



1906 / 2006 : *A century of passion for the motorcar*

The Automobile Club de la Sarthe saw the light of day 100 years ago; it was founded to organise the first Automobile Club de France Grand Prix. These two historic events involving the motorcar are closely linked, and their centenary is being celebrated on 10th & 11th June 2006.

The story of the motorcar in Le Mans and in the Sarthe began at the end of the 19th century. It was the direct result of the first machines built by the Bollée family, which disturbed the peace and quiet of the streets and roads of both the town and the department. Amédée Bollée Senior has gone down in history as the man who puffed his way Paris from Le Mans at the wheel of L'Obeissante, a horseless carriage of his own design: a journey that took 18 hours!

The first races were town-to-town affairs until the French state banned this type of event after the raft of fatal accidents in the Paris-Bordeaux-Madrid race in 1903. It was the end of town-to-town events and a new formula had to be found. The initiative came from the Automobile Club de France who made public its desire to hold a grand prix on a closed circuit. But who would be the organiser? This was the aim of the consultation published in the l'Auto newspaper on 1st December 1905. The chase for the race was on! In the Sarthe where 24 hours are more important than anywhere else, and where the motorcar already had many followers, a steering committee was set up which did a really thorough job and sent in the most competitive offer possible.

Because competition there was aplenty! A total of 17 French departments sent in offers. The circuit project championed by the Sarthe Committee was an original one in that it took the form of a triangle, measured 100 kms and consisted of long straights, so it had a lot going for it. Budgetwise it also stood the test. There was little reason for hesitation and on 16th January 1906 the A.C.F announced its unanimous choice after two inspection visits. The Sarthe had won! Things speeded up. On 24th January a general assembly voted the founding of the Automobile Club de la Sarthe whose first challenge would be to bring the organisation of this first grand prix to a successful conclusion. Adolphe Singher was elected president and the post of general secretary went to Georges Durand, the man responsible for the attractive layout.

Le Mans and the Sarthe: a land of legend

Mercedes, FIAT, Panhard, Renault were some of the names of the 32 cars appearing on the entry list for the first motorcar grand prix in the history of motor sport held on 26th & 27th June 1906. The word soon spread and tens of thousands of spectators came from all over Europe to see the race. The Sarthe was the centre of the world!



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The drivers had to cover 12 laps of the 103,180 km circuit over a 2-day period. Men and machines were put to a severe test and there were many retirements (21). The French motorcar industry triumphed in the first Automobile Club de France Grand Prix thanks to Renault in beautiful sunny conditions in an environment that from then on was ready and willing to welcome the motorcar. Renault's advantage came from the fact that the cars were equipped with the new Michelin detachable rims allowing the Hungarian mechanic-cum-driver Ferenc Szisz to plan a cunning race strategy. His average speed was awesome for that era: over 100 km/h (101,198 km/h)!

The Automobile Club de la Sarthe, future Automobile Club de l'Ouest, had won its bet. It was just the start of the adventure!

10TH & 11TH JUNE 2006: ON THE TRACKS OF THE FIRST A.C.F GRAND PRIX

- A World Premiere: 100 cars from 1895 to 1914 consisting of a selection of unique and prestigious models from all over the world will gather together 100 years on, and the no. 4B Darracq driven by Wagner in 1906 will come to the Sarthe circuit from New Zealand.
- This event will take place right in the heart of the 2006 Le Mans 24 Hours fortnight between the test day on Sunday 4th June and the 74th Le Mans 24-Hour race on 17th & 18th June.
- It is organised by the Automobile Club de l'Ouest in partnership with the Sarthe and the Pays du Perche Sarthois General Council under the patronage of the Automobile Club de France.
- With sponsorship from the MMA, DAS, Mercedes-Benz and Renault.
- Under the auspices of the FIVA, the FFSA and the FFVE.
- 5 categories: pre-1906 racing cars, pre-1906 sports cars, racing cars from 1907 to 1914, sports cars from 1907 to 1914, cars built in the Sarthe before 1914.



