



The author went to a variety of practices for English race meetings over these years and took snaps of events which did not appear in the motoring magazines which, naturally, illustrated the races. There are some of the races themselves.

Visitors to this website may like to glance through these pictures. **Part 1** covers events from late 1950 up to the British GP of 1955. **Part 2** will follow covering late 1955 to early 1959.

1950 practice for September Goodwood



The BRM T15 (135⁰V16 1½ litre supercharged) warmed-up and ready for Reg Parnell to take out to practise. The car was then painted pale green (like the original ERA of 1934, a previous result of the initiative of Raymond Mays).

On race day, in pouring rain, Parnell won the two very short races (12 and 29 miles) for which the car was entered. In both he was hounded closely at times by “B. Bira” driving a

Maserati 4CLT/48 (IL4 1½ litre supercharged). The slippery wet track was the worst possible for the BRM, with its very-steep centrifugally-boosted torque curve.

These were very minor wins but cheered-up the team, which a few weeks earlier at Silverstone had suffered the ignominy in its first race entry of having the transmission fail on the start line when driven by Raymond Sommer.

Unfortunately a basic fault in the engine cooling system was still to be identified and cured, to say nothing of numerous other problems needing development solutions.

1951 second practice for the British GP at Silverstone



The Alfa Romeo 159 (IL8 1½ supercharged) of Juan Fangio which had taken 2nd place on the grid. Pole was held by a Ferrari 375 (60⁰ V12 4½ litre naturally-aspirated) driven by Froilan Gonzalez, who had achieved the 1st 100 MPH lap of Silverstone the previous day. This was the 1st time an Alfa 158/159 had been beaten to Pole in all its post-WW2 classic Grand Prix career.

The Fangio 159 had 4 fuel tanks (tail, 2 alongside the cockpit and 1 in the engine

compartment, under the exhaust (!)). It had the original rear swing axle, set up with negative camber, where Farina’s Alfa had a new De Dion layout.

On race-day Gonzalez beat Fangio to the finish and that was the 1st defeat in a classic post-WW2 GP for the Alfa. To rub it in, the Ferrari was a 1950 model with 12 sparking plugs, unlike the improved 24-plug cars raced by Gonzalez’s team-mates.

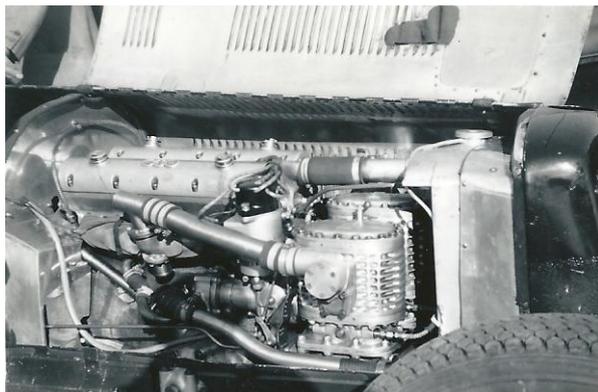
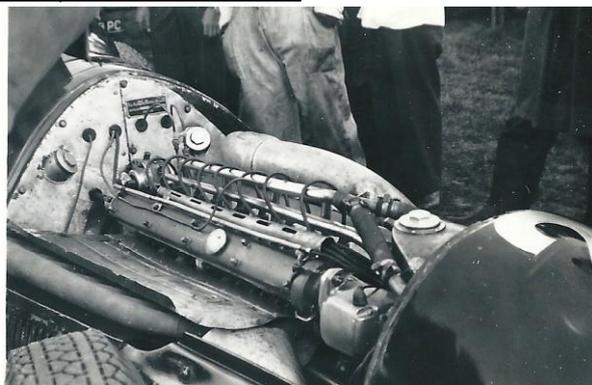
Luigi Villorosi’s Ferrari 375 with the 1951 24-plug engine – shown by the 1-2-2-1 exhaust spacing which provided room for the extra plugs in pairs in the outside of the cylinder heads.

Belgian Englebert tyres. Villorosi was 5th on the grid and finished 3rd.



1951 practice for September Goodwood

Giuseppe Farina, the 1950 World Champion, had brought his personal Maserati 4CLT/50 to the 1951 Whitsun Goodwood meeting but had finished 2nd to Parnell driving Tony Vandervell's private 4½ litre Ferrari 375 in the main event. For September he entered "Maserati or Alfa Romeo". The picture shows he actually brought a 159! He won all the 3 races he entered, defeating Parnell on the Ferrari.



