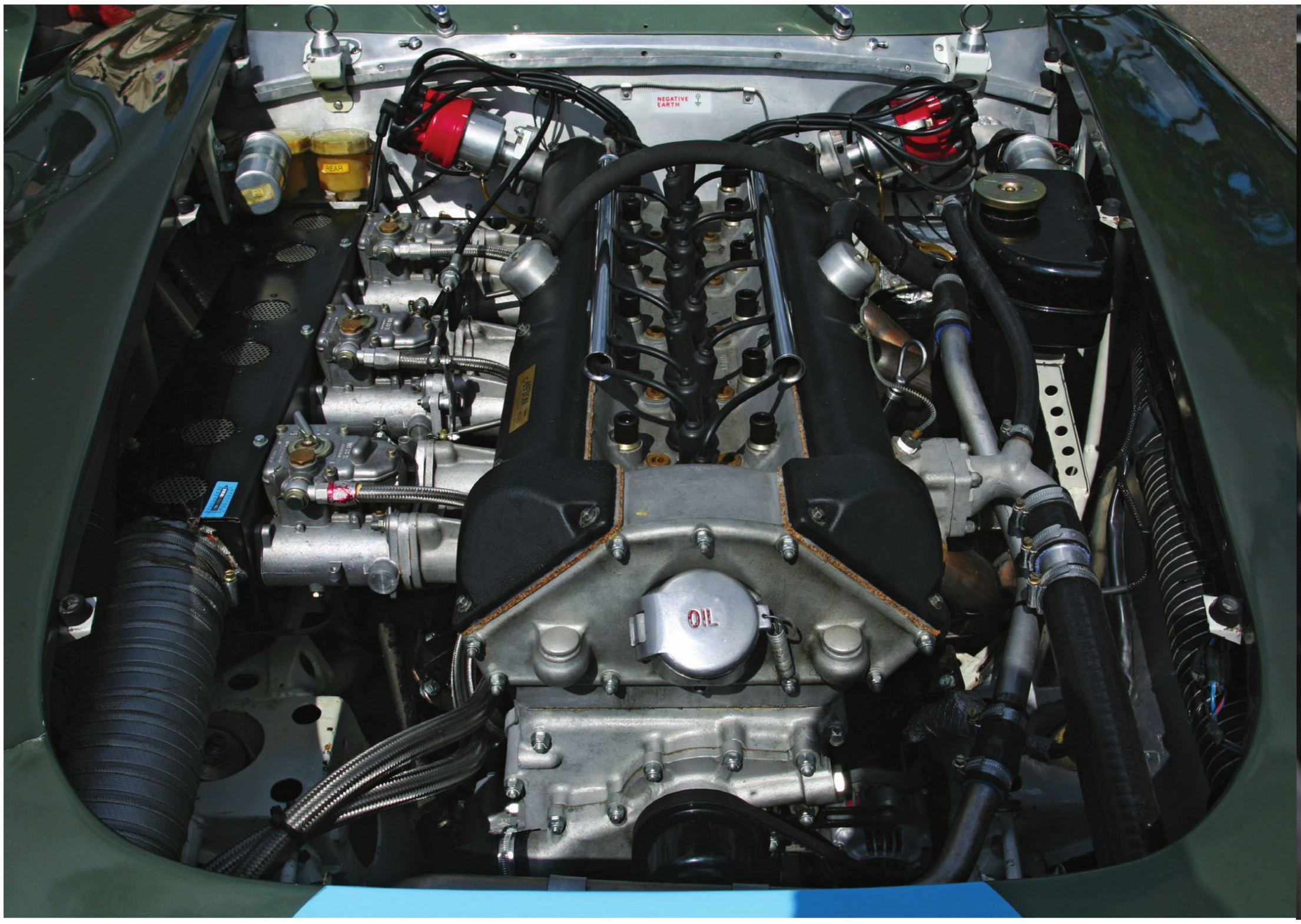
It was not to be. Although there was one shaft of light at the end of the dark tunnel that is the story of the Aston Martin Project cars, the general thrust of this tale is that which seems so often to define the British approach to sporting endeavour, one that ends with that all too familiar ache for what might have been and even what should have been, rather than what actually was.

Hill was driving Aston Martin DP212, a nomenclature that followed standard Design Project prototype naming policy at Aston Martin. Known alternatively as Project 212, the car was an experimental toe-dip back into the murky waters of racing abandoned after the world sports car championship and Le Mans win three years earlier and prompted by the knowledge that racing at the weekend helps you sell in the week.

John Wyer, coming to the end of a 13-year stint at Aston Martin, said in Chris Nixon's *Racing With the David Brown Aston Martins*: "We built the Project cars under pressure from our dealers, particularly our man in France. He was very anxious for us to go back to Le Mans and many other dealers around the world felt that a successful racing programme – even a limited one – would make it much easier to sell Aston Martins."

Project 212 was, in essence, a heavily modified DB4GT, fitted with a de Dion rear axle and, as the regs permitted, an engine bored out to four litres. But for all its power (quoted outputs vary between 310 and 345bhp), even the skill of Hill and co-driver Richie Ginther could not hold the lead at Le Mans for long. Something was far from right with the aerodynamics, causing significant rear end lift on the Mulsanne straight; and ▶





while it held onto second place for some time, a cracked oil pipe put it out for good with three-quarters of the race still to run.

But it had done enough, just, to suggest that there might be a way to take the fight to Ferrari's 250GTOs, which had become the dominant force in GT racing. For 1963, three more Project cars were built, two DP214s to run in the production class and a single DP215 prototype. Although all three possessed broadly similar bodywork, these later cars presented a more concerted effort to catapult Aston Martin back to the forefront of long-distance racing. The 214s and 215 had lighter box-section chassis as well as longer and lower bodywork with kicked up, abbreviated tails to keep air from lifting the back of the car. They were forced to abandon the 212's de Dion rear end for the 214s because of the GT class regulations, while the 215 boasted a dry-sump engine and a DBR1-based transaxle that was great in theory but, in the end, was to prove its undoing.

They duly appeared at Le Mans for 1963 with Wyer at least sure "that all three cars were perfectly capable of winning the race". The cars went well in practice, becoming the first to be timed at over 300kph on the Mulsanne, but once more race day would not work out as planned. Both 214s had been fitted with cast rather than forged pistons. Bruce McLaren, sharing with Innes Ireland, led the GT class until piston failure at 60 laps while the second car, driven by Jo Schlesser and Bill Kimberley, worked its way up to third overall before its pistons wilted, 10 hours in. The 215, for which so much had been hoped, didn't even make the third hour before the transaxle failed, despite the skilled and sensitive hands of Phil Hill and Lucien Bianchi at the wheel.

Schlesser tried again with 215 at Reims, but the transaxle meant he kept missing gears and eventually bent the valves. Things looked briefly better when Innes Ireland put a 214 on pole for the Tourist Trophy at Goodwood but, as he put it: "I thought I had the race in the bag, but the bloody scrutineers made us run on narrow rims which destroyed the Aston's handling." The pictures of Innes in various comically lurid drifts and slides suggest he might be right. At least the 215 finished this race, coming seventh after one too many spins.

And then came Monza, or more precisely the Coppa Inter-Europa three-hour race before the Italian Grand Prix. Both 214s lined up against no fewer than eight 250GTOs and a brace of E-types. Wyer was leaving Aston Martin at the end of the season and it was the last chance for the Project cars to do what they'd promised and beat the Ferraris. And, at last, one of them did.

Bianchi came home an almost unnoticed third because of the battle at the front between Mike Parkes' GTO and the lead 214, driven by Roy Salvadori. Despite racing Ferraris, Lolas, Coopers, Astons and Connaughts at grand prix level and winning Le Mans in 1959, this is the race he claims as his greatest. For the entire second half after the mid-point pitstops, Parkes, a Monza specialist, and Salvadori were locked



Twin-cam straight six now offers 380bhp; controls are heavy but handling and power more than compensate

in such a titanic struggle that, according to Roy: "For lap after lap just tenths of a second separated us and the excited Italian crowd must have thought we were taking it in turns to lead past the pits." Salvadori also had the crowd on his side, it having been erroneously announced that he was Italian.

The Ferrari had better acceleration, the Aston a higher top speed, so Parkes would overtake out of the slower corners, only for Salvadori to come past on the straights. It took a back-marker to break Parkes' tow and resolve the race in Aston's favour. But that was it. Wyer left and the cars were sold. The project was over.

Forty-something years later, I'm being strapped into a Project 214 in the Goodwood pit lane. Yet it is neither of the cars that raced in period but, instead, a painstaking recreation of the original that allows its owner Wolfgang Friedrichs to race it hard without fear of damaging irreplaceable history. He does this so that Project 212, which he also owns, is preserved for really important events such as the Goodwood TT and Le Mans.

Unlike some cars that come to *Motor Sport* for track testing, this 214 is not a museum piece, but a hard-edged, highly developed racer that's been on the podium for the last three Spa 6-Hours races, winning outright in 2005. It's perhaps a little quicker than the original but only because modern technology has liberated more reliable power from its twin-cam, straight-six motor – about 380bhp, according to Friedrichs. But while the cockpit of, say, a racing DB4GT Zagato is clearly related to that of the road car, the environment of the 214 is purely for competition purposes.

The engine fires at once with that familiar Aston bark and, at noise-restricted Goodwood at least, it's quieter than you'd think. You'd expect an achingly heavy clutch, but the throttle is hefty, too. What's more, the steering wheel is some distance away, forcing me to drive with my arms near straight. I suspect this test is going to become quite physical.

After one lap to learn how it all works, I squirt it out of the chicane in third and am at once impressed not just by the sheer power, but its accessibility. There appears to be fat wads of torque everywhere and while the engine is apparently entirely safe to 7000rpm, there seems no point at all straying beyond 6000rpm. With an all-up weight of about a tonne, acceleration is of the relentless variety. It pulls 6000rpm in top down the back straight at Goodwood with space ▶

"LAP AFTER LAP JUST TENTHS SEPARATED US; THE CROWD THOUGHT WE WERE TAKING IT IN TURNS"

to spare on gearing tailored to give a top speed in excess of 160mph. Predictably, the noise is magnificent.

Given the age of its design and the location of its engine, you'd not expect it to sniff out apexes like a bloodhound chasing a scent, but it flicks into corners like something altogether lighter and younger. It's not dainty but as David Clark, who shares the car with Friedrichs, says: "It's a car without any vices. You can just get in and go hard."

He's right. You have to be smooth with it, particularly when braking in something other than a straight line, and become acclimatised to the heavy controls, but once you do you can break the back loose with confidence and drive it on the throttle as its maker intended. The stiff throttle makes heel and toe down-changes – which are essential to avoid locking the back axle – more difficult than they should be but otherwise it feels sufficiently reassuring to encourage a modest level of commitment through the corners, even after only six or seven laps of Goodwood.