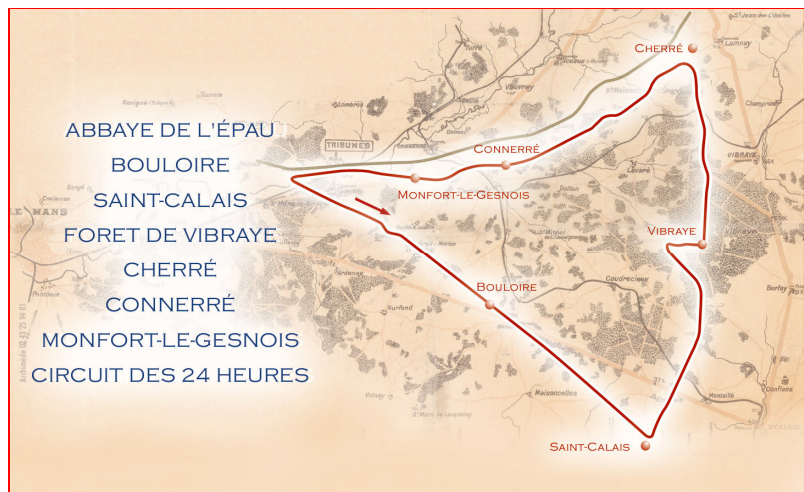
A LEGENDARY CIRCUIT

- An international celebration of the first grand prix held on a closed circuit in the history of motor racing, the ancestor of the Formula 1 grands prix of today.
- A retrospective run over the 1906 circuit: Fourche d'Auvours, Bouloire, Saint Calais, Fôret de Vibraye, Cherré, Connéré and Montfort le Gesnois (a reception will be laid on in these places). The participants will use 95% of the original circuit for the first time since 1906.
- The route will use the Vibraye Forest road, part of the 1906 circuit that has been restored and opened exceptionally for this historic occasion.
- The spectators can admire these extraordinary cars running under their own power; they are living witnesses to the skills and talent of the manufacturers and drivers of 100 years ago.
- At the end of the run there will be a symbolic grouping of the cars lined up herringbone style on the Le Mans 24-Hour circuit pits straight.
- Closing ceremony: It will take place in the Sarthe Motorcar Museum which will put on an exhibition devoted to the centenary of the first A.C.F Grand Prix and the founding of the Automobile Club de la Sarthe. The exhibition will remain open until 12th November 2006.

Provisional programme: Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th June 2006

Saturday 10th June 2006	15:00	Abbaye de l'Epau: Opening of the Welcome for entries and scrutineering of the cars taking part in the Retrospective 1906 A.C.F Grand Prix run.
	19:00	The Welcome will be closed and the cars put in a guarded parc fermé until the next morning.
	20:30	Gala Dinner (invitation only).
	23:00	Dinner ends.
Sunday 11th June 2006	9:00	Abbaye de l'Epau: parc fermé opened.
	9:30	Departure of the road-closing cars, marshals take up their positions etc.
	10:00	Start of the 1st car, the oldest, followed by the others in chronological order every 30 seconds.
	10:15	Arrival of the first car in Bouloire. Start of the stage.
	10:35	Arrival of the first car in Saint Calais. Start of the stage.
	10:50	Start of the last car from l'Abbaye de l'Epau.
	10:50	Opening of the Vibraye forest road, 1st car.
	11:05	End of the Bouloire stage – start of the last car.
	11:05	1st car at the Vibraye horse race course.
	13:00	Last car on the Vibraye forest road.
	13:00	Start of the picnic.
	14:00	End of the picnic.
	14:15	Start of the Cherré stage.
	14:30	Crossing of the RN 23, start of the Connerré stage.
	14:45	Start of the Montfort le Gesnois stage, Parc des Sittelles.
	15:30	Saint Mars la Brière; 1st car crosses the traffic lights.
	16:00	Opening of Tertre Rouge. First car on the Le Mans 24 Hour circuit in an anti-clockwise direction. Cars lined up herringbone style on the pits straight Closing of the Connerré stage and crossing of the RN 23 for the last car.
	16:45	End of the Montfort le Gesnois stage.
	17:00	Last car past the traffic lights, Saint Mars la Brière.
	17:30	Last car at Tertre Rouge - Closing of Tertre Rouge.
18:00	Closing ceremony in the Sarthe Motorcar Museum.	
19:00	End of the event.	

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13/03/06