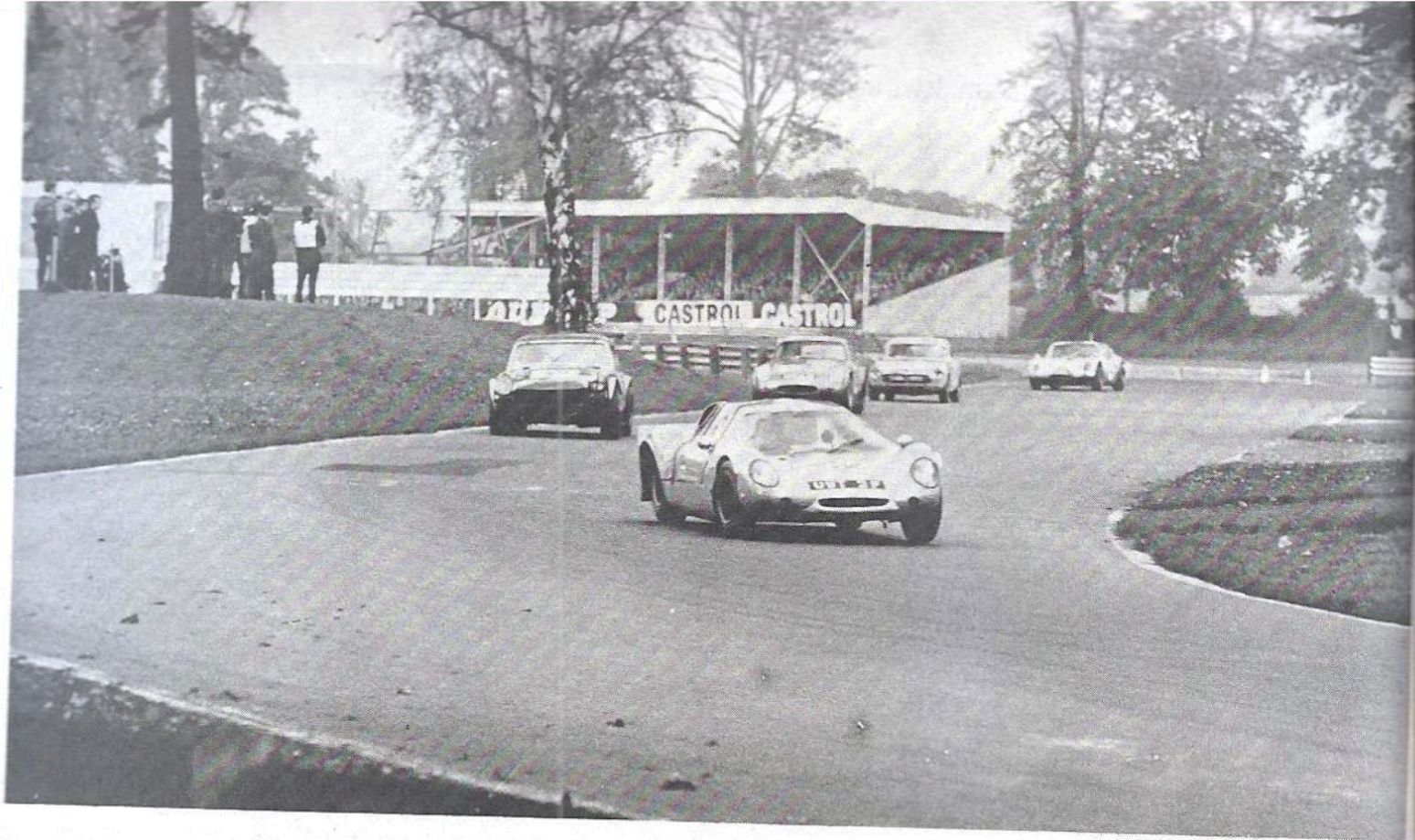


George Silverwood's pretty Mercury-Lotus 23 GT leads a string of GT cars into Vets'. The Shepherds' grandstand is in the background.

P. J. Tugwell

Scotland'

THE SCOTS have one of the most entertaining motor racing circuits in Ingliston, a tiny, compact circuit situated seven miles from Edinburgh in the Royal Highland Showground, yet before 1965 all they had was the bumpy, crumbling ruins of an old airfield at Charterhall.

Indeed, there was no motor racing at all before World War 2 north of the border. After the war Winfield, Crimond and Charterhall airfields were used—all good fun for the drivers, but offering nothing for spectators. In the early 1960s several projects were discussed, some very promising, others just plain nonsensical. Cramond on the Forth was rejected by the RAC as the track was too near the cliff edge; Dalkeith looked promising but planning permission was not forthcoming as a council housing estate was planned; Polkemmet got no further than the drawing board.

The Royal Highland Society built a showground at Ingliston House in 1960 and several people suggested that motor racing could be held on the perimeter roads: the idea was rejected. However, a kart club managed to run a few races and Ian Scott-Watson of Scotcircuits Ltd knocked on the door again. As the Society had lost some money, the idea of an additional source of revenue probably persuaded them to change their minds!

