



EXCLUSIVE

UNSEEN LE MANS

Fifty years on, we celebrate the 1963 Le Mans 24 Hours with these previously unpublished photos, delivered by an anonymous messenger

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One day about 12 years ago I took a call from reception. 'There's a chap down here with some photos who'd like to speak to somebody.' Experience suggested a carrier bag full of focus-free show snaps. Oh well, I thought, my turn to go and be diplomatic...

But what I found was the photographic equivalent of a barn-find: a box file crammed with delicious Kodachrome transparencies from the Sixties, mostly shot at significant race meetings at Le Mans, Spa and several British tracks. The young guy handed the box over. 'These were my father's. He passed away and they're no use to me; I just want someone to find a use for them.' So here is a small but timely selection of the output of a gent we know – from a pencilled scribble on the inside of the box lid – only as 'Mr Boddy'.

The calm before the storm

1 The relaxed air and shininess of the paint suggest this candid pit-wall shot was taken pre-race. Remarkably, all three cars here would finish: No. 24, the red 'Equipe Nationale Belge' Ferrari 250 GTO of Jean 'Beurlys' Blaton and Gérard van Ophem in second place, two spots ahead of the No. 25 GTO of Pierre Dumay and Leon Dernier (who raced under the name 'Eldé' because 'Dernier' translates as 'last', hardly the ideal name for a racing driver). The Lotus Elite of John Wagstaff and Pat Fergusson was the only one of three Elites to finish, in 10th place.

2a & 2b These pre-race photos show the Ferrari 330 TRI/LM of Pedro Rodriguez and Roger Penske. It set the fastest qualifying time and was running third when disaster struck just after midnight. With Penske at the wheel, the engine threw a conrod on the Mulsanne and the car spun on the instant oil slick created. Penske was only slightly injured but the car was badly damaged. Rebuilt, in 2007 it sold for \$9,275,000 – then an auction record for any car.



2a

3 This streamlined Sprite coupé was the sole works Healey entry for the '63 race and was driven by John Whitmore and Bob Olthoff, both loaned for the race by the BMC competitions department. Despite being powered by just 1100cc, the car set an average speed of almost 100mph and was running well until around 1am when Olthoff entered the Maison Blanche corner too fast and crashed. He was badly bruised in the incident and briefly hospitalised.