A rare sight – a 2-stage supercharged ERA! IL6 1½ litre. This was R11B with two Murray Jamieson Roots-type blowers in series, possibly a 140mm rotor length unit feeding a 100mm into a C-type finned manifold. Usually a 2-litre engine but running as 1½ for the F1 Goodwood Trophy race. Owned by Peter Bell and driven by Ken Wharton who finished 6th.

Lotus Mk III (IL4 750cc). Built by Colin Chapman and the Allen brothers to contest the 1951 750 Club Championship, which Chapman won. Running here stripped as a racing car.

It was much faster than its rival Austin 7-based specials to the 750 Club formula. Not known until the end of the season was its main secret – "de-siamesing" the two A7 inlet ports and feeding the 4 ports thereby created, 1,4 and 2,3, from an ex-Ford V8 2-choke Stromberg carburetter.



1952 practice for Easter Goodwood



Included as a tribute to Peter Whitehead, seen in his private Ferrari 125 (60⁰V12 1½ litre supercharged). This had a 1948/49-type single-camshaft-per-bank engine in the longer, but still swing rear axle, late 1949 chassis. His wry expression is because he had a seized gearbox and was unable to appear in the race.

Whitehead's major Grand Prix win was the 1949 Czech (Masaryk) GP in his original 1949 Ferrari.

His other major success was co-driving with Peter Walker in the new Jaguar C-type sports car (IL6 3½ litre naturally-aspirated) to victory in the 1951 Le Mans 24 hour race. He also co-drove Jaguars to win the 12-Hour race at Rheims in 1953 (with Stirling Moss) and in 1954 (with Ken Wharton).

Peter Whitehead was killed in 1958 when competing in the Tour de France with his half-brother Graham, who was

driving when their Jaguar crashed.

The garb of the interested onlookers is typical of motor-racing at that period!

1952 practice for the August 9-Hour Sports-car race, Goodwood



The Lago Talbot T26 (IL6 4½ litre naturally-aspirated) of “Pierre Levegh” (*nom-de-course* of Pierre Bouillin) and Phillippe Etancelin. The engine was the original 6-plug type with 3 downdraught carburetters. The body had been changed from cycle mudguards to fully-enveloping to meet the 1952 Le Mans rules.

Levegh in this car had driven single-handed to within 75 minutes of the end of the 1952 Le Mans, with a 4-lap lead, when the engine failed. It seems that a centre main bearing cap bolt broke in the race,

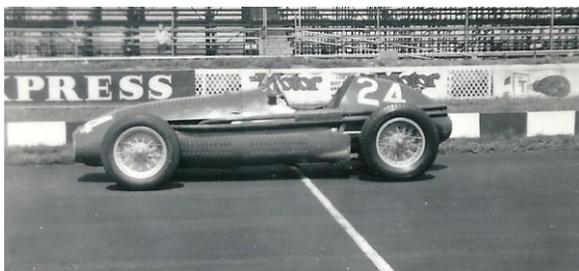
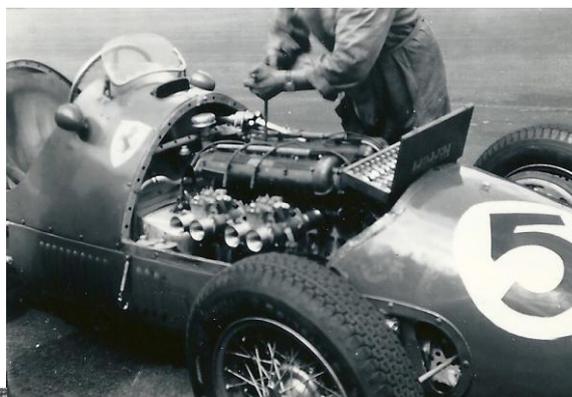
causing a vibration, and Levegh refused to hand over to his co-driver because he believed he could nurse the engine best. He may have missed a gearchange due to fatigue and then the crankshaft broke.

The car DNF early in the 9-Hour race with a broken half-shaft.

1953 first practice for the British GP at Silverstone.

Alberto Ascari’s Ferrari 500 (IL4 2 litre naturally-aspirated). The 1953 spec. had reverted to the original twin Weber 50DCO3 double-choke carburetters from the 4 x single –choke 45DOE type used in 1952 but they were now fixed to the chassis with rubber connections to the engine.

Ascari was on Pole and won the race.



Froilan Gonzalez’ Maserati A6GCM (IL6 2 litre naturally-aspirated). (Sometimes typed as A6SSG).

