

HISTORIC ROOTS



Roger Dixon

A Brief History of the HGPCA

..... *By Marcus Pye*

Aspiration and reality are often diametrically opposed. Dreams, however, do come true every time an amateur driver clambers aboard, or wriggles into, a Grand Prix car once raced by a sporting icon. Such is the unbridled joy evoked in the senses of competitors who unleash their heroes' magnificent bolides in wheel-to-wheel combat on some of the world's greatest circuits.

Historic Grand Prix Cars Association

Nowhere is this more prevalent than for members of the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association (HGPCA), which since 1979 has provided the racing platform for a sensational spectrum of machines spanning five decades. Its events showcase the development of these technological tours de force (and the odd blind alley!) from artisan-crafted two-seater Bugattis of the 1920s to spindly rear-engined “cigar tubes” of the early-'60s.

All are indicative of a heady succession of eras in which national colors, not garish sponsors' liveries, graced the grids. French Blue, Italian Red, British Racing Green, German Silver, Dutch Orange, Belgian Yellow and, of course, the white and blue of the United States of America, painted pathos into Grands Prix, further fuelling the partisan crowds that flocked trackside. Even Egypt had its own gladiatorial hue, not that violet troubled too many onlookers...

Events for these early machines were nothing new. I vividly recall standing at Silverstone's Stowe Corner in 1967, aged nine, and being captivated by an “Historic” demonstration by “Club Internationale des Anciens Pilotes” members after Jim Clark's dramatic British GP victory for Team Lotus. Juan Manuel Fangio (Mercedes-Benz W196), Stirling Moss/Denis Jenkinson (M-B 300SLR), Tony Brooks (Vanwall), Baron Emmanuel de Graffenried (Maserati 250F) and Louis Chiron (Bugatti T35B) were among the participants.

I also remember the JCB Historic Car race at Silverstone's '73 British GP, in the aftermath of the massive F1 shunt triggered by



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Founded at the Monaco Grand Prix in 1979, the HGPCA has been a regular fixture in the principality ever since.

future World Champion Jody Scheckter. Nigel Corner (Aston Martin DBR4), who would become an early HGPCA member, and John Roberts (Lotus 16) finished one-two in the mixed single-seater and sportscar event. John Harper (Lister-Jaguar) and Richard Pilkington (Cooper-Bristol)—both still racing hard today—finished in the top 10.

Thankfully, generations of enthusiasts have always clamored to own “used-up” racecars, many bequeathed or handed down from father to son. In “pre-investor” times, some even acquired them by being in the right place at the right time—and sometimes for a song! Seven years after watching Jean Behra race a works Maserati 250F in the 1957 British GP at Aintree, for example, Charles Lucas ended up owning it!

As he recalled in 2005, “When (racer) Boley Pittard vaguely mentioned that he knew where an old Grand Prix car was in Italy, I gave him £400 and a trailer, and sent him on his way south.” If Lucas was amazed when Behra's lightweight 250F (chassis 2528) duly arrived, looking very scruffy, he was astounded when its engine ran! Dick Crosthwaite restored it to pristine condition and “Luke” raced it for five seasons without any work except changing the plugs.

Driving the scarlet beauty—which Fangio had raced to victory at Monaco in '57—for the first time at Silverstone clearly left Lucas rapturous: “After half a dozen laps I was well and truly smitten. It was poetry in motion. Totally predictable and perfectly balanced, it was joy incarnate. When I finally dared to drift it round old Woodcote it was like touching the hem of God's Nomex.”



Founding member Dan Margulies (helmet) drove this Maserati 4CL at the first HGPCA event at Monaco in 1979.



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For donkeys' years Great Britain's Vintage Sports-Car Club (an institution founded in 1934) had put on *ad hoc* races for charismatic machines like this, built either side of World War II, even though strictly speaking, the majority were born outside the group's catchment area. The real thrust, within a growing movement of enthusiasts fascinated by these later Grand Prix machines, came with the formation of the HGPCA.

But where did this historic Grand Prix movement originate? In glittering Monte Carlo during the month of January 1979, the Automobile Club de Monaco envisioned a support race for the Formula One Grand Prix on the streets of the Principality to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first Monaco GP in 1929—won by Briton William Grover-Williams, competing under the pseudonym “Williams,” in his patriotic green Bugatti Type 35.