2b

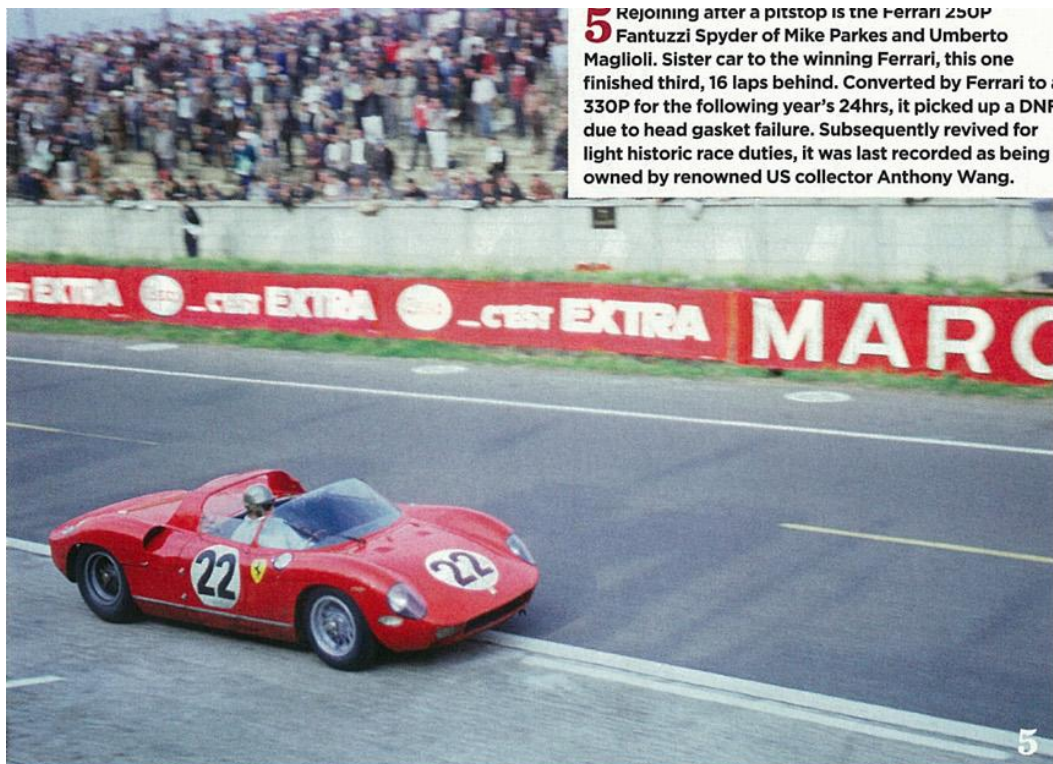


3

'Down in the British corner a pair of Lotus Elites are grabbing all the attention'



4 We're down in the British corner here, with a pair of Lotus Elites grabbing all the attention and a brace of Sunbeam Alpines being rather ignored. Three of the four succumbed to engine failure during the race, but the No. 39 Elite of Wagstaff and Fergusson won the GT1.3 class and finished 10th overall. This matched expectations; an Elite had finished eighth in the previous year's event.



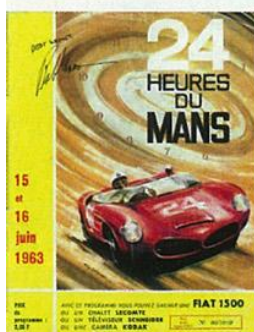
5 Rejoining after a pitstop is the Ferrari 250P Fantuzzi Spyder of Mike Parkes and Umberto Maglioli. Sister car to the winning Ferrari, this one finished third, 16 laps behind. Converted by Ferrari to a 330P for the following year's 24hrs, it picked up a DNF due to head gasket failure. Subsequently revived for light historic race duties, it was last recorded as being owned by renowned US collector Anthony Wang.

Who finished where?

As was fairly typical for the event, out of 80 cars entered for the 1963 Le Mans, just 49 made it to the start line on June 16. And despite the warm, dry weather only 14 were still running 24 hours later. The winner – by a comfortable 16 laps – was the works Ferrari 250P driven by Italians Lorenzo Bandini and Ludovico Scarfiotti. In fact the first six places went to Ferraris, three of them 250 GTOs.

First car home without the aid of a prancing horse was the Cobra Daytona of Brits Ninian Sanderson and Peter Bolton in seventh place. Though two laps behind the NART GTO of Masten Gregory and David Piper (and 29 laps shy of the overall victor), they were at least credited with winning the GT+3.0 class.

Further down, and illustrating how legends car grow around Le Mans cars, was the streamlined MGB of Paddy Hopkirk and Alan Hutcherson. Since immortalised as a Scalextric model, it is often spoken of with great reverence as having finished 12th overall and first in class. True, but it was also the last car to be classified as a finisher, and all others in the class had dropped out of the race!



6 Main focus here is the Maranello Concessionaires Ferrari 330 LMB of Jack Sears and Mike Salmon. It finished fifth overall, 25 laps behind the winner. One of only four 330 LMBs, and the only right-hand-drive example, it has since been owned by various elite Ferrari collectors and made two appearances at the Goodwood Revival. The car – now yellow – is reputed to have sold for \$16m last year.



7 Graham Hill in the experimental Rover-BRM gas turbine car he shared with Richie Ginther. A specially invited entry, allowed to run but not compete – hence the '00' number – it surprised everyone by not only lasting the 24 hours but finishing in what would have been seventh place, averaging 107.8mph. Hill described the experience as 'like sitting with a Boeing 707 behind you'. Rebodied as a coupé, the car ran for real in 1965, coming 10th.