

A Timeless Reconstruction

The south of France in the hills above Toulon. Blue hills in the morning haze, the shimmering Mediterranean in the distance, green pine trees, manicured lawns imported from Biggin Hill and a space age racing circuit owned by Bernie Ecclestone.

That is where early on Friday, 24th April we came down the pit garage access ramp to join the gleaming Gulf liveried GT40 which was the exact replica of P1075. The car was being readied by the mechanics for the free trial sessions of the 4 Hours of Castellet endurance race to be held that Sunday on the Paul Ricard HTTT organized by the V de V organisation.

To introduce the car, let us step back 3 years.

Back in 2006, having raced 1078 and 1016 practically continuously for 5 years, and having seen the kind of stress that races put on the car, I had toyed with the idea that it would be nice to race without that nagging feeling of guilt that I could be damaging a piece of history.

Original GT40s stand up to one hour races relatively well, but I also wanted to do longer endurance events or free track days, which I thought would be too much for the original cars.

I was thinking of a GT40 that was the same as the originals, drove and felt like the originals and would be allowed to take part in Historic races.

Further back in 2000, when I started looking for a GT40 and knowing they were scarce, I had thought I might only be able to buy a 'continuation' car and looked, among others, at Safir. Through my search process I become aware that especially in the UK there were people driving replicas on the roads. Finally I had been lucky and bought 1078.

At the first Le Mans Classic in 2002 having finished the technical formalities, we were taking a walk around the paddock and the 'village', when in the field at the left of the entrance I saw a whole bunch of GT40s parked under the trees. Needless to say, I took a very close look at the cars which belonged to the Enthusiasts Club. I was impressed by how close to the originals they were.

I then became a member of the Club and started to get more acquainted with the various construction variants of club members' cars. Although very close to the originals, inquiries revealed it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to get the required FIA Historic Passport for a similar car.

So if I wanted to realise my idea, I had to find another solution. In 2006, Pete Brock, who was having his Cobra Daytona Coupe constructed in South Africa by Superformance, made me aware that they were building a continuation GT40 which he said was using continuation chassis numbers, hinting they should be able to obtain the FIA papers.

In October 2006 I contacted Nigel Hulme, who represented them in the UK, and discussed the possibility of having a Superformance built as a Mk1 in Gulf livery. I soon realised these cars, while having the same outward appearance, were made to accept different capacity and powered modern engines and gearboxes and therefore tried to establish whether I could have one built to FIA specs. I was assured this would be possible, but finally decided that brakes, suspension and chassis were so different from the original that there was no way I would be allowed to race the car. For a while I thought of buying one for training on track days, but then gave up.

In May 2007 I read in *Classic and Sportscar* that GT40 GT111 had been found and was being restored by Gelscoe. I knew Gelscoe as a company from whom you could purchase various GT40 parts that were exactly the same as the originals. I had done this in the past, but didn't know they had the capacity to restore cars that were damaged to that extent. It is about then that I also came to know they had built a 1965 GT40 from scratch and read that Ronnie Spain had found it to be exactly like the original.

Like most people who have ever been associated with a GT40, for me the best, the most famous GT40 was P1075, twice winner of the Le Mans 24 Hours. A testimony to this is the number originals and replicas that have been painted in its distinctive and well known Gulf colours, to make them 1075 'look-alikes'.

It has an amazing history which has been summed up below by Ronnie Spain.

To my knowledge then, Gelscoe had apparently built a perfect 1965 car and had restored the chassis

GT 40

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Chassis number	GT40 P/1075 (Mirage M.10003 rebuilt)
Despatch date	23-1-1968 (completion)
Customer	Gulf Oil Corp., Pittsburgh, USA
Colour	Light blue with marigold stripe
Trim	Black
Configuration	Race specification on lightweight frame with lightened roof
Engine	67/10. 1968 Ford 289 with Gurney-Weslake heads and Webers
Transmission	NR1009. ZF 5-speed with 3.44:1 FD (+ J ratios)
Wheels	Mirage (BRM) 8½ in. and 11 in.
Tyres	Firestone
Other details	(As for GT40 P/1074)
Registrations	

1075 has an incredible race history attached to it. Although not officially recorded as such, it was in fact a rebuild of one of the 1967 Mirages, available information showing it to be M.10003. It raced as a Gulf/JWA team car in every contended round of the 1968 Sports Car Championships with the outstanding results of outright wins at the BOAC 500, Spa, Watkins Glen and Le Mans and third overall (a class win) at Nürburgring. In 1969 it won at Sebring and then became the first car in the history of the event to win Le Mans twice. After being exhibited at a few

shows, 1075 was shipped back to Gulf's headquarters in Pittsburgh.