"MIKE SALMON LOST IT AT MAGGOTTS AND LED THE FIELD TRAVELLING BACKWARDS ALL THE WAY TO BECKETTS?

Whether the original 214s were like that or whether Colin Blower Motorsport has further refined the handling characteristics is another matter. Michael Salmon has probably spent more time racing Project Aston Martins than anyone else alive and ran both 214s in 1964 after they'd been sold by the works, before becoming a serial winner of historic races in Project 212 in the '70s. "I always reckoned the 214s were slightly quicker than 212, but trickier to drive, particularly when it was wet when the de Dion axle gave 212 a distinct advantage," he says.

In a 214 at the International Trophy at a soaking Silverstone



in 1964, Salmon broke the GT lap record in practice in one of the 214s, headed the field through Copse, lost it at vast speed at Maggotts and "led the field, travelling backwards, all the way to Becketts". He rejoined in 27th yet finished second, only six seconds shy of Graham Hill's 1964-spec Maranello GTO.

Tragedy then struck when Salmon and Brian Hetreed took the 214s to the Nürburgring for the 1000Km race at the end of May. There was a thunderstorm in practice, Hetreed lost control and, as was too frequently the case at that track, it cost him his life.

That accident halved the 214 population. While it has been suggested elsewhere that parts of the car were salvaged and even that the wreck was rebuilt, Salmon's is just one of several authoritative voices that maintain the car was destroyed, and he should know. Certainly Clark and Friedrichs are particular about making no claim to the historical identity of that 214.

The surviving 214, the Coppa Inter-Europa winner, now resides in Simon Draper's collection, while 215 is in the hands of Genesis manager and historic racing stalwart Tony Smith. As mentioned previously, 212 is in Friedrichs' care and still raced to this day.

It's very easy to knock the Aston Project cars. Call it another example of the too-little-too-late approach peculiar to a surprising number of Aston-badged endeavours over the years and you could be thought more cruel than unfair. Yes, had the 214s' pistons been forged rather than cast, they might have won Le Mans or at least their class. But they weren't and they didn't. In racing you cannot live in the 'what if' world.

Even so, I think we can now afford to think more kindly of these cars that have been adding a dash of colour, a sense of occasion and no small measure of speed and beauty to grids for more than 40 years. Fact is, on the only occasion when one did not succumb to mechanical malady or sheer bad luck, it beat the finest GT car of its era on its own turf. It was not just John Wyer's last race at Aston Martin but would prove to be the last by a true works Aston for more than 25 years. It must have meant a lot, not least that the Project cars could go out as they had come in: leading from the front. ■



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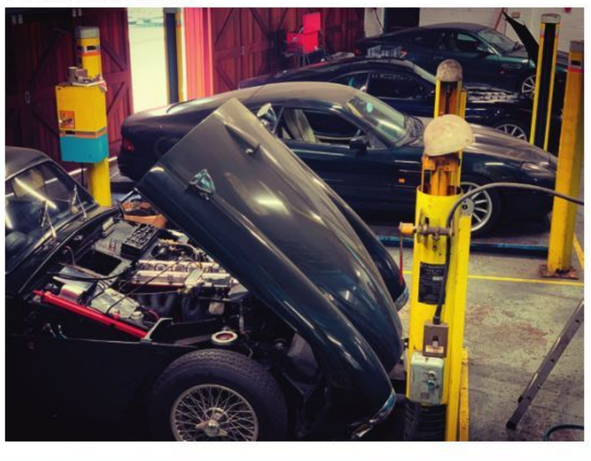
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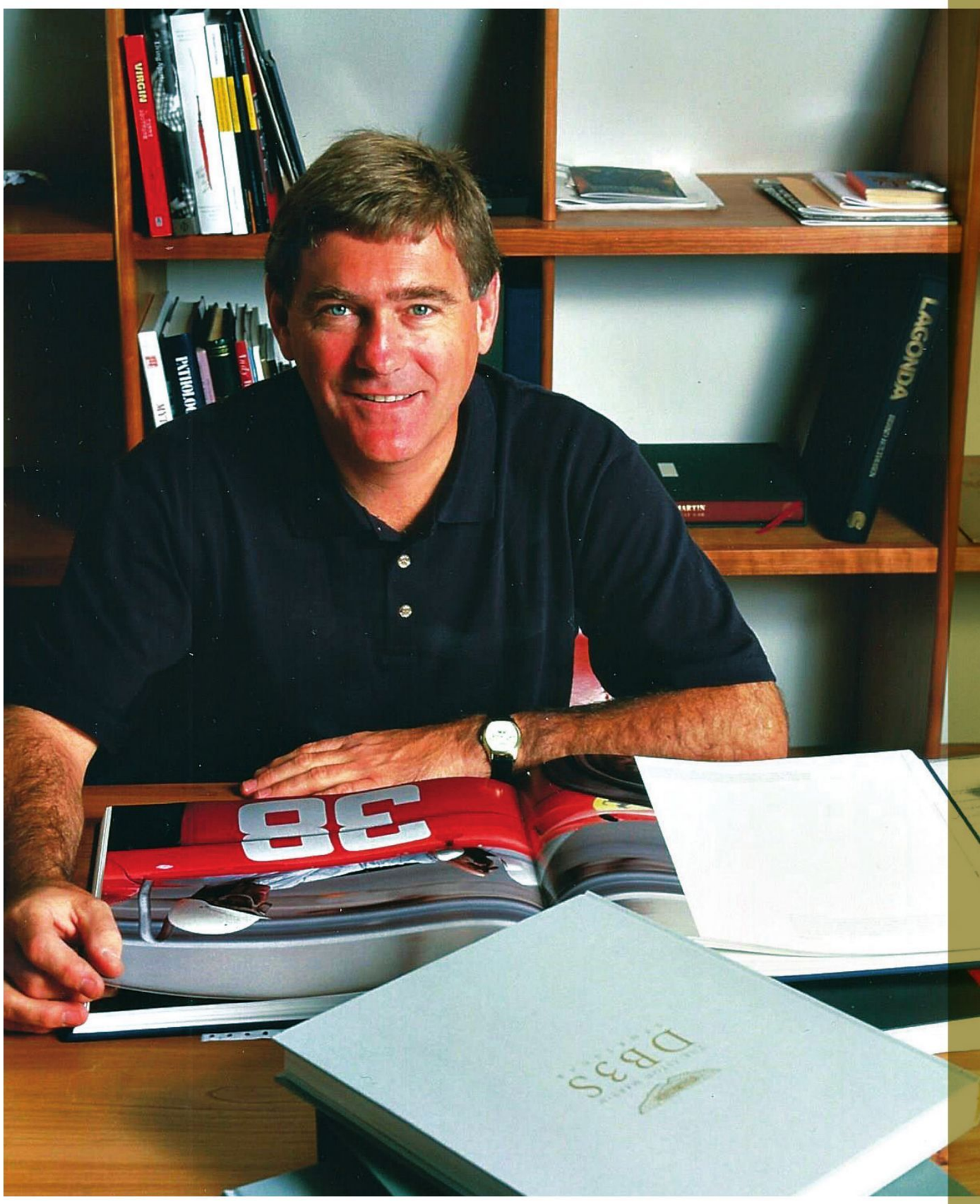
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SIMON DRAPER

A man with the world's best collection of Aston Martins and the force behind the Palawan press

writer **GORDON CRUICKSHANK**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, SEPTEMBER 1997



If you see an unusual Aston Martin at a race, chances are the entrant will be Simon Draper. His collection is the biggest and quite possibly the most complete single-make grouping of any marque. But after some years racing old cars, he has turned his attentions to publishing books about them, creating some of the most lavish and expensive volumes ever seen.

Cars made an impact on him while growing up in South Africa, when his schoolteacher father would often take him to the Roy Hesketh circuit at Pietermaritzburg. But it was at his prep school that one marque in particular made an indelible impression, when another pupil turned up in an Aston Martin DB4. Having finished his degree at Natal University, Draper came to the UK in 1970 to pursue his other interests, music and English literature, working 'temporarily' at his cousin Richard Branson's fledgling business. Twenty years on, he was a director of Virgin, and chairman of Virgin Records, one of Britain's most successful music firms, handling, among others, Phil Collins and Mike Oldfield.

Virgin discouraged the usual company-car status race, and Draper ran practical Volvos, Saabs, and Audis, until a short-wheelbase Quattro Sport caught his eye. "It was hugely practical; I did long Continental trips with the children strapped in the back."

Not so his next machine, Lancia's riotous 037 rallycar, daft but exciting as London transport.

When Virgin was floated in '86, Simon indulged his Aston penchant with a V8, which he still has. "It's just about the best car I have; it gets better and better." But the race bug had bitten, thanks to Nick Mason. "Nick had become a good friend through the music business, and he gave me a ride to Silverstone in his GTO. It was wonderful." He joined the AMOC, and had his first race in '91 in an Ulster. It began a period of intense racing "sometimes four races in a day" which brought his name to prominence as the breadth of the Aston collection he had quietly amassed became apparent. Not only did it include the highlights – DB3S, DBR1, DB4GT Zagato and the DP214 prototype – but his commitment to the marque extended to resurrecting one of the streamlined Type Cs and restoring the unique 1940 Atom experimental saloon.

Words and music: Draper switched from records to producing lavish luxury books on cars – and birds

He pursued Astons with the same thoroughness that he collects contemporary art, but there are ▶



Draper, here with DB4GT racer, began competing in an Ulster and has remained faithful to his beloved marque

diversions too: he has a weakness for Bristols, Lancias and for Zagato coachwork, and one of his joys is a Lancia Hyena. Ever seen one? Probably not. Zagato constructed just 25 a few years ago, clothing its Integrale platform in a svelte coupé body to make a pulse-raising road car. He bought the only remaining Bristol 450 from Tony Crook, and runs a modified Bristol Blenheim day-to-day.

Now, however, glossy paper occupies more time than chrome-plate. When, in 1992, Draper and Branson sold their interests in the Virgin Music Group to EMI, Draper chose to concentrate on a new project, publishing the finest books possible on selected subjects. Palawan Press began with *Aston Martin – The Compleat Car*, which stunned the market by its quality and £750 price, and has stuck to the same formula of the best at whatever cost. If you contrast this with Virgin's image of low price and no frills, Draper is quick to correct you. "The original mail-order business and the airline took that approach, but Virgin Music always went for top quality, the best artists and good packaging." Certainly Palawan's productions are unique among car titles, not just for their excellent photography, layouts and the writings of acknowledged experts, but for their goatskin bindings, numbered brass cover plaques and four-figure prices. But there is usually a cheaper option, cloth-bound at £200 or £300, and remarkably, says Draper, it's the expensive ones which sell out.

"WE HAVE A HARDCORE WHO WILL BUY THE EXPENSIVE VERSION. THE HARD PART IS KNOWING HOW THE CHEAPER ONES WILL SELL"

The costs would horrify Sir John Harvey-Jones. Palawan is really only Draper and Stephen Navin, who contract photographers and writers, briefed with Draper's vision. As with Astons of old, the books are in danger of costing more to make than they sell for. "I'm happy to cover our costs," he says. "We have a faithful hardcore who will buy the expensive version of the next book. The hard part is knowing how the cheaper ones will sell."

