

1926 DELAGE 15 S8

This month is the centenary of the first Grand Prix staged in Britain, held at Brooklands – the world's first purpose-built motor racing circuit – on 7 August 1926 and organised by the Club.

To mark this historic occasion, here is a remarkable survivor: a Delage 15-S-8, one of four works cars entered by the French team for the 1926 race. While three competed, the car before you served as the practice car and is the only known surviving chassis from that historic race.

The 1926 'Grand Prix of the Royal Automobile Club' was nothing short of dramatic. Of the nine starters, only three completed all 110 laps. Teammates Robert Sénéchal and Louis Wagner claimed victory in their Delage – at a time of four hours and 56 seconds – ahead of Sir Malcolm Campbell in a Bugatti, with another Delage finishing third. Mechanical failures and tyre troubles were constant.

Wagner repeatedly made pit stops to cool his feet in water after the Delage's exhaust became unbearably hot, while André Dubonnet, driving Brooklands for the first time in an ordinary blue lounge suit, finished with flames shooting from his engine.

The lessons of that race transformed Delage. For the 1927 Grand Prix at Brooklands, engineers relocated the exhaust away from the driver, reconfigured the engine and moved the supercharger to the front. The work proved successful: the team swept the podium, taking first, second and third.

After its racing career, the car passed through the hands of Sir Malcolm Campbell, W. B. Scott and Formula 1 driver Reg Parnell before being bequeathed to Brooklands Museum in 2011. Generously loaned to the Club for this exhibition, it stands here now an astonishing 100 years after it was built.

Brief Technical Specification

Engine: 1.5-litre, inline-eight cylinder, with supercharger

Top speed: 125mph

Price when new: not sold publicly

Maximum power: 375 bhp

On display Tuesday 11 August to Monday 17 August, courtesy of Brooklands Museum.