It was on. An 0.76-mile track was laid using widened perimeter roads and new roads and the first meeting was held in April, 1965. The tight circuit kept down racing cars' speeds and consequently, although there were a lot of off-course excursions, no one was seriously hurt. Armco barriers were erected to protect marshals and to allow more spectators near the trackside. In August this year (after the previous year's plans for an extension using the car park was dropped on the ground that too long a circuit would probably spoil the spectacle of the racing) a link road to and from a hairpin was added; this had the effect of giving the cars a reasonably long straight on which to stretch their legs.

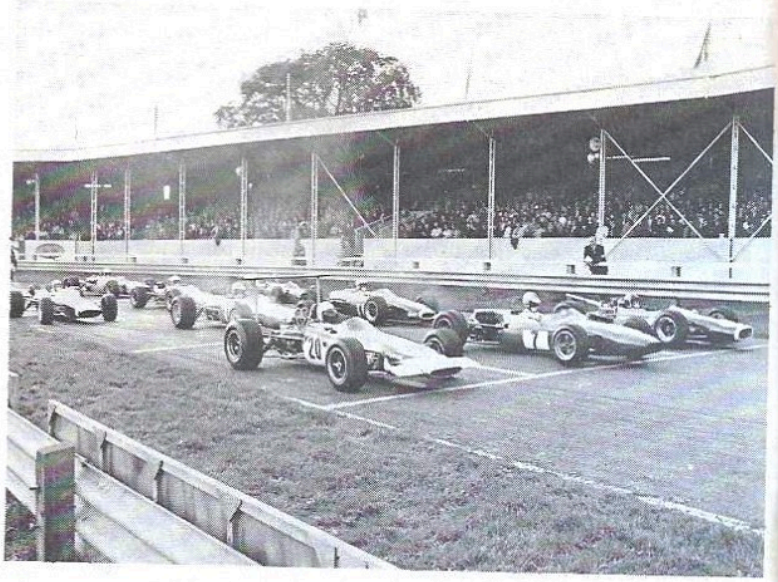
Last Sunday I travelled to Ingliston to watch the National British Lombank Trophy meeting to see for myself the tiny, 1.03-mile circuit that most of the visiting British have raved about.

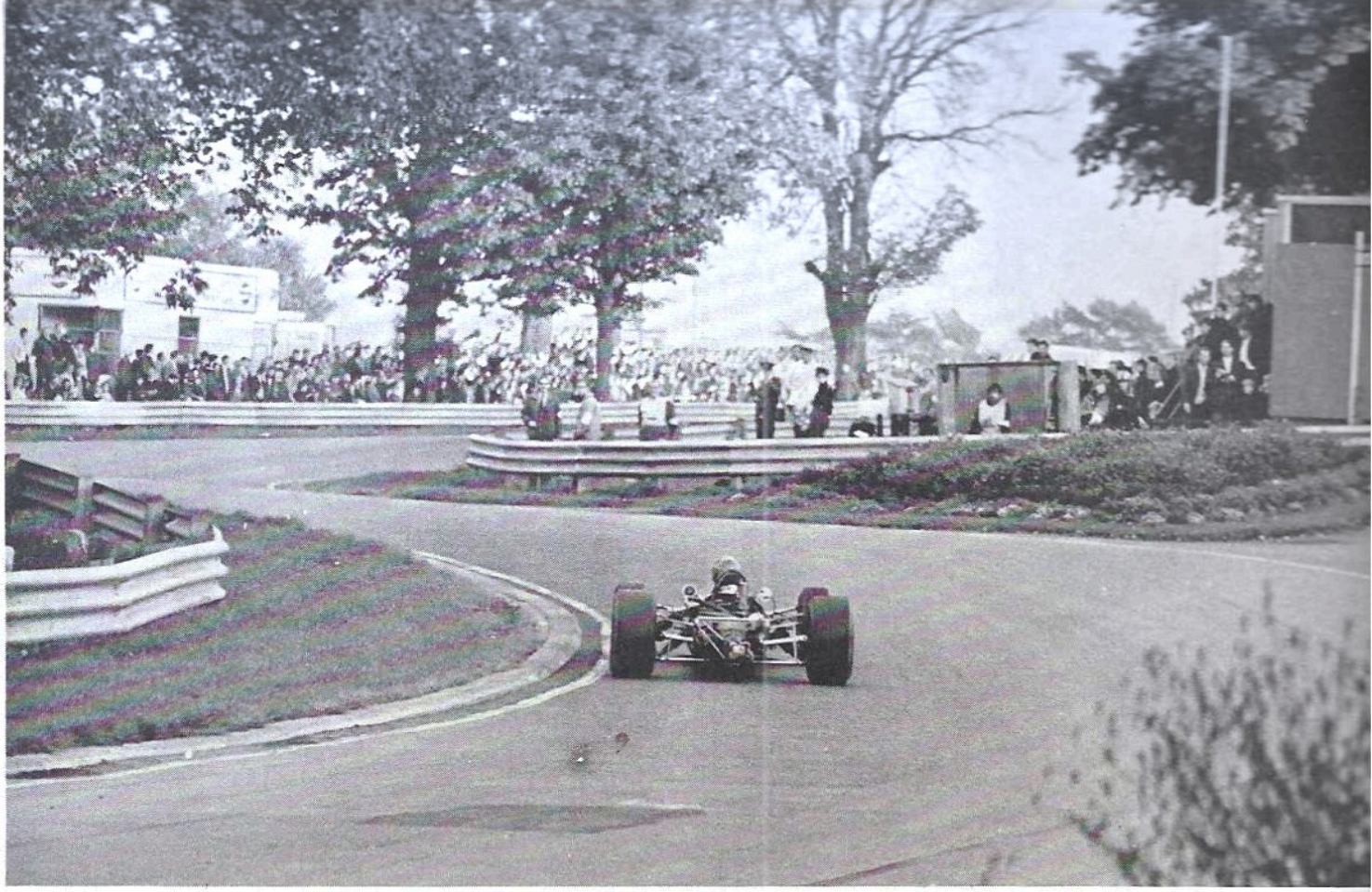
Scotcircuits Ltd, who promote the motor racing at Ingliston, and the Scottish Motor Racing Club, who organise the racing, are indeed lucky that they are able to use some of the amenities that exist at the Royal Highland Showground. There are large, comfortable grandstands originally built for a running track that was rarely used; large restaurants exist; the spectators do not have to wade through inches of mud at wet meetings; the toilet facilities are first class; and the competitors have completely covered-over paddock stalls—used by animals during the week!