It's the opposite of the usual story; mainstream titles have a sales burst, with discounts to dispose of the run. The Palawan titles, on the other hand, are hardly impulse buys. They aim to be the best, so any historian or marque lover will want one; but because of the high production costs there are no discounts. They sell steadily but not in a frenzy; good news for hesitant collectors but not for cashflow. This doesn't tempt Draper to alter course: "Like the music business I trust my own judgement; I don't try to predict what the public want."

After the success of *Ferrari in Camera*, a stunning pictorial history, he will this autumn publish the autobiography of photographer Louis Klemantaski, to be followed by a Bristol history by LJK Setright, and the Dick Seaman story, all commissioned from acknowledged experts.

"*Ferrari* has been our biggest success, but I think the DB3S book is our best so far," says Draper. "But it cost too much to make. I'm considering a two-tier approach, perhaps cheaper editions with smaller pictures around the same text. We'll see." Before that, though, Palawan's most lavish work arrives, and it's nothing to do with cars. *The Atlas of Rare Pheasants* reflects Draper's interest in rare birds and has taken four years to create. Another of Draper's passions, modern art, has resulted in a uniquely short-run edition of Julian Barnes' novel *Evermore*, hand-illustrated by artist Sir Howard Hodgkin.

All this means that Draper races less nowadays. "It takes too much time to stay competitive." The cars compete regularly in others' hands, and the Aston Martin name remains Draper's chief focus; hence two books on Zagatos and Ulsters due next year. And, in case you were wondering, a Palawan is a rare peacock pheasant from the Philippines. ■

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BEAUTY AND THE

The DB3S is one of Aston Martin's most underappreciated racers. It's now time for it to claim its place as one of the company's all-time greats

writer **ANDREW FRANKEL**

photographer **JAMES MANN**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, DECEMBER 2016

There may be more exciting things you can do with a steering wheel in your hands than guide an Aston Martin DB3S around Goodwood, but few are more satisfying, fewer still that make you feel more lucky to earn your living this way. It is true that the DB3S was not suited to every circuit at which it raced and we'll get to the reasons for that, but as the car flows over Goodwood's crests you could easily be convinced that this car was made for this track, and vice-versa.

You don't need me to tell you that the DB3S is beautiful. To me its Frank Feeley body is the best of an era that provided a greater concentration of heart-stoppingly beautiful sports cars than any other: Jaguar D-type, Maserati 300S, Ferrari 750 Monza… the list is long, but while the Italian shapes were more sleek and the Jaguar's more interesting, the DB3S tops the list for sheer, simple beauty.



BEST

Even among Astons, it is hard to beat. Improving the preceding DB3's flat-faced shape was perhaps not difficult, but not even the far more successful DBR1 was drop-dead gorgeous like this. But that's not why it's here.

It's here because to me the DB3S has as good a claim to being the most important Aston Martin racing car as the DBR1. That I concede is some statement, given that it ranks the DB3S alongside the only Aston to win Le Mans outright and the World Sports Car Championship. But if you look at where Aston Martin was before and after the DB3S, its contribution is clear. Before the DB3S Aston Martin had never won a premier league sports car race, its best cars only ever contenders for class wins at the really big events. The DB3S not only delivered that big win, but also took second at Le Mans three times in four years.

What's more remarkable is that the DB3S was derived from the DB3, Aston's first purpose-built racer, a car designed and engineered so conservatively as to be deficient in almost every area: weight, power, suspension configuration and aerodynamics. What a largely unsung hero of the sport did in taking that unprepossessing raw material and turning it into a car that made Aston Martin a credible force in global motor sport for the very first time should never be overlooked. The DB3S was the car that gave Aston Martin the confidence that it could cut it with the best, and that confidence enabled Aston Martin to go further still with the design of the DBR1, the car that finally delivered Le Mans and the title.

"It's a car that really has everything," says classic car dealer Peter Bradfield, who has brought DB3S/2 to Goodwood today and recently sold another non-works car. "It looks beautiful, sounds beautiful and, as you are about to find, out, is pretty beautiful to drive." As one of just 11 factory cars and with Peter Collins ▶


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among its former owners, its value can be estimated in the many, many millions of pounds.

The DB3S happened because, as Aston's period competition manager John Wyer recalled, "We weren't happy with the DB3; it was too big and too heavy and had been rather disappointing." It had been designed by Dr Eberan von Eberhorst, whose pre-war reputation as the developer of the D-type Auto Union spoke for itself. But Aston Martin was a very different organisation and it's fair to say that a shoestring budget and Wyer's demands to get the car finished did not sit well with the methodical Eberhorst, any more than did its twin-cam engine, originally designed by WO Bentley for Lagonda. His natural caution and Auto Union experience caused him to select heavy-gauge chassis members onto which a large unattractive body was bolted in traditional style. When the car was finished it was late, overweight, underpowered and unreliable. So it fell to one Willie Watson, a senior designer who'd worked for Bentley before the war, to find a solution.

I've always thought it a shame Watson's work merited no more than a single letter appended to the original name, for to think of the DB3S as merely an optimised DB3 is to misunderstand it completely. And unlike the DB3, the 'S' was done in quickly: five months from presentation of concept to a running prototype. The engine (now expanded to three litres), gearbox and front suspension survived the transition, but the rest of the car was new. Lower, narrower, shorter and with a chassis made from lighter gauge steel, it featured new sliding block rear suspension and a light alloy final drive. Feeley's bodywork was aerodynamically stable and also efficient in ejecting hot air from the engine.

The result was clear from the very first Monza test, Peter Collins lapping about 4sec faster than the DB3 had ever gone despite having no more power. It also gave the distinct impression of being more reliable than the DB3. For the first time, it seemed Aston had built a car that could compete with the world's best.

"The car was more than good enough," says the voice on the end of the telephone, "but its engine never had the power to do the rest of it justice." I'm talking to Tony Brooks who, with Sir Stirling Moss, is one of only two drivers alive to have raced a factory DB3Ss regularly in period. "It was lovely to drive: strong, balanced and competitive on circuits where power was not a priority, but at places with long straights, all you could do was sit there while Ferraris, Maseratis and Jaguars went flying past."

The car's first big win came in its first year, at the Dundrod Tourist Trophy in Northern Ireland. Facing three fully developed factory Jaguar C-types, one with Moss on board, the car of Collins and Pat Griffith won, with Reg Parnell and Eric Thompson's DB3S second. By contrast all three Jaguars suffered transmission problems, two terminal, the third sufficiently serious to restrict Moss to fourth.

Coming right at the end of its first season, the omens for 1954 could scarcely have been better, but that promise was not matched by results. According to Wyer, it was "A complete disaster. The principal reason was we tried to do far too much with far too little." Le Mans provided the perfect example: Aston entered four DB3Ss, two with gorgeous coupé bodywork, and a V12 Lagonda. The Lagonda crashed first, then both coupés had accidents caused by their appalling aerodynamic instability, while the two open DB3Ss succumbed to mechanical failure. In the world championship, a single third place in Buenos Aires for Collins and Griffith was the only result of note.



"THE CAR WAS MORE THAN GOOD ENOUGH BUT NEVER HAD THE POWER TO DO THE REST OF IT JUSTICE"

But 1955 was far better. The DB3S became the car to beat in domestic sports car racing, winning at Silverstone, Aintree, Crystal Palace, Oulton Park and, best of all, the Goodwood Nine Hours. Internationally, the first of those second places came at Le Mans, albeit courtesy of the withdrawal of the Mercedes-Benz team after the infamous accident. Back at the Tourist Trophy, a DB3S was first car home behind the three rampant SLR Mercedes, and ahead of factory teams from Maserati, Jaguar and Ferrari.

As could be expected given this was its fourth season, by 1956 the light of the DB3S had started to fade, partly through age, partly because Wyer and his team had switched focus to the DBR1 with its lightweight spaceframe construction. But the 3S still came second at Le Mans and won its class, was still formidably competitive at home and was still beloved by all who drove it; but was no match for more modern, lighter Ferraris and Jaguars with their bigger, more powerful engines.

So just how successful was the DB3S? Given where it came from and how little money was available relative to that spent by other factory teams, I think it did just fine – and there are statistics to back it up. In Chris Nixon's superb *Racing with the David Brown Aston Martins*, Wyer put it like this: "In four seasons as a front-line factory racer, the DB3S started 35 major races and scored 15 outright wins, 13 seconds and 7 thirds." Not a bad record for a car born out of an older, failed project.

And one of those victories belongs to DB3S/2, whose chassis plate is worn by the car you see here. ▶

Simple, clean, uncluttered cockpit matches car's philosophy. Later twin-plug head added useful bhp

Crashed on its debut by Reg Parnell at Le Mans in 1953, it nevertheless went on to win the Goodwood Nine Hours later that summer and come second in the Tourist Trophy. But the following year Parnell crashed it again, this time heavily on the Mille Miglia, and its chassis was scrapped, and its body bolted to another DB3S. But, as was common practice in the day, its chassis number was simply transferred to a new works car, the one before you now. It was raced as a works car at Dundrod by Collins and Griffiths, where it retired with final drive failure, but it came second at the Aintree International, beaten by less than 2sec by Masten Gregory's monstrous Ferrari 373MM with an engine half as large again. It was then bought by Collins, who managed to race it five times in 1955, always finishing, and on the podium at both Oulton Park and Snetterton.

Being an earlier car, it comes with rounded curves and not the 'Gothic Arch' edges that became a feature of later works cars. Its engine has the twin-plug head that arrived in 1954 to raise power from a wholly insufficient 182bhp to a still scarcely adequate 225bhp. When you consider that the SLR Mercedes and big V12 Ferraris were beyond 300bhp, you have some idea of what the little Astons were up against. As its life as a works car ceased in 1954, it correctly lacks the disc brakes that appeared in spring 1955.

"WITHIN A COUPLE OF LAPS IT'S CONVINCING YOU YOU'RE NOT A MIDDLE-AGED HISTORIC RACER BUT A SUPERHERO"

Incidentally, when discs became available not everyone liked them, Collins in particular insisting his car stayed on drums.

It is wonderfully uncomplicated to drive. Bradfield explains the starting process – flick a switch and press a button – and the old twin-cam straight six spins into life, happy to idle evenly at 1100rpm. It's a lovely sound, not symphonic like a Ferrari, nor hard edged and brutal like the Mercedes, but sweet, smooth and reassuring.

The cockpit is straightforward, too. It's reasonably spacious for what is actually quite a small car, far more roomy than a C-type Jaguar for example. It's dominated by a huge Jaeger rev-counter flanked by the usual scatter of minor Smiths instruments. The gearbox has just four speeds, laid out in a conventional H pattern, with reverse safely tucked



away back and to the right. Bradfield has already warmed it through for me and time is short, so there seems little point in hanging about.