Gonzalez was 2nd on the grid and finished 4th.



Three World Champions together.

Giuseppe Farina of Italy (1950) on the left but obscured.

Alberto Ascari also of Italy (1952 and well on the way to 1953) in the centre, signing an autograph.

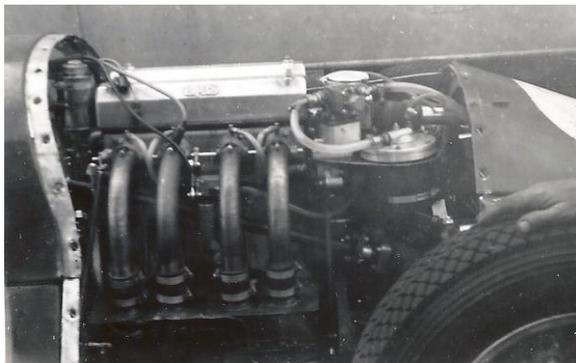
Juan Fangio of Argentina (1951, who would go on to become Champion again in 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957) in characteristic attitude on the right.

Behind Fangio is his young Argentinian

protégé Onofre Marimon

In 1953 Farina and Ascari drove for Ferrari, Fangio and Marimon for Maserati.

Three of those in the picture died in accidents:- Marimon after crashing his Maserati 250F on the Nurburgring in 1954; Ascari in a Ferrari 750 sports-car during unofficial practice at Monza in 1955; Farina crashed his Lotus-Cortina fatally on ice near Chambéry in the French alps in 1966.



1953-type Connaught F2 engine (I4 2 litre normally-aspirated). Developed from a 1950 Lea-Francis "US Midget-racing" basis.

Fitted in 1953 with US Hilborn port fuel injection which had become practically standard for Indianapolis cars by 1952.

Fuel flow was pumped proportional to RPM, which worked well with methanol-base fuel which was not very sensitive to air/fuel ratio.

Connaught were experimenting with nitromethane additive. "Bira" was the best team finisher, 7th, a long way behind.

1954 practice for Easter goodwood

Tony Rudd, ex-Rolls-Royce, development engineer for BRM, in a new T15 Mark II. The team had been bought from the original Trust by Alfred Owen's Rubery Owen group late in 1952. Post-1951 the only events open to the 1½ litre supercharged car were *Formule Libre* and post-1953 only fairly short races in Great Britain. The BRM team therefore revised the car to suit, shortening and lightening the chassis and improving its somewhat dubious roadholding. The double side rods of the new Lampredi-type de Dion tube location are visible. Stub exhausts were adopted but these had later to be fed into pipes because the noise upset residents of a nearby hospital at Goodwood.



Pale green finish had given way to very dark green in mid-1952, allegedly because it was easier to clean off stains – but superstition *may* have come into this change!



Maserati 250F (I6 2½ litre naturally-aspirated) serial 2507, bought by Gilby Engineering for Roy Salvadori to drive, with the patron Sydney Greene in the cockpit.

This was the first 250F to appear in the UK.

The car DNF in the main race after a collision with a BRM.

The 250F engine of the Gilby car. The oil tank in this original spec. was in the engine compartment under the carburettors – note the filler cap. Later it was moved to a cooler location in the tail – which caused its own problem!

Although the Weber 42DCO3 carburettors did not have a ram air intake at this time they were provided with inlets which could balance air pressure to the float chambers.



1954 practice for Whitsun Goodwood
Tony Vandervell versus Alfred Owen



Peter Collins driving the Vandervell "Thinwall" Ferrari (type 375 but much developed, 60⁰ V12 4½ litre naturally-aspirated)

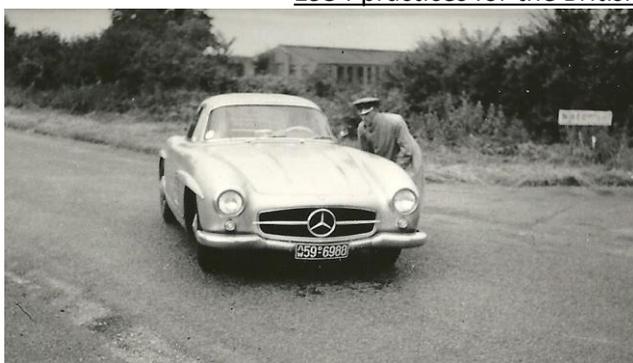
Ken Wharton driving the BRM Mark II (135⁰ V16 1½ litre supercharged)

Collins won the 36 mile Whitsun Trophy on raceday with Ron Flockhart in the other BRM Mk II 2nd and Wharton 5th.