In 1976 it was leased to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, where Gulf believed the car would gain them maximum publicity. It was in restored condition and was quite superbly finished. In late 1984, after turning down innumerable offers to purchase the car, Gulf finally relented and sold it to proud new owner Harley Cluxton of Phoenix, Arizona.

Note: Despite all my best efforts to get to the truth behind the Mirage chassis details built into GT40 P/1075, in spite of every door being slammed in my face as I went on researching after my book came out, I finally had all the chassis details needed to confirm that 1075 was not a rebuilt Mirage as I had been told by Len Bailey, but was a unique GT40 built up with Mirage modifications incorporated.

GT40 P/1075 is now owned by Walmart supremo Rob Walton.

of GT111. So it was possible to have an exact replica built.

If so, and if I was going to have one built, I wanted it to be an exact replica of 1075, which had distinct differences from the other Mk1 cars.

It took me some time to contact Andrew Newall, one of the owners of Gelscoe, on the subject. I didn't know whether they would build it for me, as they hadn't even publicised the fact that they were building complete cars.

I finally came round to talking to Andy about it and called him one night early in March 2008 and explained my idea. He said he would think about it and speak to his partner, Jon Brewin. They were apparently in the process of building their third car, which they had decided would be their last. He nevertheless said he liked the idea of building a Weslake, John Wyer car and would get back to me.

He very quickly called me back and told me they were ready to proceed. On 5th March I wrote Andy the following message:

*Dear Andrew,
Thank you for your extensive e-mail. It appeals a lot to me to be able to do as you suggest. My main motivations are the following:*

- ◆ *1075, the JW Gulf car, is mythical and to me epitomises the most glorious period of the GT40. I love GT40s but even if it were possible to convince Rob Walton to sell it, the price is well above 10 million \$US.*
- ◆ *I tried 1074 but what the owners are asking also bears no relation to what I consider to be the value of the car.*
- ◆ *I drive and race my cars, though I resist changing or modernising them, even if it will better their performance. For example, even for the gearbox I purchased from you I was not fully satisfied since they were never used in GT40s. So I financed Paul Fleming to have the castings made for the correct ZF 25-1 gearbox, which was the one fitted on my car. As soon as it is ready I will change it.*
- ◆ *So I could do nothing but look for an acceptable reconstruction. Very few of my cars are 'reconstructions', but when I have them I choose them for their exact replication of the originals, like my Favre 250 GTO.*
- ◆ *Unfortunately none of those I looked at, including the Superformance, satisfied the 2 conditions I consider to be essential:*
 - ◆ *The car must be strictly the same as the one it is a recreation of.*
 - ◆ *The car must race and drive like the originals.*

That is precisely what I liked in the photos you sent. The chassis, suspension parts, door latches etc all appear to be absolutely correct.

So tell me how you propose we proceed.

Best regards

Claude Nahum

Within a week we had agreed and construction started. The car was to be delivered towards the end of 2008.

There were numerous details to deal with. The chassis was different from the 'normal' GT40 in the floor, the front and the roof. The rear of the car, the door latch mechanism, the air intakes, the rear engine compartment and the layout of the front were all different. We had lots of documents and photos to refer to. Furthermore a professional photographer I knew, Mathieu Hertault, had just realised a detailed photographic portfolio of 1075. Whenever we needed details I asked him to send me the photos.

The build of the chassis started immediately. It would be numbered GEL W001.



Work starts on the tub

While this was going on Andrew informed me he had found the original gearbox casing from 1084, which we immediately purchased to use on the car.

In June 2008 I visited Gelscoe's workshop for the first time. I was amazed at the collection and variety of GT40 parts they had in their workshop. Andy showed me all the parts that had been put aside to build my car. He then took us into his and Jon's office, where against the wall was an old fashioned wooden cabinet with thin, long drawers. It reminded me of the drawing cabinets we had at the Ford Research Centre in Dunton when I used to work there back in 1970. Andy opened a drawer which was full of pencil-drawn technical drawings. He took one out to show it to me; it was an original FAV drawing of a part of the GT40.

The cabinet was the original cabinet containing all the original signed drawings of all the parts of the GT40 as drawn at FAV, with all developments and modifications to the drawings. This was incredible. It was like a time warp. Drawings, notes, details, changes, modifications were all there. That was the