The engine note hardens as it sucks air through its trio of 45mm Weber carburettors, exuding a certain steeliness as you accelerate towards a conservative 5500rpm, but never quite resorting to the savagery exhibited by some race engines from this period to which modern tuning methods have been applied. It feels entirely standard, as it should, but quick enough probably to trouble one of the warmer modern Porsche 911s in a straight line.

I've been told the brakes are poor but, on a circuit with many high-speed straights and curves to keep them cool, they work well for a car of this performance and vintage.

But a DB3S is all about the corners and while I've driven Ferrari, Jaguar and Mercedes sports racers from this era, from entry to apex to exit the Aston is the best balanced and most communicative of them all. Moss used to complain about the DB3S lifting an inside wheel and losing power, but I expect he was driving them rather differently. To a mere mortal it is simply sublime: it turns in with the merest hint of understeer and, if you like, will tackle the whole corner in this safe and secure stance. But what it's actually inviting you to do is lift a touch just to tuck the nose back into the apex before adding judicious amounts of power with your right foot. In a less classy car, this would wrench the back loose and you'd be flailing as you tried to contain the slide. Instead the DB3S flows gently from mild understeer to gentle oversteer. This is its natural state.



Not the fastest sports-racer of its era, but a delight to handle over a sinuous circuit

The problem is that within a couple of laps it's well on the way to convincing you that you're not just a middle-aged historic racer, but some kind of superhero. The temptation to make like Peter Collins and start drifting it around at more than 100mph is very evident.

But I'm not Collins and this is not my car: it's a near-priceless jewel. I can see as clearly today as it must have seemed in the 1950s why the DB3S was never going to mount a consistent challenge to the fastest sports cars in the world, but almost a lifetime later none of that matters.

Visually the car is a work of art, and as a driving machine it is something more even than that. I hope I have spelled out its importance, too. As Brooks said to me: "If you could have put the engine and gearbox from a Ferrari into an Aston Martin, the result would have been the greatest sports car of its time." As a man who raced sports cars for both factory teams in the 1950s, his perspective is not only unique but, I suspect, spot on too. ■

ASTON MARTIN

COLLECTORS' EDITION - FROM RACE TO ROAD





“WE DIDN’T JUST TALK ABOUT DOING LE MANS, WE ACTUALLY DID IT”

Robin Hamilton took Aston Martin back to La Sarthe in the 1970s and ’80s, but works support ultimately worked against him...

writer **RICHARD HESELTINE**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JULY 2011



Robin Hamilton at his *Grand Designs* house – another novel, ambitious project

The rolling Derbyshire countryside before us stretches as far as the eye can strain, the murky months of spring doing nothing to dampen our host's enthusiasm. Robin Hamilton is outlining his most recent endeavour: a house-build on this very plot. Even in its embryonic stages you have to marvel at the sheer bravery of his scheme, much of the thinking behind its construction being highly original. No wonder, then, that it will ultimately be immortalised on the small screen in Grand Designs. It may be a world away from motor sport, yet this project is very much in keeping with his apparent go-it-alone ethos. First and foremost, this former racer knows his own mind.

"You either have the balls to do something or you don't," he quietly intones. "Having said that, I look back on our first attempt at Le Mans in 1977 with a range of emotions, including horror. I don't know how we did it with what we had; so much could have gone wrong." That year, Hamilton's plucky equipe claimed 17th place overall with a car that began life in 1969 as an Aston Martin DBS V8. 'Le Petit Camion', as the locals dubbed it, was an unlikely racer, but it made perfect sense to Hamilton: making the improbable probable was a central theme in his competition career. That initial bid followed a raft of equally left-field projects and would also lead to him becoming a constructor in his own right. Hamilton was following a long-term plan and anticipated the road ahead would be cratered with potholes.

"YOU EITHER HAVE THE BALLS TO DO SOMETHING OR NOT. BUT I LOOK BACK ON LE MANS '77 WITH MIXED FEELINGS, INCLUDING HORROR"

"As a child I played with Meccano and blew myself up with chemistry sets," he smiles. "Then I discovered motorcycles. At 16 I was dealing in them, but what started me off was an Ariel Red Hunter. It was crude but I had this idea to develop and race it. I wanted to take something unsuited for a purpose and make it suitable. By the time I'd finished it could hold off a Manx Norton at Brands Hatch."

Fast-forward to the dawn of the '70s when Hamilton was facing an unsure future: "After school I did an engineering apprenticeship with the Rolls-Royce aero division and became a service engineer. Then in 1971 Rolls-Royce went bust. I'd built up a side business dealing in sports cars – many of them Astons – so I began concentrating on them. I became an official service dealer three years later and a distributor in 1977. Our place just outside Burton-on-Trent was a real Aston emporium but there was no swank. We just struck a chord with people who liked what we were about.

"From the outset I wanted to do more than buy and sell, so I developed my own DB4GT for club racing. It was a great way of promoting the business but it gradually became more serious so we decided to race something else." Robin Hamilton Motors' weapon of choice was the DBS. "Even though it was unsuited to being thrown around it had an engine we knew intimately, so we set about developing that and the rest of the car." Bolstered by decent results in clubbies, Hamilton naturally set his sights on Le Mans. Unfortunately, Aston was undergoing one of its periodical downturns so factory involvement was mostly encouragement-based. "They took a lot of interest in our aerodynamic studies at MIRA. I remember saying they should do a special high-performance 'Le Mans replica', but that fell on deaf ears. Then the Vantage appeared, which was the double of our car!

"It went through a number of physical reiterations, too, some of which were ghastly, but we were learning. I remember one phase where it had huge downdraught carbs jutting through the bonnet – spectators loved it.

Ours wasn't a big company; when you develop a car in public they will see all sorts of things. We knew that in some quarters we'd be slated, but I'd already begun formulating a plan for a purpose-built racing car."

Hamilton hoped to compete in the 1976 24 Hours, only to be scuppered by a budget shortfall, although he persuaded SAS (a manufacturer of riot gear) to back his bid for '77. Now bearing the chassis number RHAM1 (Robin Hamilton Aston Martin), 'The Muncher' (its internal moniker, coined because of its appetite for brake discs) made its international debut at the Silverstone Six Hours in May 1977. Sharing the car with Hamilton was former autocross star Dave Preece, who spun it into the catch fencing at Becketts during practice. Still, they were running in the top 10 during the first two hours of the race before the diff overheated and flambéed the oil seals. Then came Le Mans.

"We arrived a few days early and completed building it in the paddock. The French thought we were crazy but they loved the Britishness of it all. The organisers, the ACO, may have turned a blind eye to a few indiscretions as the name Aston Martin still struck a chord with fans. We had all sorts of dramas in qualifying and just squeezed in, although the team was shattered from all the night



sessions before the race began. The event itself went well. We ran out of brake discs but Dave, Mike Salmon and I adapted and the old car kept on going. The engine never missed a beat.

"Afterwards there was genuine enthusiasm for what we had done. The press had written us off before we got to France so the sense of achievement was amazing. We were third in the GTP class but had we run in Group 5 we would have been second. We felt a sense of achievement but it didn't make us complacent – it was just a step forward in our plan. So-called experts said the car was too heavy, which was obvious, but as Aston specialists we couldn't very well race a Porsche. There were certain features we couldn't trim down while staying within the rules. The only option was more power, so turbocharging was the way ahead. We set about it ourselves, and at times we were getting 800bhp or more, but the heat build-up was immense. We couldn't afford a proper intercooler system so I knew we were on thin ice.

"We missed out 1978 and did the '79 six-hour race at Silverstone as a shakedown for Le Mans. Derek Bell drove the car with Dave Preece and myself. We were thrilled to have him on board and Derek put in some good lap times. He said it was the only car that could reel in the Porsche 935s on the straight. We were getting more experienced and I still think that when we chopped down the roofline we made quite a mean-looking car. It was done for aerodynamic reasons although we found we then had too much downforce at the front. It was hard work to drive and not as fast as it could have been. It overheated and melted a piston early on in the 24 Hours, and that was that. We did one more race [Bell joining Hamilton for the 1980 Silverstone Six Hours] but by then we were concentrating on what became the Nimrod."



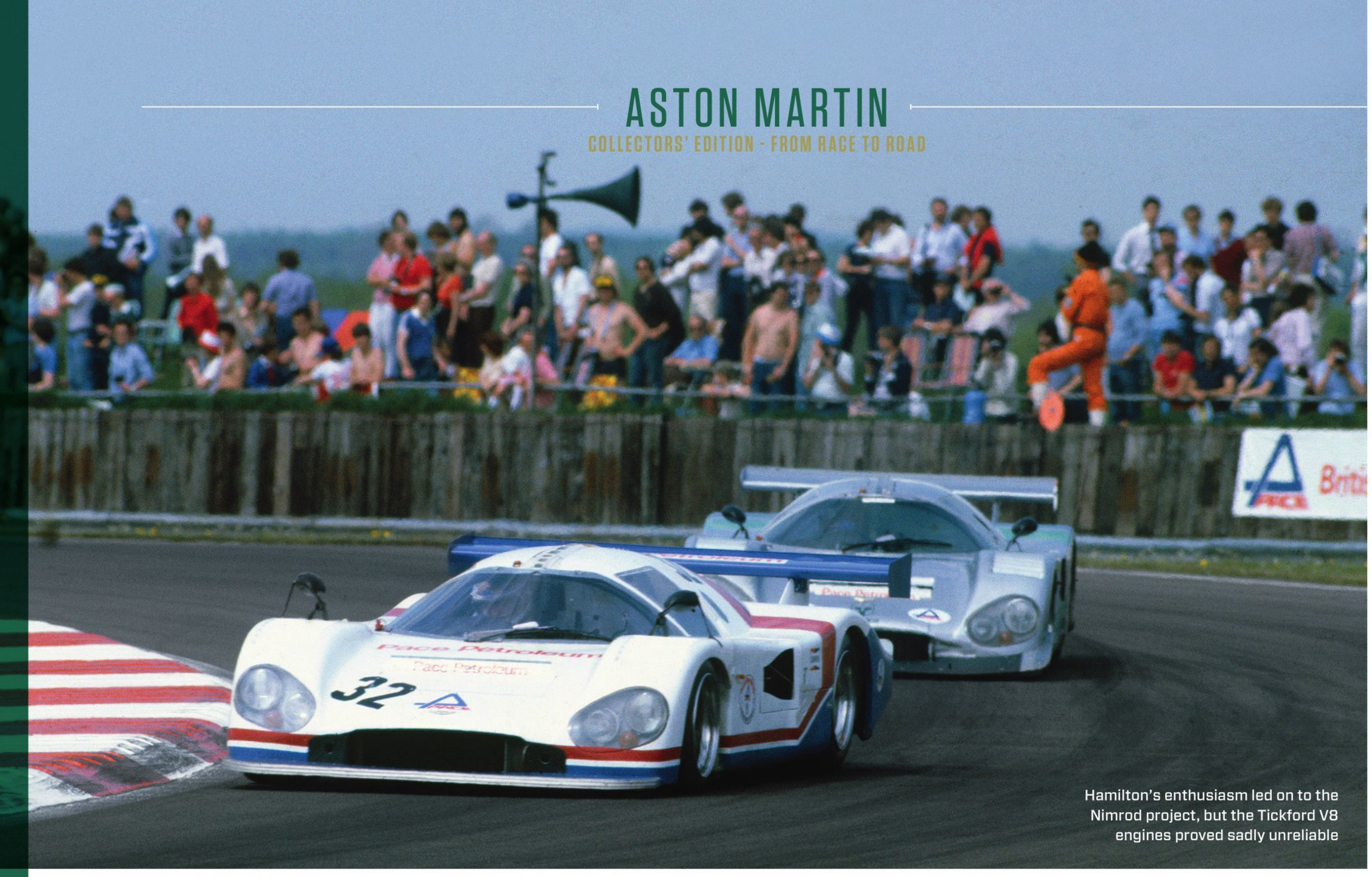
'Le Petit Camion' – or Little Lorry – finally made it to Le Mans in 1977. Hamilton, above, was delighted to finish, even in 17th place overall