Monegasque resident Uwe Hucke heard of the ACM's plan and contacted fellow Bugattiste Martin Dean and Alfa Romeo aficionado Christopher Mann who—realizing there would not be a second chance to make a first impression—drove from England through snow and ice on New Year's Day to meet with the decision makers and formalize the deal.

Sponsored by London auction house Christie's, the *Coupe du Cinquantenaire* feature was a blockbuster and, as something very different on an otherwise traditional program, indelibly logged in the memories of those perched in the lofty grandstands.

A field of distinctly different front-engined Formula One machinery rushes away from the start of the 2002 Oldtimer Grand Prix at the Nürburgring.



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A unique selection of ever-evolving historic racing cars is lined up for inspection prior to the 1967 Ancien Pilotes demonstration at Silverstone.



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(Left) Juan Manuel Fangio demonstrates the Mercedes-Benz W196 during an early Ancien Pilotes demonstration. **(Right)** Current HGPCA member Richard Pilkington raced his Cooper-Bristol to a top 10 finish in the 1973 HCB historic car race at Silverstone. Pilkington is still racing today.



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Mark Clubb's Cooper T45 leads a string of similar HGPCA machines through the narrow streets of the 2005 Porto Historic Grand Prix.

A galaxy of superstars were there to enjoy the event, including pre-war Mercedes-Benz aces Manfred von Brauchitsch and Karl Kling, Baron "Toulo" de Graffenried (who demonstrated a 1950 Alfa Romeo Tipo 159 "Alfetta" with verve), Formula Junior creator Count Giovanni "Johnny" Lurani and Stirling Moss, who in 2011, graciously accepted the HGPCA's invitation to succeed Richard Attwood as its President.

Martin Morris drove his 2-liter ERA R11B brilliantly to capture pole, outpacing Neil Corner's magnificent 1937 Mercedes-Benz W125 "Silver Arrow"—the supercharged straight-eight engine in which had made a whopping 646-bhp 42 years previously—and the twin blue and yellow Siamese-flagged 1500-cc ERAs, R5B "Remus" and R2B "Romulus" with The Honorable Patrick Lindsay and Bill Morris up, respectively.

Other familiar names in the field included *Alfisti* Alain de Cadenet (in Guy Moll's '34 Monaco-winning 2900B) and Christopher Mann (2600 Monza); Bugatti racers Bernard Kain (T35B) and Americans Murray Smith (T51) and Stephen Griswold (T54); Maserati men Dan Margulies (4CL), Bill Summers (6C), Tony Merrick (6CM) and Cameron Millar (ex-Rene Dreyfus 8CTF); plus German Manfred Rimboeck in Count Hubertus Doenhoff's gruff Talbot-Lago T26SS.



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Demonstrating the diversity of the HGPCA field at Dijon-Prenois in 2012 is Julian Bronson's rare Scarab F1, one of only three ever constructed.



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Robin Lodge hustles his Ferrari Dino 246 through the modern-era Bus Stop chicane at legendary Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Belgium.

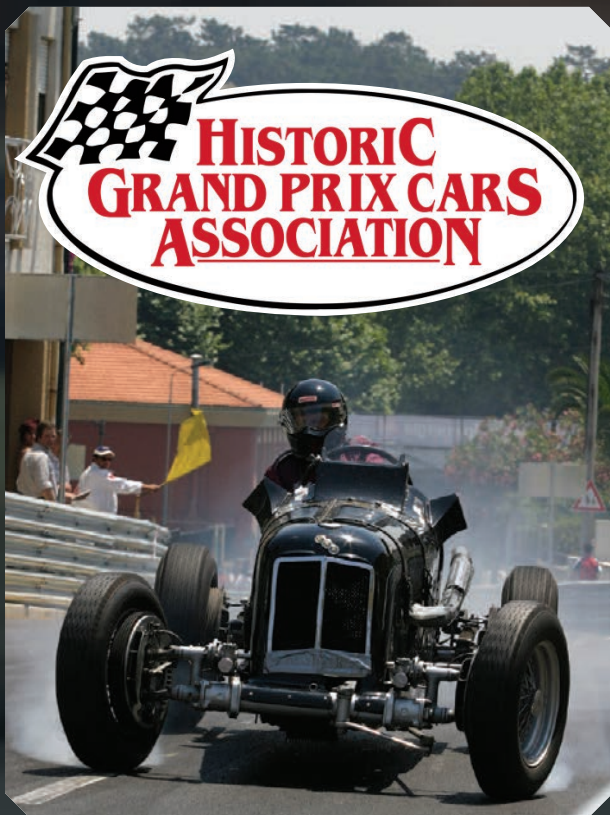
HGPCA TODAY

More than 120 competitors raced over an eight-event HGPCA program in 2012, making long-awaited returns to Brands Hatch's Grand Prix circuit, Zandvoort in Holland and Italy's Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari at Imola—all World Championship venues of old. Members also enjoyed the current Silverstone, Nürburgring and Spa-Francorchamps Formula One tracks, and France's fabulous Dijon-Prenois roller-coaster.

