

CLASSIC DRIVER

Relive the Goodwood Members' Meeting from a driver's perspective

Lead

If you were able to attend the Members' Meeting (or even stream the live coverage), you'll know just how exciting the event can be from a spectator's point of view. So just imagine what it's like to be one of the drivers...

James Cottingham's day job involves acquiring and selling on high-value cars for his family business, [DK Engineering](#) – but on several weekends a year, he swaps his office Chesterfield for a bucket seat on an historic racing grid. This year, his season-opener was the 73rd Goodwood Members' Meeting, at which he piloted a 1965-spec Shelby American Daytona Cobra Coupé. He gives us an insight into the diary of a Goodwood driver.

The car



"A Shelby American Daytona Cobra Coupé is an incredibly rare thing; only six were built originally, and today they're worth tens of millions of dollars," James tells us. "Our car has been built as a 99% perfect copy of an original car, to the original specification and with FIA Period F papers. We wanted to ensure we weren't trying to make it appear to be something it wasn't, so we haven't painted it in a replica period-correct colour scheme. Ecurie Francorchamps had an AC Ace painted in AC green with a yellow band across the wing in period, and we felt that if the team had run a Daytona Cobra Coupé, it would have worn this colour scheme. It's just a bit of fun, really." At this point, we noticed a colour-matched Rolex Submariner on his wrist, and asked if it was intentional. "Absolutely – why not?!" came the reply.

The co-driver



"I'm also racing a 1959 Tojeiro-Jaguar solo in the Salvadori Cup, but in the hour-long Graham Hill Trophy, I'll be sharing the Daytona Cobra with Joe Twyman. We do a lot of business together – me being in the Ferrari world, and him working for Gooding & Company and as an independent consultant for private collectors – but he's also one of my best friends. We raced a Mini together for two seasons a few years ago. He's also a safe pair of hands, which is important when you're watching your baby go around the track!"

Leading up to the event



The Tuesday before Members' Meeting weekend, the car was sent to Donington for testing. "We played around with set-ups and then, on the last lap, we had a driveshaft failure. It was unlucky, but lucky in a way - it's better that it fails on the last lap of testing than the first lap of the race. We sent the car back to base, and it was a through-the-night job to replace the driveshaft; we also found one of the shock absorbers was bent, too. As you can imagine, they're not too easy to get hold of at such short notice. However, Tim Summers - with whom I shared a Cobra at the Spa 6 Hours last year - was kind enough to let us borrow the rear shocks from his car. Once those issues were sorted, we had to sort out the exhausts: they were silenced before, and we had to make sure it had straight-through pipes for the Members' Meeting, in true Goodwood spirit."

"While all this was going on, I was in the office trying to tie up any loose ends, as I knew I was going to be away on the Friday. I must admit: I was a bit distracted thinking about the weekend ahead. The cars were loaded up onto the trailer on Thursday afternoon to be taken down to Goodwood on Friday morning, and I made my way down on Friday afternoon, stopping at a dealer on the way to inspect a car on behalf of a customer."

Race weekend

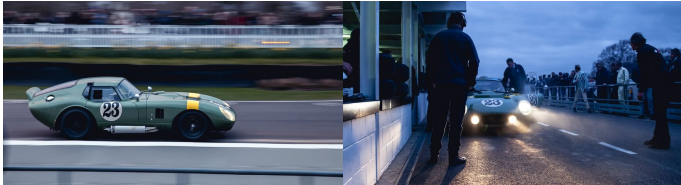


"On arrival, we signed on, got the car scrutineered, had a wander round to look at the other cars, and caught up with a few familiar faces. After that, Joe, a few others and myself went to the pub for dinner - the Royal Oak in Lavant is an old haunt of ours, and somewhere we always try to go when we're at Goodwood. We tried not to have too many beers..."

"On Saturday, we were up bright and early to get ready for the qualifying session. Joe hadn't had quite as much time in the car as I had, so we wanted to give him a bit longer. He managed to get the car up to P4 and, although there was a red flag due to some oil on the track, I was able to find a good line and get us up to P2. We still had a few mechanical teething problems, so I brought the car in early and we went off to where the transporters were parked to practise our driver changes. Being among the younger drivers in the race, we wanted to take full advantage of that.

"I was actually qualifying the Tojeiro in the session before the Cobra race, so I had to come in a few laps early from that in order to run down to the assembly area - I'd missed the driver's briefing, as had Emanuele Pirro, who was the pole-sitter. We were both given a quick summary before jumping into our cars but, then, a big crash on the home straight meant our session was delayed by half an hour." The clean-up operation and the 6:30pm noise curfew squeezed the race down to 30 minutes, during which time each car had to change driver once.

And they're off!



"I went first, and it was an interesting start. Two cars definitely jumped the gun, and I'd lost a place by the first corner. But then I had a pretty decent battle for second, working out where both of our weak points were. I made a few attempts, then went down the inside in the braking area on the back straight; doing that is always a little bit unnerving when you're doing 155mph and trying to hit the brakes later than your opponent. I could also see our oil pressure dropping a little; driving these historic cars, part of the art of it is looking after the car. So, while maintaining a good pace, I was hoping the practice we put into the driver change would pay off during the pit stop – and it did."

When Joe was released from the pits for his stint, he came out ahead of the red Cobra that held the lead from the beginning. "That car was really on song, as evidenced by the speed traps. As everyone saw, it eventually got past, but Joe did really well to hold onto second in such a hotly contested race, with so many good drivers. We were really grateful to have done so well in the car's first time out, so we owe thanks to the many people who helped make it happen, particularly Gary Spencer from Classic Racing Cars."



"After the race, we got changed and headed straight out to the party. We had a few drinks and really enjoyed the band – that's one of the unique things about Goodwood, they look after you so well and put on such a good show. The entertainers that were there, the band, the firework finale with music... it's just signature Goodwood. You couldn't see or repeat it anywhere else."

Photos: © [Tim Brown](#) for *Classic Driver*

Gallery

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