

Napier-Railton Special fired up and running by Brooklands Museum



The Napier-Railton Special was fired up today and was running on the Finishing Straight by the Brooklands Museum. The sound was wonderful.

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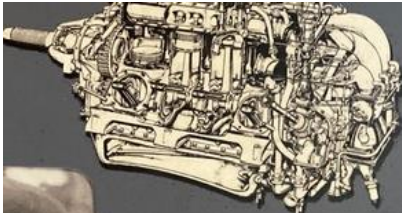


The Napier-Railton Special was built in 1932/3 by Thomson and Taylor – who were based at the Brooklands Track – to the commission of wealthy amateur racing driver John Cobb. It was built specifically to break World Endurance Records and to race at the Track and, in 1935, became the fastest vehicle to lap the Outer Circuit, at 143.44mph (231km/h). The record was never beaten. John Cobb and his co-drivers achieved several world endurance records with the car: probably the most notable of these was the 24 Hour Record of 150.6mph (242km/h) set at the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1936.

The Napier-Railton's racing days ended in 1937, when Cobb felt that he could no longer beat the Brooklands handicapper: its final victory was in the 1937 BRDC 500km race. In 1949 John Cobb hired the car to the Romulus Film Company for use in 'Pandora and the Flying Dutchman', a film about a racing car driver. In 1951 it was sold to the GQ Parachute Company of Woking, which had the car modified for high-speed trials of aircraft braking parachutes on the runway at Dunsfold airfield. To cope with the stresses of these tests, Dunlop fitted the car with special disc brakes - the only significant change made to the vehicle to the present day.

Since the acquisition of the car by Brooklands Museum in 1997 it has been demonstrated at many venues including Brands Hatch, Goodwood, the Farnborough International Air show, Silverstone, Donington Park, Dunsfold, Montlhéry (France) and Laguna Seca (USA).

THE ENGINE



One non-supercharged Napier 'Lion' X1A aero-engine: 12 cylinders, 139.7 x 130.2 mm (5½" x 5¼"), (23,970 c.c.) in three banks of four - one bank vertical, the others at 60 degrees. Double overhead camshafts on each bank, actuating four overhead valves/cylinder. Four-throw crankpin with three connecting rods on each crank-pin. Ignition by dual magnetos mounted transversely at the front of the crankcase. Engine on channel-section sub-frame. 535bhp at 2,550rpm. RAC rating 145½hp.

THE DRIVER

Born in 1899, John Cobb took an interest in Brooklands from an early age, when he would cycle over to the track from his Esher home. He started racing in 1925 and immediately took to big cars such as a 10-litre Fiat, Parry Thomas's 27-litre 'Babs' and a 10.5-litre Delage with which he broke the Brooklands lap record in 1929.

In 1937, Cobb commissioned a new twin-engined Railton to attack the World Land Speed Record. With this car he took the record in 1938, 1939 and finally in 1947 at an average speed of 394.19mph (634km/h). John Cobb was tragically killed while attempting a water speed record in 'Crusader' on Loch Ness in 1952.

See video clips:

[230807-napier-railton-video1.MOV](#)

[230807-napier-railton-video3.MOV](#)

<https://www.brooklandsmuseum.com/>

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