



GRAND PRIX DE TOURS

Tramlining at Tours

The annual Grand Prix de Tours presented a unique challenge, with drivers having to share the circuit and paddock with an active tramway system – the demonstration races were scheduled to avoid colliding with services. The tight 1km track plus 230 cars meant crammed grids, too.

1934 RILEY 12/4 TT SPRITE

After a covert test run at Donington the week before, Eric Perou gave this Riley its first French outing in his ownership at Tours. Better known for 'Healeys, Perou bought this car six months ago to prepare it for the 2016 Le Mans Classic. It had been off the radar for many years, its last public appearance being in 2008. Although classic car restoration and preparation is his business, he's had to

do little to this 12/4 special. 'Its chassis and frame were sound,' said Eric, 'and its unusual Armstrong Siddeley aluminium coachwork caught my eye. 'While it's not really tested by this short circuit, it's a pleasure to drive and a good racing car. The engine's not quite sorted though. It'll need more work before the Le Mans Classic next year but I hope to finish in the top 20 of the 1923-39 grid there.'

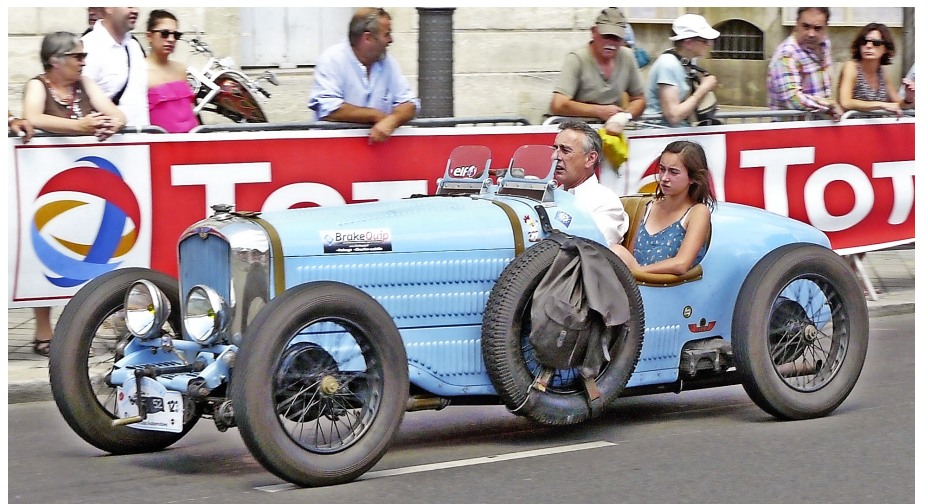


1928 BUGATTI TYPE 43

The octogenarian Count Léo de Malet Roquefort drove his 1928 Bugatti Type 43 from Château la Gaffelière, his ancestral Saint-Émilion vineyard near Bordeaux, to Tours for the GP - a round trip of 700 kilometres and ten hours.

He took the time to talk about the car while waiting on the roadside, some distance from the circuit, for the arrival of a replacement for his failed battery so that he could drive home. 'For events like this, my Type 43 is perfect. It's more practical than my 1936 Type 57 Stelvio, more comfortable than my 1925 Type 35 and the supercharged 1931 Type 51,' said the Count. 'It handles long distances well.'

The count has owned the Type 43 for about 20 years. 'Sadly I know nothing of its history,' he said. 'It's needed some mechanical and paint work, but it's largely as it was when I found it.'



1930 RALLY NCP SALMSON

A contemporary of but less well-known than the sporting Bugattis, this Rally NCP has been restored from the ground up by Xavier Delaunay in time for this season. 'Ten years ago I bought the chassis and the Salmson engine,' Delaunay explained, 'and the following year I acquired the cyclecar bodywork. Six years' restoration work followed before it was running again. At present it has a three-speed gearbox but originally it had a four - which I'm reinstalling later this year in my search for more performance.'

The short wheelbase sporting N series was manufactured in north-west Paris for a only few years in the Thirties, but a large number survive.

'The 'CP' stands for court et puissant – short and powerful. That's exactly what it is!' said Delaunay. 'I've demonstrated it this year on the banked circuit at Monthéry, the hill climbs at St Briec and la Pommeraye and the street circuit at le Puy Notre-Dame. It's a driver's car and I want it to drive it regularly. It has the patina of age rather than a museum shine.'

CHATEAU IMPNEY HILLCLIMB, WORCESTERSHIRE

Impney on the rise

▶ 1965 AUSTIN-HEALEY FROGEYE SPRITE

Re-instigated after a 50-year hiatus, the hillclimb track in the grounds of Chateau Impney in Worcestershire played host to a new event, and as a result motor sport has an infamous new corner – the Roundabout. Drivers couldn't stop talking about it – or spinning off on it.

This 1965 Austin-Healey Frogeye Sprite was a highlight. 'It was the first attempt at a lightweight racing Austin-Healey Sprite, in 1965,' said owner-restorer James Thacker. 'It was the first to use glassfibre body cowls front and rear and Minilite wheels, plus a 1275cc engine before the road cars. Alec Poole raced it – he could beat E-types in the wet with this Sprite. The mesh grille and removable headlight is a nod to his work – he removed it to use as an air intake for the carburettor but we've got to run with two. I raced it in ModSports, but rolled it six times when the brakes failed at Silverstone in 1977. It's been off the road since – this is its first outing.'



▲ 1968 ELDON MK6

'This is the second of just four Eldon Mk6 Formula Fords made. They were all shipped to the US, and the other three were written off in accidents at Lime Rock,' said the Eldon's owner Duncan Andrews. 'This came back ten years ago and I've just finished restoring it.'

'It was the only example – and the first of its kind – with inboard suspension, a forerunner of today's pushrod suspension.'



▲ 1959 TVR GRANTURA LIGHTWEIGHT

'This was the first Lightweight TVR Works car, originally raced by John Wolf who went on to found Wolfrace wheels,' said owner-driver Ivan Dutton. 'It raced in 1959 and was sold in 1960 minus its engine. Its second owner fitted an MG unit. I bought it two years ago and fitted an original-style Climax engine, but the rest of the car only needed a stripdown and rebuild.'



▲ 1965 FISHER-ALFA

'It's a total one-off,' said Pete Speakman of his Anglo-Italian single-seater. 'It was built by Jack Fisher in 1965, an Edinburgh engineer whose hobby was good ideas. This car has a corrugated lightweight steel floor and spaceframe for stiffness, and the Duetto 1.6-litre engine has a compact wet sump from a Giulietta, baffled against oil surge. Rivals had dry sumps but this made it more reliable.'

▶ 1936 ERA R7B

'It was Arthur Dobson's car,' said Julian Wilton, who has owned his ERA for two years but has only driven it three times.

'It was originally painted red, and was the sister car to Prince Bira's blue ERA R12C. There was a great needle match between Dobson and Bira that the press made out to be an off-track rivalry as well as on. Normally Bira would win, and this would come second.'