Mention of which is freighted with mixed emotions. "I'd badgered Eric Broadley at Lola about working with us on a new car. He could have taken one look at The Muncher and laughed – it was a tank, but he could see we wanted to do it properly and relented. He agreed to produce the tub and suspension; we'd do the bodywork, ancillaries and so on. The tub was wider than normal as we saw the possibility of a two-seater road-going version at some point. We took delivery of the first one as early as 1979. We didn't race it sooner because we couldn't afford to, but we developed a lot of ideas on The Muncher."

However, the lengthy gestation could have derailed the scheme, as the premier sports car class changed to Group C for 1982. "Actually it didn't affect us too much," Hamilton counters. "We had to redo a few things, but not a lot. It wasn't until early '81 that the project really got going again. A big catalyst was Victor Gauntlett, a real Bulldog Drummond character who had taken a 50 per cent stake in Aston Martin. I approached Victor within seconds and he was healthily questioning whether we could pull it off. It was agreed that we'd run two cars in the World Endurance Championship, and the US distributor Peter Livanos also wanted in. The biggest problem was coming up with a name for the car. It took days before we arrived at Nimrod, which is a mighty long-distance warrior.

"A condition to the agreement was that we had to use engines from Aston Martin's Tickford subsidiary, which ultimately became a serious issue for all parties. We had developed our own bulletproof normally-aspirated engine; 500bhp was enough to get started, and we knew how to obtain 600bhp, but understandably Victor wanted some works involvement. We tried to drive the project forwards against real concern over engine reliability – and we were paying for the engines. At every stage, at every event or test, we would encounter problems and it sapped energy from our team."

With Geoff Lees, Tiff Needell and Bob Evans on the driving strength, the factory Nimrod made its debut at the 1982 Silverstone Six Hours. And retired when the camshaft top chain tensioner came loose. At Le Mans Needell was running 10th when he suffered a massive crash following a tyre blowout. Face was saved by a privateer entry. Lord Downe had received the first customer chassis (ultimately, five cars were made), which was entrusted to Ray Mallock to develop with Richard Williams acting as team manager. Having risen ▶



Hamilton's enthusiasm led on to the Nimrod project, but the Tickford V8 engines proved sadly unreliable

as high as fourth by half-distance, it was seventh by the flag despite running on five cylinders. "That was an amazing achievement, although Richard ran his engines at a more conservative level. We as a works team used the performance envelope promised to us."

The season ended as it began, with the factory squad proving intermittently competitive. The Downe equipe finished third overall in the title chase and would repeat the feat a year on. "I knew by autumn '82 that we were in trouble. Livanos had pulled out early in the programme and poor old Victor was suffering financially."

For 1983, Hamilton was forced to go it alone and chose to chase the Yankee dollar. "The European season didn't start until April so there was no chance of showing what we could do, but the Daytona 24 Hours was in February. IMSA was keen to establish commonality between the US and European sports car regs, so I went over there and was fortunate to meet the right people at the right time: we entered two cars with backing from Pepsi-Cola. If we did well, we were promised backing for the rest of the year. Unfortunately, we were using our last two Tickford engines and both 'Pepsi Challengers' failed. In the lead car we had the tremendous pairing of A J Foyt and Darrell Waltrip [the former also driving the winning Porsche 935 K3] alongside Tiff [and Guillermo Maldonado]. We were doing well until the baffle wrapped itself around the crank: the dry sump pan hadn't been wire-locked and fell out [a similar fate afflicted the sister car]. Pepsi then dropped us, so I did a few more races on a shoestring and we were fifth in that year's Sebring 12 Hours. Then my bank called in the guarantees, resulting in me liquidating my Aston and Citröen dealerships, both profitable businesses, and Nimrod Racing Automobiles."

With it died the all-carbon-fibre Nimrod C3. "That was to have been the culmination of all we'd learned since the mid-70s." Hamilton regrouped and moved away from exotica and racing cars altogether, turning his attention to all manner of environmentally-driven ventures. Nor is he bitter that he didn't make it further on the race track. "There are two sides to every story, but I wish I'd insisted we used our own engines. A lot of things went on behind the scenes politically, but I'm sure everyone went into it with the best intentions. The circumstances weren't right and there's no point dwelling on it. I know the amount of effort that was invested by myself and others, and that's the important thing. We didn't just talk about doing Le Mans, about building a car. We actually did it." ■

"I KNEW BY AUTUMN '82 WE WERE IN TROUBLE. LIVANOS HAD PULLED OUT AND POOR OLD VICTOR WAS SUFFERING FINANCIALLY"

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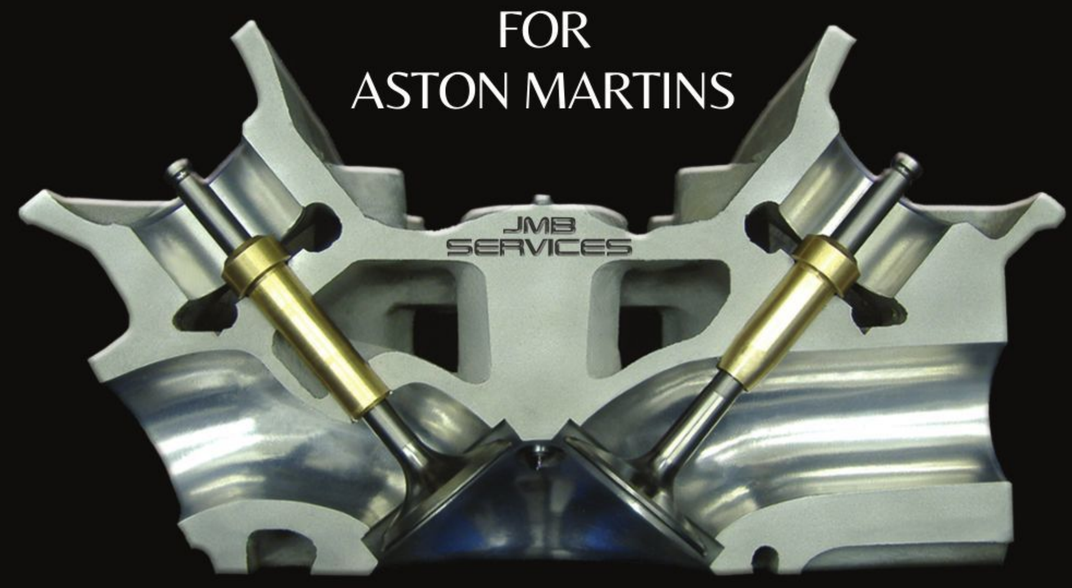
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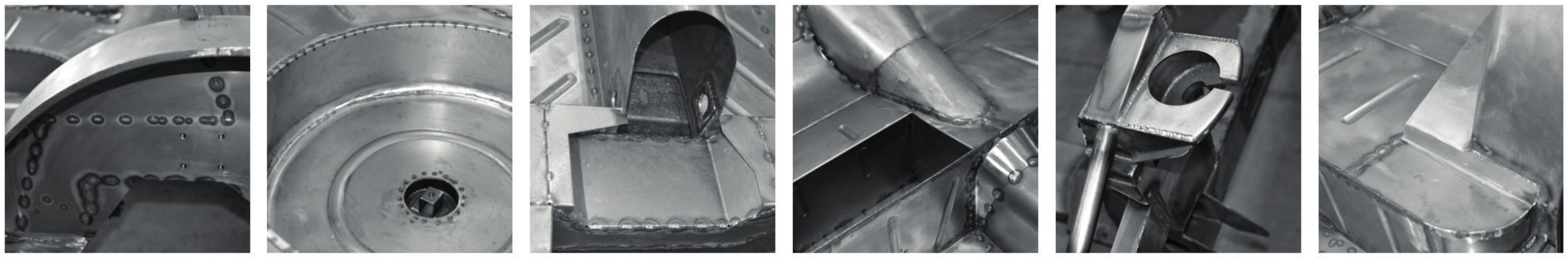
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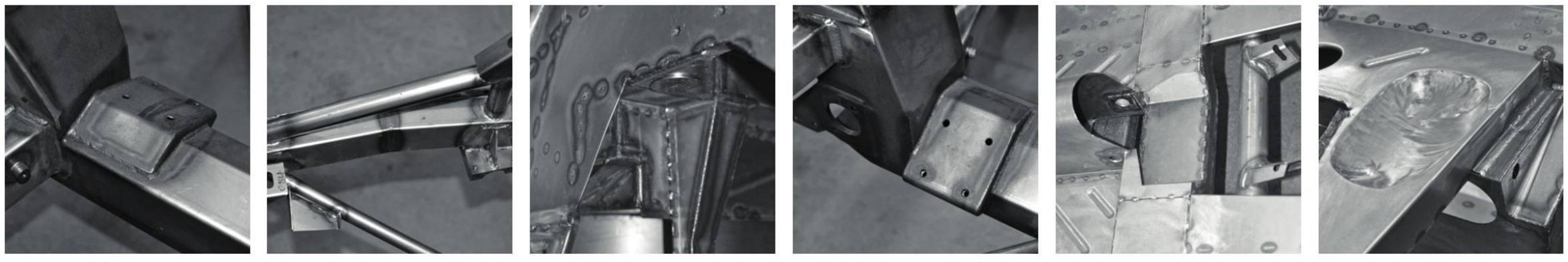


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WARHORSES
ASTON'S ULSTER

It left Feltham as a semi-works racer in 1935, made its debut on the Mille Miglia, finished eighth at Le Mans, went back to Italy - CMC 614's itinerary was a packed one. It still is

writer **GORDON CRUICKSHANK**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, JUNE 2002

After I drove all the way to Winchester to view this car, Fred Blakemore told me it wasn't really his. Yes, the car lives there, but he says he doesn't feel that it belongs to him so much as just being on loan from Ecurie Bertelli. That's what having a significant history does for a car. Like a stately home which is part of a nation's heritage, the object develops a sort of public importance, which has to be respected by its current guardian.

