

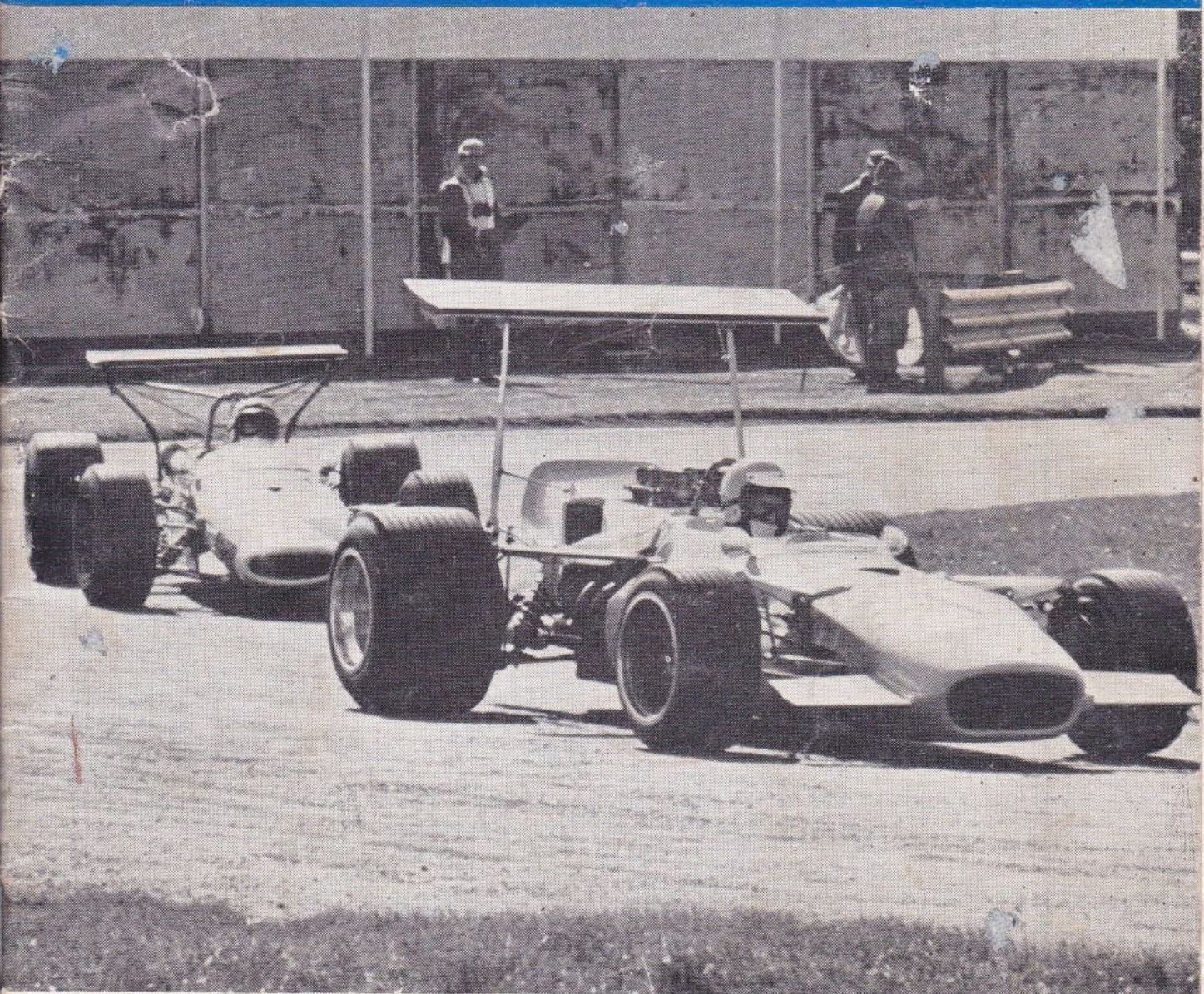


ECURIE ECOSSE

News From The Mews



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A good big 'un harried by a good little 'un—Willie Forbes in his Lola 5000 leads Graham Birrell in the F2 Brabham during the memorable race at Ingliston's April meeting.

Photo: The Scotsman

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So near to Ingliston Victory!

By Alastair Balfour

Ecurie Ecosse returned with a bang to the Ingliston Edinburgh Students' Charities Cup meeting on April 13 when the Brabham made its first appearance there. Fortune did not smile, however, and despite two terrific record-smashing struggles with Willie Forbes' giant Formula 5000 Lola T142, Graham Birrell had to settle for second place.