Tony Vandervell had been an early supporter of the BRM but, by the end of 1951, he had become sure that the way forward for a British racing car was not through the committee system enforced on it by the need for multiple sponsors. He had therefore resigned from the Trust and afterwards ran his own team with the 4½ litre Ferrari base originally bought in early 1951 (he had earlier made sporadic entries with Ferrari 1½ litre supercharged cars). While the ensuing rivalry with BRM was not unfriendly, it was certainly a needle match!

On the 17 occasions that Vandervell raced his 4½ litre against the 1½ litre supercharged BRMs (owned by Alfred Owen after 1952), his car finished in front and 1st 8 times. In the other 9 events, although in front of the "Thinwall" (which DNF 7 times), the BRM was not necessarily 1st. Vandervell won most of the important races (1952 Ulster Trophy 250 miles; 1952 Silverstone 100 mi; 1953 Silverstone 50 mi; Snetterton 108 mi) and he was competing against 2 or 3 BRMs. BRM won one significant race (1953 Charterhall 100 miles).

1954 practices for the British GP at Silverstone



Rudolf Uhlenhaut, Chief Development Engineer of Mercedes-Benz, arrived at Silverstone well ahead of the new team of W196 Grand Prix cars. His "private touring car" (as he described it to an enquirer !) was the 1953 development of the successful 1952 300SL (W194), sports car, having Bosch direct fuel injection and a low-pivot rear swing axle. These new feature, suitably

customised, were included in the W196.

Uhlenhaut (on the left) and Alfred Neubauer (Team Manager) posed with the W196 for a picture by a Press man— and the author snapped one under his elbow!

This was the first return of a Mercedes team to England since the Donington GP of October 1938.



The W196 (IL8 2½ litre naturally-aspirated) had obtained 1st and 2nd places in their début in the French GP on the very fast circuit at Rheims just 11 days earlier. Their all-enveloping streamlined bodies had been specifically designed for that race. There was talk that a lighter open-wheel version would be brought to Silverstone, but both cars were the streamliners.



Fangio brought in the Mercedes after a few laps in the rain to discuss the car with Uhlenhaut.

The Silverstone circuit – then a concrete waste with corners defined by old oil drums filled with concrete – was not the place for a car with hidden front wheels. Although Fangio took Pole on the 2nd practice day at just over 100 MPH it was at the price of a corner bashed in on a corner drum.

In the race the Fangio W196 was humiliated by the “primitive” Italian cars and finished 4th, with more body damage,

behind two Ferraris and a Maserati. Karl Kling in the other W196 was only 7th.

Mike Hawthorn in a 1953 Ferrari 625 chassis fitted with an engine from the early 1954 type 555 whose handling was unsatisfactory. The bulge in the bonnet was needed to accomodate the wider engine (IL4 2½ litre naturally-aspirated).

Hawthorn finished 2nd to his team-mate Gonzalez.



Tony Rudd warming-up the Maserati 250F (IL6 2½ litre naturally-aspirated), serial 2509, bought by Rubery Owen to give the BRM team some experience of the new 1954 formula while their own 4-cylinder car was being built.

Driven by Ken Wharton it finished 8th.

Stirling Moss' private Maserati 250F, serial 2508, just overhauled at no charge by the works with the latest mods and with permission to use works revs at their expense.

In the race Moss was 2nd with under 9 laps to go when a lock-washer failed in the gearbox due to overtightening of the nut (the factory's fault) so a reduction gear fell off its shaft and the car lost all drive (DASO 147).



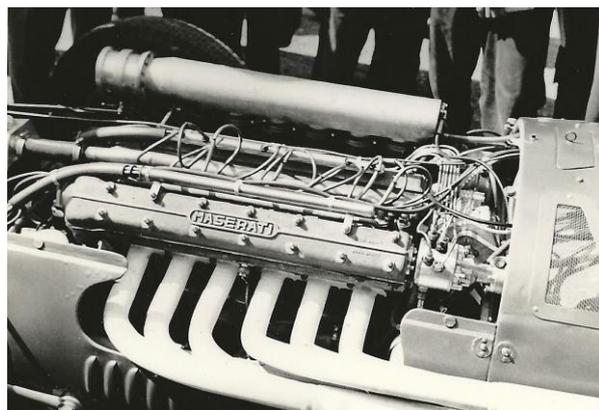


Alberto Ascari, on loan to the Maserati team from Lancia (whose novel 2½ litre car was still not ready to race) tries a brand-new 250F. The works cars came late to the circuit on Friday (race on Saturday in Britain in those days) and were allowed a short untimed practice in light rain after everyone else had finished.