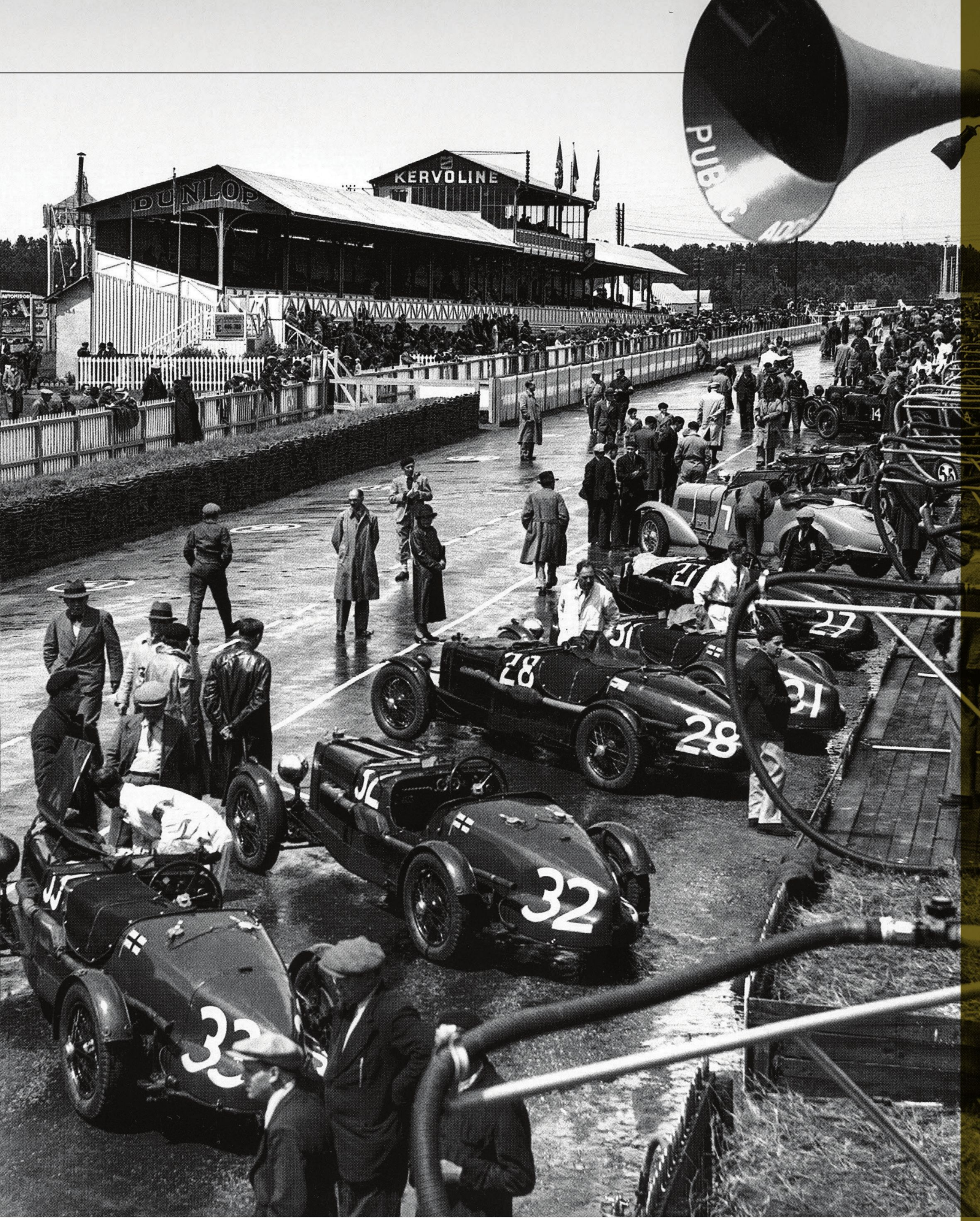
The car? Aston Martin Ulster CMC 614. Ecurie Bertelli? The top pre-war Aston Martin specialists. Fred Blakemore? Current guardian. The link? Derrick Edwards. To anyone in the Aston Martin world, Edwards was a legendary figure. Racer, tuner and generally one of those special characters we don't seem to produce any more, Edwards was the man behind Aston Martin specialist Morntane Engineering, which begat Ecurie Bertelli, and for over 30 years he raced, tuned, raced, lightened and just kept on racing CMC 614.

In AMOC's Register of Members' Cars, an exhaustive listing of individual histories, 614's race entries go on for page after page, by far the longest in the book. Most of that was with Edwards or his partner Judy Hogg at the wheel; but frankly the car hasn't had much rest since its first event, the 1935 Mille Miglia.

It's one of those cars which needs the right owner, so when the time came to sell six years ago, it wasn't advertised; instead Andy Bell, the guru of Ecurie Bertelli, quietly rang up Blakemore and suggested it was his turn to become guardian. An Aston enthusiast, Fred couldn't say no. "It was Derrick who got me into racing," he recalls. "I had an Aston MkII which I took to ▶



Le Mans 1935: Aston Martin team lined up for the start, CMC 614 nearest the camera


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him to sort, and as it was never quite ready, he would offer me his cars to race. He even let me drive CMC, and even then I thought it was a superb car to drive. It didn't feel like a pre-war sports car at all."

That's because of Edwards' constant modifications. Over the years he sat it on small, wide wheels, as everyone was doing then, fitted a 'bunch of bananas' exhaust, stiffened the rear springs and dampers outrageously, and dumped the big 25-gallon fuel tank for a 10-lap sprint version, as well as removing every scrap of weight he could, including lights and dynamo, relying on the magneto for racing. The result was a machine which has beaten MG K3s, 4.5 Invictas and supercharged Alfas – not bad for a 1500cc road car.

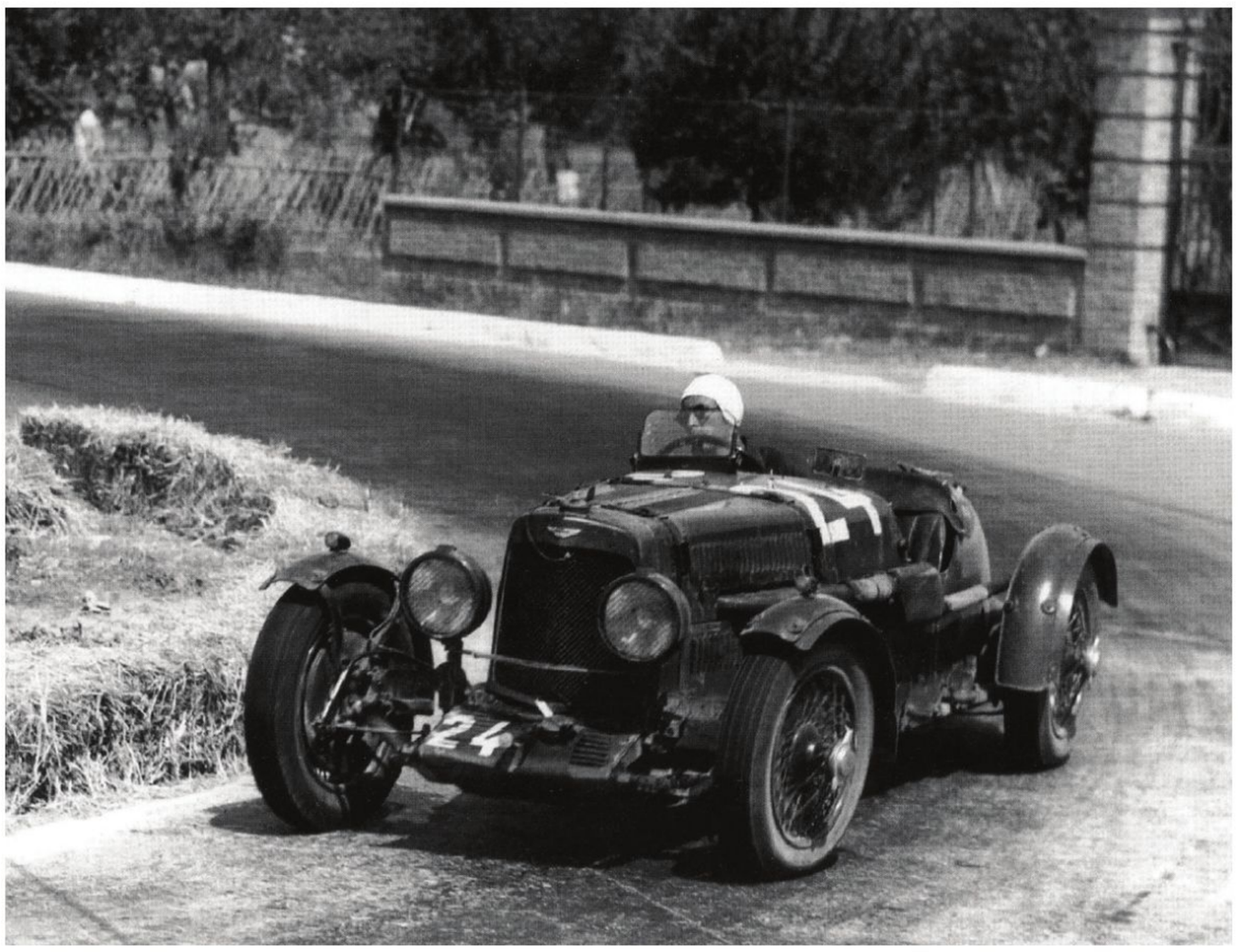
Blakemore has refitted most of these parts, which Edwards had conscientiously stored, so that today CMC is pretty much as it was in the 1930s. More comfortable, but not so quick. "I can't match Edwards' times on the track," admits Blakemore, "but as well as all the AMOC meets, sprints and hillclimbs, I've done two MM retros, and I don't think I'd have lasted with the racket from that skimpy exhaust and the battering from the hard rear end."

Those MM retros are especially appropriate for CMC 614, which began its career on that demanding Italian adventure in the hands of E R Hall. It's one of 21 production Ulsters, built pretty closely to the same spec as the works team cars which had collected the team prize in 1934's TT (hence the Ulster name), famous in their red livery and LM-series numbers. These lightweight variants of the MkII Aston had dry-sump four-cylinder 1496cc engines and handsome aluminium bodies with low, mesh-filled radiator shells, and were guaranteed to do 100mph.



Derrick Edwards and Judy Hogg, its long-time custodians, with CMC. Below, Count Johnny Lurani on Targa Abruzzo

"EVERY LAMP HAS A SEPARATE SWITCH, WHICH ALLOWS FOR CAR-TO-PITS SIGNALLING – WHO NEEDS RADIO?"