A foretaste of the Brabham's suitability for this tight and twisting one-mile circuit—excellent adhesion and good acceleration—was given in practice when Graham hurled the blue BT23C round in an official time of 51 seconds, 1.4 seconds under the record which was equalled by Forbes. Harry Ballantine recorded Graham at a 50.8, but the timekeepers must have missed that one!

When Graham climbed from the car after practice he said happily: "That was tremendous. I reckon I could have gone a second faster if I had needed to." He reported having to dip the clutch going through West Gate hairpin to keep the revs. up, but apart from that everything was well.

The Brabham was wearing the Stan Sproat-inspired airofoil at the back which had been hurriedly rigged up at Thruxton the previous weekend. This wing acts on the chassis, not on the hub carriers.

After Thruxton, where the Brabham was definitely down on power, the Cosworth FVA motor was whipped out and sent back to Brian Hart (the Cosworth agent who is doing all the work on our engines), and the spare put in. Judging by results the spare was not down on power at Ingliston.

A 10,000 crowd was attracted to the circuit by dry sunny weather,

and they certainly saw one of the best races for some time at Ingliston. There was a good entry for the main event, the Charities Cup Race run in two heats of 15 laps, but two of the main entrants failed to make the starting grid. John Millar, who won the main race at the last meeting with his Brabham BMW, had a rear suspension breakage in practice which couldn't be repaired in time, and Irishman Tommy Reid didn't appear with his Brabham BT23 (still suffering from its Thruxton maladies) which could have provided a good comparison with our car.

In the first heat Graham hesitated for a second at the start then shot off in third place behind Bill Dryden in John Romanes' Lotus 35, now fitted with a 2.5 litre Coventry Climax engine, and Willie Forbes, whose thundering Lola stormed off in a burst of searing acceleration. However, by the second lap Graham was past Dryden and starting to catch Forbes. Another lap and he was right behind the yellow Lola.

That was how it remained for the rest of the 15 laps. Time after time Graham would close right up to within a few inches of the Lola exhaust pipes, but the combination of a big car and Willie's experience forced him to settle for second place, 0.4 seconds behind. However, there was compensation in the form of a new outright lap record for Ecurie Ecosse at 50.8 seconds, as against the old record held by Forbes and John Miles of 52.4. This new record was a speed of 72.99 mph, some going round Ingliston!

The second heat was a similar story—at least for six laps. Then

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Graham appeared round Merchants in front of the Lola, having passed while lapping some back-markers. We all thought he would pull away now, but Willie's blood was really up and he threw the Lola round and harried Graham all the way. Lap after lap Graham would bring the Brabham round past the grandstands a few yards ahead of the Lola, then Forbes would really put his foot down and the yellow car screamed up to hang on to the Brabham's gearbox. Graham was looking remarkably unflustered, because it's not every day you have a 5 litre car almost pushing you round the circuit.

Alas, on the second last lap the eight-wheeled "Brabola" came up to lap Bill Dryden on the back straight.

Dryden moved over to let Graham past, but then moved over further to let Forbes past, which put the Lola on the inside for the hairpin at West Gate. Graham was first in the corner, although on the outside, and was edged off by Forbes on the exit.

This put the Brabham's rear wheel on the grass and Graham spun, letting Forbes well away. Graham quickly recovered to retain second place, although some ten seconds behind the Lola. For the last lap and a half he was really pushing the Brabham round, but despite this Forbes was given the fastest lap, an incredible 49.8 seconds. So Willie Forbes won the Students' Charities Cup, and £100, after a very consistent drive, and Graham took second, and a total of £60.

EASTER AT THRUXTON—CONTINUED

managed to get back on to the circuit and rejoined the race. He had got some dirt in his air-intakes and was audibly rough for the next two laps, but they seemed to clear themselves and he started to really motor to make up lost ground. By how Rindt had passed the four Matras and was steadily increasing his lead, creating a new lap record at 114.62 m.p.h. in the process. For his part, Graham had made up ground to eleventh position by the end of the race. His was the

second non-works car to finish and he was seventh Grade B driver.

Our thanks go to that indomitable pair, Stan and Sandy, to the calm control of team manager Harry Ballantine and to the most glamorous lap-board holder on the whole of the Pit Straight, Jennifer Nadin.

Finally a very heartfelt "Well done" to Graham Birrell. It was an excellent first showing and a hint of the promise that Ecurie Ecosse is back on the International scene.

NEXT INGLISTON MEETING— SUNDAY, MAY 11