The Maseratis had to start from the back and Ascari's was soon out and after taking over Luigi Villoresi's (he was also on loan) that failed as well. However, Marimon brought the 3rd car into 3rd place.

1955 practice for Easter Goodwood

Moss' private Maserati 250F engine which had been fitted with SU fuel injection into the inlet tracts in place of 3 x Weber double-choke 42DCO3 carburetters. The pump can be seen driven off the rear of the exhaust camshaft. Fuel flow was controlled pneumatically. There was a 10% increase in maximum power on the same fuel (50% methanol) which provided higher straight-line speed but with less torque at medium RPM (DASO 147, 158).



The throttle valve was in the flanged entry to the inlet manifold. There was therefore a large mass of air between valve and engine and this spoilt the response of the car to the accelerator pedal movement. Moss found the lag in reducing power caused oversteer on entering a corner and delay in accelerating out.

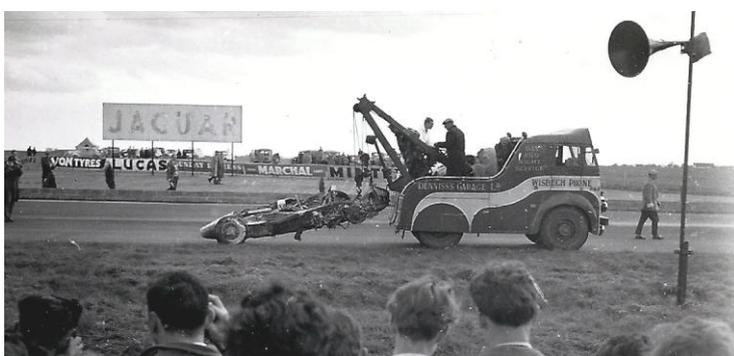
His lap speed at Goodwood dropped from a September 1954 1min. 32.6sec to 1. 33. (DASO 147). He was beaten by a plain 250F in one race and DNF with an SU problem in the big race.

A test between injection and carburetters after the meeting, which Alf Francis (Moss' Chief Mechanic) insisted on, showed a lap speed reduction to 1. 31 and so proved that the latter was 2.2% faster than the injection system on the Goodwood circuit (DASO 147).



The Moss Maserati had also been fitted with Dunlop Al-alloy disc wheels and also Dunlop disc brakes. These would not have been much advantage in short races.

1955 International Trophy race at Silverstone



Ken Wharton, driving a Vanwall (1L4 2½ litre naturally-aspirated) was delayed by throttle linkage problems but resumed to put more running on the car. Approaching Copse corner he went off-track while passing

another car, hit one of Silverstone’s concrete-filled-drums holding a corner sign which broke the rear suspension which in turn pierced the fuel tank and the fuel caught fire on the exhaust (DASO 68). Wharton managed to throw himself out while the car was still spinning, to the relief of the spectators, but the Vanwall was badly damaged before the fire was put out. The wreck was towed away after the race. Wharton’s burns kept him out of action for two months.

1955 British GP at Aintree
David Brown versus William Lyons



Another needle match of the ‘50s was in the sports car arena. On the left the David Brown-owned Aston-Martin team of DB3S cars (IL6 3 litre naturally-aspirated). On the right the singleton entry of William Lyons’ Jaguar team, the D-type (IL6 3½ litre naturally-aspirated).

At Aintree in 1955, after leading initially Hawthorn’s Jaguar, developed especially for the long and fast Le Mans circuit, was overwhelmed by all 4 Astons, more suited to British short circuits. They finished in the order:- Roy Salvadori; Peter Collins; Reg Parnell; Peter Walker.

Jaguar concentrated on racing at Le Mans and their cars won that event 5 times (1951, 1953, 1955, 1956 1957). Aston Martin won once (1959).

Stirling Moss accelerating out of Tatt’s corner at Aintree in a Mercedes-Benz W196 on his way to winning the British Grand Prix, his first classic GP victory. Juan Fangio in another W196 is just behind.



The winning car, complete with the victor’s garland on the bonnet, being pushed back to the paddock.

Mercedes-Benz brought 4 cars and they finished in the first 4 places (Karl Kling being 3rd and Piero Taruffi 4th). This was their revenge for the debacle in 1954!

From personal experience after the race the author has to say that the Liverpool police simply did not know how to treat good-tempered motor-racing enthusiasts!