For 2013, in addition to HGPCA's preferred eight races in five countries, which will take members to three current Formula One circuits and at least three former World Championship Grand Prix venues, a very special event for Pre-1940 machinery is being promoted to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the first car race at Donington Park in 1933.

Coming but a week before HGPCA's return to the streets of Pau in France (thus presenting an opportunity for racers coming from afar to enjoy a fine European double-header), the Nuvolari Trophy double-header at Donington also provides owners of early cars with an exclusive showpiece rarely seen outside the remarkable Goodwood Revival in September.

For more information visit www.hgpca.com



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HGPCA PROVISIONAL CALENDAR 2013

April 20-21	Silverstone VSCC Spring Start (GB)	Pre-1966
May 3-5	Donington Historic Festival (GB)	Pre-1940
May 11-12	Pau GP Historique (F)	Pre-1961 & Pre-1966
May 25-26	Brands Hatch GP (GB)	Pre-1966
June 14-16	Dijon-Prenois GPAO (F)	Pre-1961 & Pre-1966
July 26-28	Silverstone Classic (GB)	Pre-1961 & Pre-1966
August 9-11	Nürburgring Oldtimer GP (D)	Pre-1961
Aug 30-Sep 1	Zandvoort Historic GP (NL)	Pre-1961 & Pre-1966
Sept 20-22	Spa Six Hours (B)	Pre-1966
October	(TBA)*	

During the race, spectators gasped as Corner survived a hairy spin at La Rascasse hairpin, but he managed to get the big Merc going again and howled back from 18th to 2nd, less than 10 seconds behind Ambrosia creamed rice magnate Martin Morris in his ex-Reggie Tongue ERA. Lindsay, Kain, de Cadenet and Mann completed the top six in what historically proved to be a very important race.

HGPCA vice president Merrick has a particularly fond memory from that day. "Mario Andretti climbed into the 6CM on the grid. Cheekily, I offered to swap drives—for Mario to take the Maserati and me his Lotus 79. After the Grand Prix the reigning World Champion came over and said he regretted not accepting my offer as he'd failed to finish."



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Showing the way at Zandvoort in 2012 with the yellow Ferrari 156 Sharknose recreation is retired Dutch Grand Prix driver Jan Lammers.



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Brabham driver Duncan Dayton acknowledges our shooter at the 2005 Pau Grand Prix Historique through the streets of the ancient French city.

The spectacular and well-received Monaco race captured the imagination of the 23 competitors who took part. Unlike Corner's Mercedes, the gallant winning ERA is still raced with considerable vim by Morris' son David, the former Team Lotus mechanic who now specializes in the preparation of pre-war automobiles in a quaint corner of southwest England.

Recognizing the potential marketability of the front-engined cars—the youngest of which were only 20 years old—and therefore seeking more action at premier league events, several hands-on British-based competitors banded together to form the HGPCA, nominating Bill Summers as founding president. A small number of life memberships were sold to help the group on its way.

Monaco certainly wowed Anglo-French former single-seater and sportscar racer Simon de Lautour, who ran the celebrated Ecole du Pilotage Winfield racing school for the Knight brothers at its southern outpost, the ultra-modern Circuit Paul Ricard. Through well-connected racer Robs Lamplough, the message was telegraphed to Chris Mann that a historic support race was on the table for the 1980 French Grand Prix. The fluent French speakers thus flew down to discuss a deal with the circuit management.

"I was just 40 and not long out of contemporary racing where it was normal to negotiate start money," said Lamplough. "When it came to the prickly subject of money I suggested £50,000. We eventually shook hands on £40,000 for which we would provide the best 20 Pre-1960 Grand Prix cars from the UK. This included most of the Maserati 250Fs, Bruce Halford's pair of Lotus 16s—one of which he put Maurice Trintignant in, I believe—my two BRM P25s and a stack of others."

