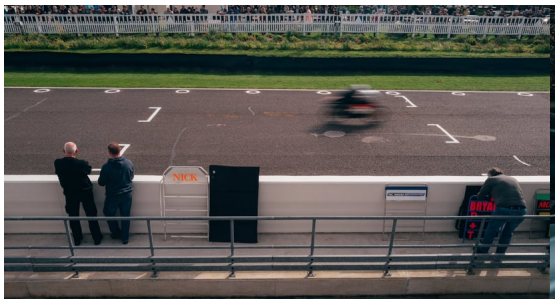
Can-Ams and priceless traffic jams at the 81st Goodwood Members’ Meeting

Lead
Kicking off Goodwood’s 2024 motorsport season in true style, the 81st Members’ Meeting was a chance for a gathering of the world’s greatest racers and personalities to hang up the keys to their usual machines and race some of motorsport’s icons...



There truly is nothing quite like Goodwood in the springtime. From the sea of vibrant daffodils that line the edges of the circuit, through to the thick morning fog that blankets the airfield, only to be burnt away by sunshine and replaced with tyre smoke and an unrivalled atmosphere. Goodwood’s Members' Meeting has been an event for true racing enthusiasts since its inception in 1948, where 9th Duke of Richmond first opened the circuit and held the first in a series of meetings for members of the British Automobile Racing Club. Staggeringly, from that opening right through to the last edition in 1966 there were 71 Members’ Meetings, before being revived and continued in 2014, with this gloriously intimate event has gone from strength to strength ever since.

Of the many standouts, our immediate highlights must include seeing Gerhard Berger's screaming Ferrari 640 light up the rears heading out of the final chicane, and the

priceless array of pre-war Bugatti Grand Prix cars, that were certainly more than just showpieces, being wrestled out on track by their brave racers.

Speaking of those brave racers, Goodwood has always been the ultimate melting pot of famous names from the world of motorsport, many of whom swap the fire up procedure of their high-tech British Touring Car for some the old-school flavour of decades gone by. We briefly caught up with Tom Ingram, BTCC’s Champion of 2022, who’d swapped out his current Championship contender, a bonkers Hyundai i30 Fastback, for a Group 1.5 Rover SD1. “People used to see these old Rovers against the nimbler Ford Capris and far more powerful Chevy Camaros, but trust me, they are a more than worthy competitor on this grid!” Ducking and diving between the four-wheeled heroes and busy mechanics making last minute preparations, a star-studded grid began to emerge, with Touring Car legends Matt Neal, Tiff Needell and team captain Gordon Sheddon all gearing up to trade paint.

While checking out the rest of Tom’s competition, we spotted an unfamiliar site lining up in the paddock: a 1980 Mazda RX-7, sporting a stunning yellow and blue livery. For those who know, these RX-7s were a force to be reckoned with in their day, making a name for themselves on the US Endurance scene. Boasting period racing success, this vibrant example was dressed in the same livery that Win Percy used during the 1980s.

If the sound of a sustainable fuel-filled, thirty-strong grid of Ford Mustangs lining up for the Ken Miles Cup wasn’t enough to satisfy your V8 needs, Goodwood knows just how to stun and awe the thousands of visitors year in, year out. The 81st Members' Meeting brought a celebration of the Canadian-American Challenge Cup, or Can-Am to you and I, presenting a unique chance to see fire-spitting Group 7 monsters from 1966 to 1974 head out on the circuit for a demonstration of their power and agility. Of the weird and wonderful creations, some of the most innovative cars from the era were in attendance, from Lola, McLaren and Chaparral, created before the likes of Ferrari, Alfa Romeo and notably Porsche, with their outrageous 917/30, all wanted a taste of glory.

We say it every year, and this year was certainly no exception. “Just how do they do it?” Goodwood always manages to guarantee that every person who enters these sacred grounds leaves with the biggest smile on their face and memories to last them until at least July, when the fun will resume with the Festival of Speed. Until then, we'll fondly remember seeing priceless pre-war racers line up behind the original legends of Le Mans, creating an intimate and relaxed atmosphere that allows you to get closer to the action than ever before.

Photos by Elliot Newton

Gallery

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