Impressive class performances on the TT and elsewhere made this purposeful new Aston an attractive proposition for private owners, which is where Eddie Hall comes in.

With his previous Aston experience, including driving works cars, and a predilection for driving British sports cars, Hall must have looked a likely prospect to buy one of the production Ulsters, and the Feltham works prepared 614 for its first outing for him. Sadly, it expired at Siena with an oil leak after leading the class; but a month later 614 lined up for Le Mans with the three red team cars. The works entries were red because the Irish wife of designer AC 'Bert' Bertelli was superstitious about green, but the four works-supported private entries stuck with Britain's racing hue, and it can't have brought too much ill-luck as CMC, in the hands of Maurice Falkner and Tommy Clarke, finished eighth.

Hall then decided he would take 614 to the Targa Abruzzo, the 24-hour sportscar event through the mountains above Pescara. But when he got there he changed his mind. Count Lurani, due to be his co-driver, later recalled that he met Hall on the road, saying that he hated the hotel and hadn't had the welcome he expected, and so he was going home. After a tense three days tracking down Bertelli, on holiday 'somewhere in Italy', Lurani got permission to take the car over. He placed third overall on handicap.

That was the last of CMC's works-backed exploits. Hall never did buy it, concentrating instead on his TT exploits in the unlikely Derby Bentley. Instead, it was sold in 1936 to someone called Ian Porter-Hargreaves, who tried to overcome the small capacity by fitting a Centric supercharger. It didn't make too much difference; his race results for the next three years are not spectacular. But it did give the car a distinguishing feature: the bonnet bulge to clear the blower is still there, though the unit is long gone.

Just after WWII, Porter-Hargreaves sold the car to McNab-Meredith, another keen amateur who raced it often, including in AMOC's newly instituted St John Horsfall Meeting commemorating the charismatic Aston racer who had recently been killed. At some point he removed the supercharger; certainly it was no longer blown by 1958. It was from him that Edwards bought CMC in 1963, and began a new and intense period in its track career. Edwards ▶



CMC back at Le Mans for the Classic with Fred's son Robert. Below, ACO medal awarded for eighth place in '35 24 Hours



entered the car in any event it could qualify for – sprints, hillclimbs, sports car races all over Britain, and latterly a range of continental events, which he especially enjoyed.

"He went out almost every weekend," says Blakemore. "At first he would drive to the events, but as the car became more highly modified he began to trailer it The car even went round the world in a container. He sent it to Laguna Seca, got there with minutes to spare before qualifying, then couldn't get it to start. He repacked it in its container and it went on to complete the journey. His comment was 'I hope it enjoyed its trip'."

Although he liked Ulsters generally – and this one in particular – over any other pre-war Aston, Edwards wasn't reverential about his old car. Apart from all those speed mods, he also changed its green paint for the dark blue it still carries. Blakemore: "People keep asking me if I'll repaint it the original green now that Derrick is gone, but it's been blue now longer than it was green, so perhaps it should stay." Certainly the colour instantly identifies 'the Edwards car' now that it once more looks like the other Ulsters.

Once back in road form on 18in wheels, CMC needed little preparation before its new owner set off for Brescia, though Andy Bell remounted the body and tightened everything up. "It flew round – didn't miss a beat." But then this car has a reputation for reliability. A couple of years ago when a loose wire shorted out the fuel pump, onlookers who knew the car were absolutely amazed: "But this car never breaks down..."

Remarkably, the neat single-cam engine with two SU carbs has not been taken apart for years. It was built up for Edwards by Eckhart Berg, and it just goes on and on.

"Every winter Andy checks the valve clearances," says Fred, "and every year they're the same." Part of this longevity is due to shell bearings instead of white metal and replacing the duralumin rods with steel, letting the unit spin to a heady 5500rpm. In Feltham spec, output would have been an unspectacular 85bhp; Edwards reckoned to be nearing 120, but refitting the cast exhaust manifold will have cut this back notably. The four-speed non-synchro gearbox has a remote change to bring it closer to the driver, who sits almost over the rear axle.

There's nothing especially advanced about the design for its time; it was merely soundly thought out and extremely well built. Almost the only departure from convention is the underslung tail of the chassis, which is why MkIIs look so low and purposeful –Ulsters in particular, with that tapered lift-up tail sculpted around the horizontal spare wheel. Practical and beautiful.

A competition driver himself, Bertelli laboured to make the cockpits of his racing cars efficient places to work. Just about every lamp on CMC has a separate switch, which not only boosts reliability but allows for some complex car-to-pits signalling – who needs radio? Instruments are few (no speedo at all); the throttle is in the middle (perfect for heel-and-toe). But just so you don't relax, the gear pattern is back-to-front. A flickering ammeter shows that Fred has reverted to coil ignition and refitted a dynamo, which lets him use the car on the road, while neatly and invisibly tucked under the seats are two oddment trays which Andy fitted for the MM which just about double the available luggage space. Two quirks: the gear lever is topped by the rubber pull from a lavatory chain, and the cockpit is edged by a split garden hose. But naturally it's a pre-war hose, put there by Bertelli himself.

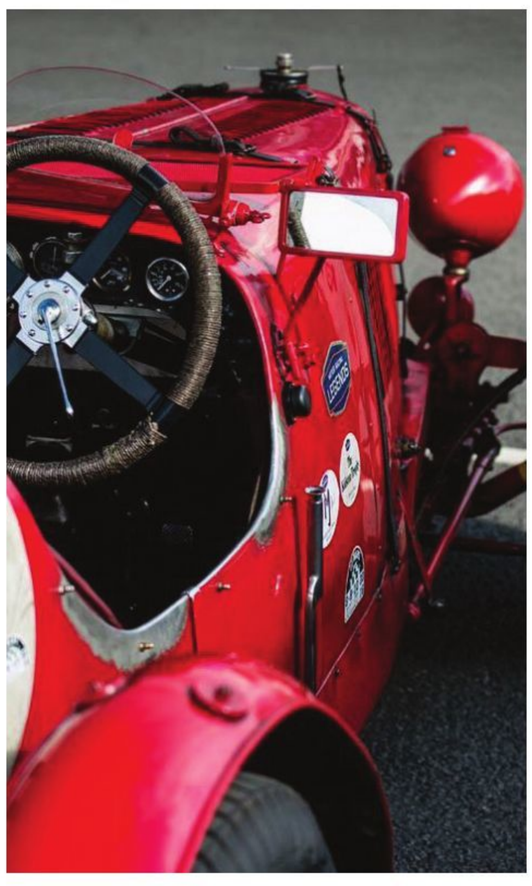
Edwards always said that the Ulster was the best-handling pre-war Aston Martin, and Blakemore agrees: "I put its success down to its excellent road-holding. It's quite heavy – Astons always were – so it's one of those cars you have to wind up and then rely on the grip not to give any speed away. But you can take your hands off the wheel at any speed and it keeps going straight." He's obviously got it sorted – his window-sill carries a row of glass trophies for his successes, and a large silver cup for a class win at Coys towers over the spread of photo albums, books and magazines which chart this warhorse's history. And there's even a plastic kit: if any of you built the Airfix AM Ulster, well, it was CMC 614 you finished up with.

Next up are the Le Mans Classic and the British Empire Trophy. And Wiscombe. And St John Horsfall... CMC may not be out every weekend nowadays, but there's not much danger of it gathering dust in the garage. ■

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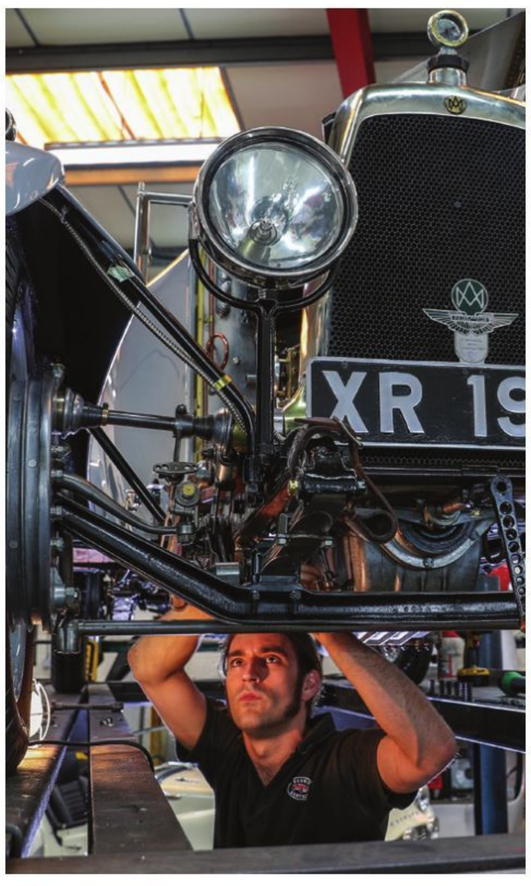
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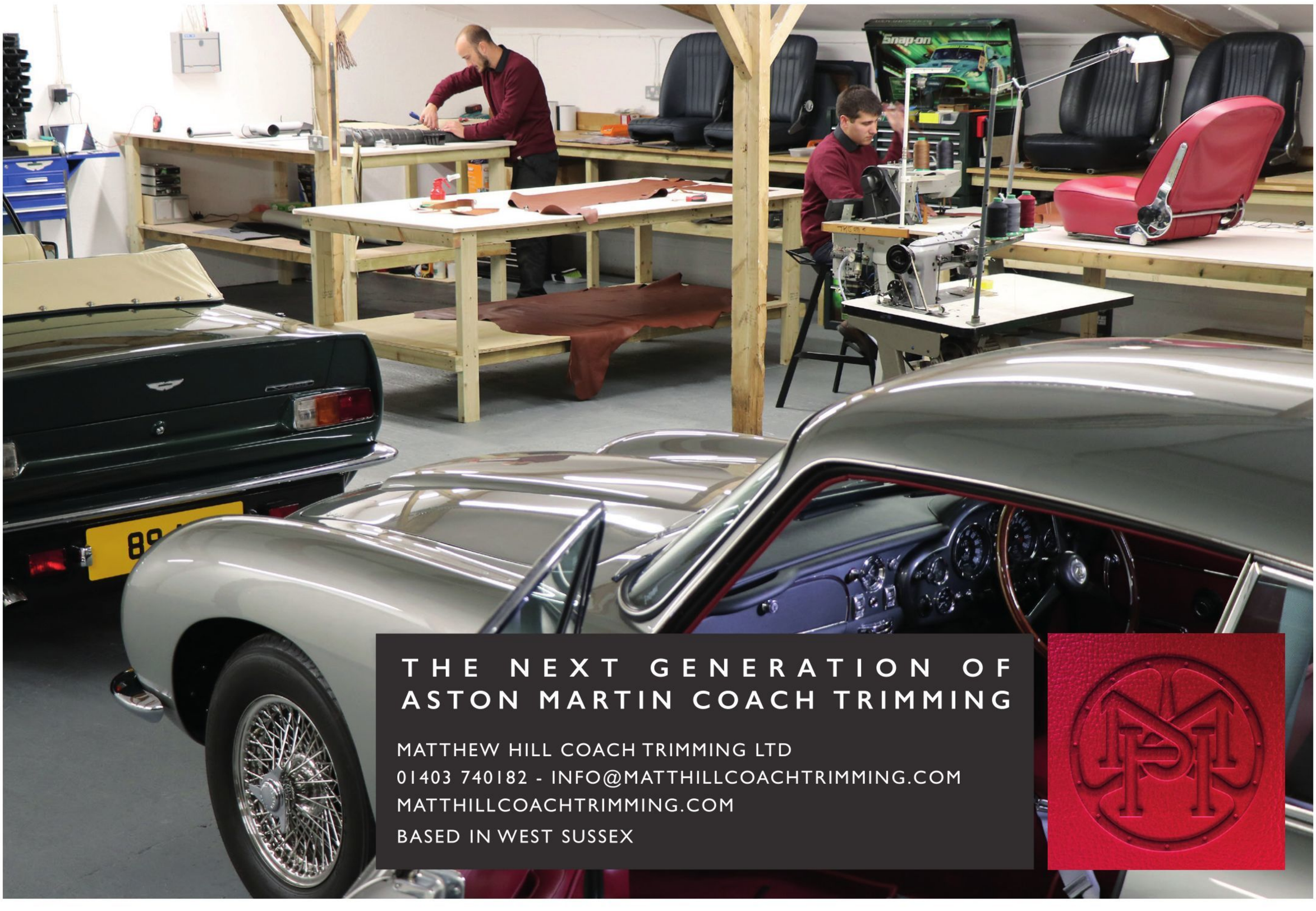
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writer **GORDON CRUICKSHANK**