Used to racing for nothing, even at Silverstone's British GP meetings, this remarkable deal astonished the owners who received £1000 each which, with ferry deals, more than covered their traveling expenses. The balance essentially went to top up the fledgling HGPCA's war chest. Again, the race was a thriller—with Lamplough's BRM beating Willie Green's Maserati by a nose—underlining the value of the nascent organization.

Lamplough recalls that battle, "Willie's 250F—Sir Anthony Bamford's very special lightweight car—and my P25 were very equally matched on lap times. The Maserati was scorching in a straight line, but with its drum brakes couldn't deal with the BRM's discs, so I could always outbrake him into the final corner. There wasn't a lap on which our order didn't change, and the crowd went wild, but that's what made the difference."

Again, the F1 drivers loved seeing the cars of their youth. "We shared the pits with them and Jacques Laffite, Jean-Pierre Jabouille and 'Jumper' Jarier, all of whom I knew," said Lamplough. "They were queueing-up to push-start us. Looking back, it was a pivotal day in historic racing's history."

Historic Grand Prix racing had well and truly arrived with the HGPCA as its nucleus. Superlative battles embroiling the finest cars, underscored with great on-track sportsmanship and wonderful camaraderie off it—values cherished by the HGPCA today—found a ready market and a burgeoning calendar of world class events quickly evolved.

Pioneer among these new events had been the Nürburgring Big Show of 1973, brainchild of Count Doenhoff and fellow German nobleman car nut Kurt von Hammerstein. It morphed seamlessly into the AvD Oldtimer Grand Prix, which celebrated the entity's 40th edition in 2012. The HGPCA has always



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Former HGPCA president Richard Attwood (left) and veteran Frank Synter enjoy a close dice in their pair of matching Brabhams.



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Another seldom-seen GP marque is the 1950s British constructor Connaught, this B Series example now owned and driven by Nick Wigley.



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There's always on-track action at an HGPCA event, as shown by this trio of cars battling each other at Pau in 2012.



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Another of the charms of the HGPCA meetings is that cars from different eras run against one another, letting fans see how the cars have evolved.



Jim Houligrave



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Bending his Cooper T51-Climax around a street corner left-hander before a crush of onlookers at Porto in 2005 is HGPCA member Brian Joliffe.



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One of HGPCA's stalwart entrants is Neil Corner with his faithful Maserati 250F, shown here leading a Veritas RS S6.

Headed for the first turn at Estoril in 2003 is a representative pack of mostly rear-engined Grand Prix machinery.

supported this event, and in 1991 was also influential in the British Racing Drivers' Club's initiative to launch its own Historic Festival (now the privately run Silverstone Classic).

The HGPCA (for which competition secretary Martin Grant Peterkin organized racing programs until his retirement in December 2010) has traditionally taken grids of predominantly front-engined (Pre-1961, including smaller-capacity rear-engined machines) and exclusively rear-engined (Pre-1966) cars to Europe's foremost historic events. Members have also flown the flag enthusiastically in individual campaigns as far afield as the USA, Australia and New Zealand.

For many years, thanks to generous support from the likes of premium fashion houses Mulberry and Polo Ralph Lauren, timepiece manufacturer Chopard, engineering giant British Aerospace (through its corporate jets business), Maserati UK and specialist automotive sales houses Brooks, Christie's and RM Auctions, competitors have been able to race their cars and be rewarded for doing so.

More recently, long-term partner Arbuthnot Latham Private Bank has successfully promoted its high-end business by underwriting the cost of splendid hospitality—always a central element of the lifestyle events HGPCA visits—in the convivial ambiance of HGPCA's exclusive "Red Truck" unit at events.

The times may have changed, but almost 33 years after that first standalone race at Paul Ricard, the HGPCA—now with a 250-strong membership, operating perhaps 400 cars—is still a respected prime mover in what has become motor sport's fastest-growing sector. As Alfieri Maserati recently asserted, "in my opinion it is by far the most important organization in the world for those dedicated to preserving and racing old Grand Prix cars."



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Raymond Mays demonstrates the BRM V16 during an "Ancien Pilotes" demonstration race in the late 1960s.



A flock of "cigar tube" Formula One cars from the rear-engine revolution of the early 1960s illustrate the diversity of a typical HGPCA field.