During the morning Graham Gauld of Compro Public Relations, who handle the publicity for Ingliston, showed me round the circuit. And what a circuit! Although the track is the regulation 30-ft wide, it does appear to be too narrow in places. From the start in front of the main grandstand the cars curve right round Farmers' to the esses, which comprise a left and a right (Bankers') and another left (Foresters'), followed by a 90 deg right at Gardeners' which is taken on a non-conventional line because of the camber. A short straight leads to a fast right-hander at Shepherds' and then competitors in quick cars reach 100 mph along the straight before they have to brake sharply for the slow hairpin at West Gate. Then a short straight takes them to a tight left-hander (Ploughmen's), followed immediately by a faster left (Vets') and then there is the long, right-hand sweep past the grandstands (Merchants') back on to the start/finish straight and it all starts again. Fast cars lap in just over 52 sec and there is just no time for competitors to relax.

Ready for the off in the Lombank Trophy race. John Miles (Lotus 41X) is in pole position.

P. J. Tugwell





P. J. Tugwell

A single-seater rushes into Bankers', the beginning of the tricky esses section shortly after the start.

circuit

Ingliston is run on a proper commercial basis and consequently large crowds of around 10-15,000 attend each meeting — there is one a month apart from June when the Showgrounds feature four-footed animals. Admission charge is low at 5s a head (most other circuits charge 10s or 12s 6d for equivalent meetings) with 2s 6d for children. However, grandstand accommodation is 10s extra and a 5s car parking charge is made.

Competitors get a very good deal: they are paid a basic rate of travelling expenses calculated on the distance they travel and the category of racing car they own. In addition, prize money is good. For instance, John Miles won both parts of the Lombank Trophy *formule libre* race at £70 a time and also won the GT race, gaining an additional £25.

With such a short and twisty circuit the racing just *has* to be entertaining. Drivers cannot let up for a minute and they have to work really hard for their money. Even the club circuit at Brands Hatch is huge by comparison! Graham Birrell was totally exhausted after driving the Ecosse-Imp in a 20-lap race. Baulking occurs quite frequently, but the standard of flag-marshalling is extremely high and the blue flags are used sensibly.

I would suggest that the track in the start line area and immediately beyond it should be widened. In the Hartley Whyte saloon car final three cars entered Farmers' side-by-side, with the inevitable result: a multiple shunt which caused several hundred pounds worth of damage to two Imps and two Minis.

It was the Hartley Whyte race which provided one of the best scraps of the afternoon. Graham Birrell in his Wylies-sponsored Perdal Escort Twin-Cam led throughout, despite a malfunctioning diff, but right in his boot the whole way came John Handley in the Don Moore Mini-Cooper S. Birrell threw the Escort round in full-blooded slides, while Handley's speed through the esses was almost unbelievable.

John Miles, too, drove with verve in both the Lotus 41X (fitted with twin carbs for the occasion) and the Lotus Europa of Gold Leaf-Team Lotus. He really chucked the cars around in the traditional Ingliston manner and once again showed Formula 1 potential.

Lydden Hill comes nearest to Ingliston in the south of England, but the amenities at Lydden . . . well, you find them! A new, shorter, tighter circuit at Crystal Palace would, of course, be the answer. One where people in comfortable grandstands could see practically the whole track, where the cars were flung into corner after corner, where you could wine and dine and go to the loo in comfort, where you could be *entertained* for a whole afternoon.

MICHAEL KETTLEWELL

The 1.03-mile Ingliston circuit, showing the new link to the hai West Gate. The circuit facilities are second to none.