TAKEN FROM *MOTOR SPORT*, MAY 1998

St John 'Jock' Horsfall's name is famous in Aston Martin circles, but he had a secret. A successful works driver before the war, he went on in peacetime to twice win the Spa 24 Hours but kept quiet his wartime life in MI5, including driving a corpse packed in dry ice to Scotland. Why? To drop the body in the sea carrying fake documents to fool the Germans about British plans – the real-life 'Man who Never Was' story. But there was more. Ian Girling worked with Jock Horsfall from 1947 until Horsfall's death racing an ERA in 1949, and recalls their time together.

"I actually lived with the family for some seven months while he and I built his second Speed Model Aston into a Formula B car, running on methanol. It was eventually modified back into a sports car, now known as 'the Spa Special'. As Jock was financing it himself, money was not too plentiful, but it was a labour of love. He was such a nice guy, quite quiet, but always full of fun. When his cousin Kath came to visit, we wired up the lavatory seat to a Scintilla magneto — it gave her quite a shock.

"I had a hand in the preparation of the car for the Spa race in '49. Jock was worried that Paul Frère had not had experience in the car, so he drove the entire 24 hours on his own. He would have been even further up if we hadn't had to tie the front wings up with rope.

"He spent the whole war in MI5, and one of his duties was testing the defences of airfields, army camps and naval establishments. When he found weaknesses he would take the CO to task with the equivalent rank of a full Colonel. He would also transmit fake radio messages from all over the country to see if they were intercepted. Once he was standing in the grass on an airbase, photographing Mosquitoes landing, and an eagle-eyed pilot spotted him. When the base police arrived he threw his Minox camera into the long grass and claimed he had just been shading his eyes. Of course he had to come back at night and find the camera. He rarely carried ID, he just talked his way out of trouble. Only once did he fail to satisfy an army corporal, and had to divulge a War Office number to vouch for him.

"He would try to get port officials and the like drunk to see what they would reveal, and he actually had a special butter ration for this. He would eat ¼lb of butter beforehand to line his stomach, so that although they got more and more drunk, he would stay sober.

"Often he went off to collect our agents returning from abroad, and was also involved in 'disinformation', passing misleading information to the Germans. I have documents which show that the department even spied on the Americans, copying details of their new 'planes, downgrading the performance figures, and then releasing that to the Germans via our double-agents.

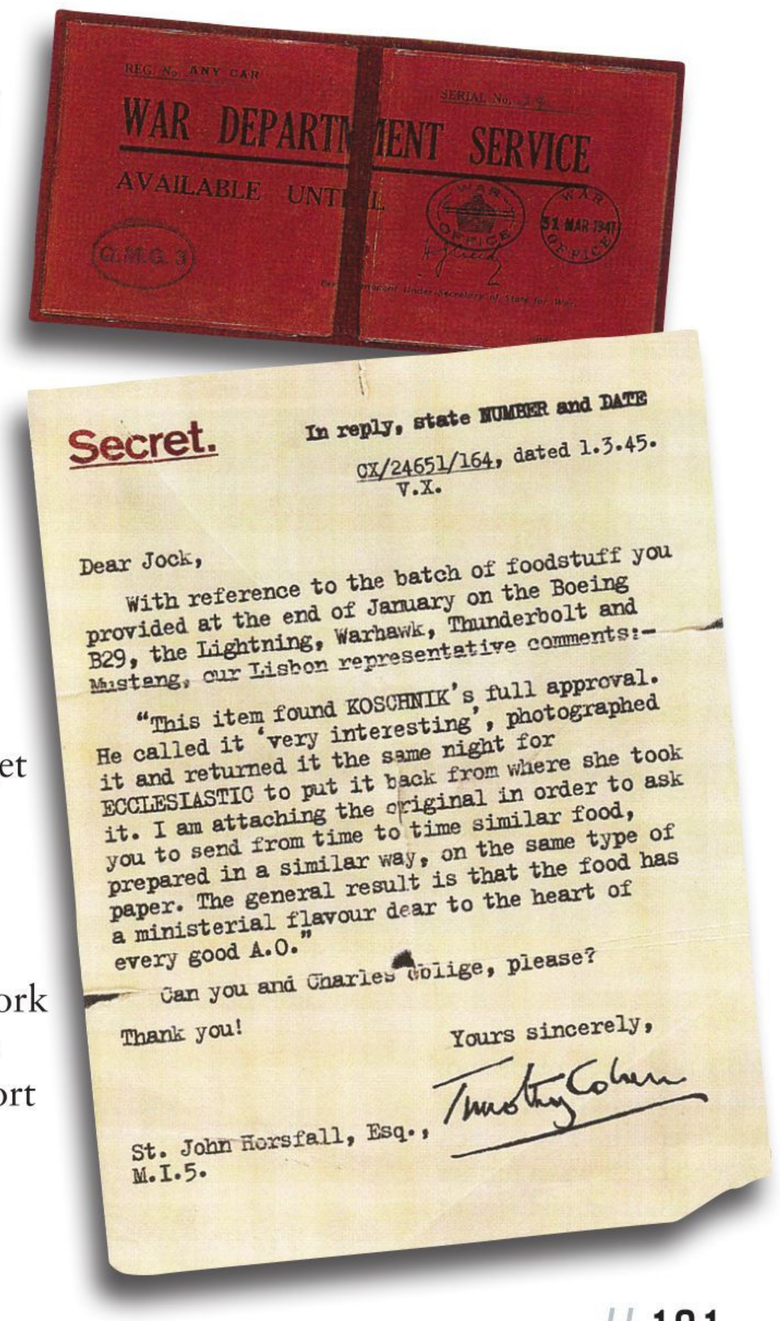
"I was with Jock after he had agreed to drive Peter Bell's ERA following John Bolster's accident. He was very worried that John had encouraged Bell to produce more and more power from the ERA's engine without improving the handling, and that you just could not use the power. However, with just two weeks to go before the Silverstone race, even with Jock's skill and experience there was just not the time to make worthwhile improvements to the road-holding. The result we all know. I was so stricken that I couldn't bear to visit a race at Silverstone for years afterwards.

"The other brothers weren't really interested in racing, though Jeffrey worked with Freddie Dixon and Harry Ferguson on the four-wheel-drive project. His mother was very keen, though. And brave — she once leapt into the sea to save someone, even though she was 60 and recovering from flu. The butler followed with her bathing-suit, and she was so exhausted he had to propel her back up the path.

"As to women, Jock said, 'I will never get married until I stop racing. I've seen the look on wives and girlfriends in the pits when their man doesn't appear'.

"Jock was a very special person, a fine engineer and a really wonderful man to work and be with. I still, at times, visit his grave and am still saddened at the loss to the sport and his many, many friends." ■

Horsfall's MI5 ID card, and letter about faked details of US planes being leaked to Germans via Lisbon double-agents



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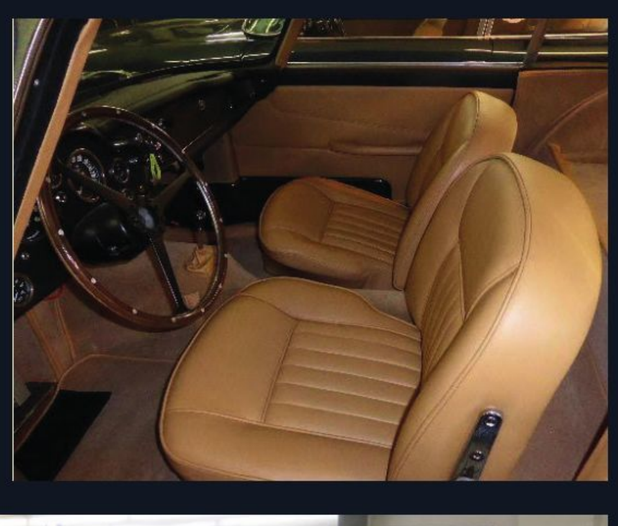
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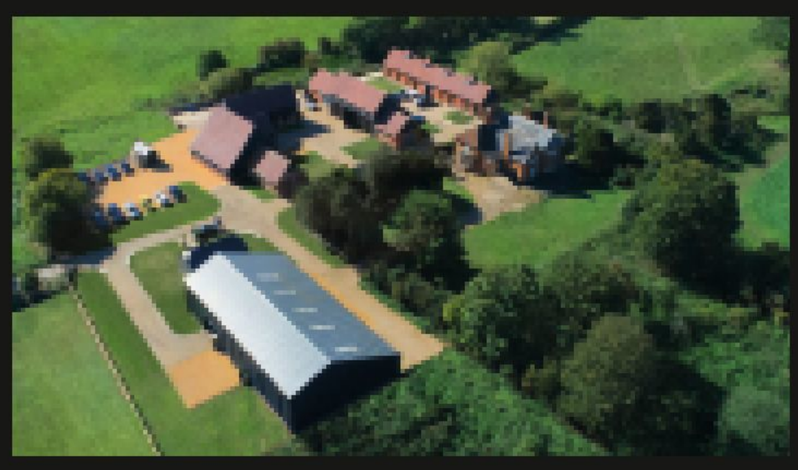
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