

installed around Stone, Club and Abbey. On the downside, the popular spectator area on the inside of Woodcote was removed.

Two giant Avesco Starvision TV screens had been used at the Grand Prix for the first time in 1988 and had proved so popular with spectators that five were to be provided for 1989 – the largest number ever at one location. They were 20ft high, and two were to be located between Stone and Club, with others at Woodcote, Copse and Becketts, providing not only the BBC coverage but also Silverstone's own specially filmed footage as well, including the support races. At the same time Radio Silverstone was increasing its daily commentaries.

But all this work had to be paid for somehow, and when the ticket prices for the Shell Oils 1989 British Grand Prix were announced, spectators were dismayed to find that they had risen by 67 per cent to £30 for basic admission. "The prices have been brought into line because they had become totally out of step with the costs of putting on a Grand Prix," explained Silverstone Circuits chairman Tom Walkinshaw at the time in an interview with *Autosport*. "They didn't take account of the increases inflicted on us by outside parties, and even with this increase we are only now in line with the other European Grands Prix.

"We had to take a good look and see how we could use the facility in order to make it pay. That's why we will soon have two circuits that can operate at the same time. It's not just testing but corporate days and the school."

When Silverstone was granted the five-year deal to host the British Grand Prix from 1987 onwards, it had to agree to a raft of demands from FISA. In the first phase, it had to concentrate on fulfilling the very basic demands, such as a new press centre, safety fencing and closed-circuit television all around the track for safety reasons. The debris fencing, in particular, was unpopular with spectators, restricting both their view and the opportunity for photography. But, as Walkinshaw explained in the interview, they didn't just wake up one morning and decide to spend several thousand pounds on fencing. "The governing body says that the standards for a Grand Prix include debris fencing, so we did it, there was no option.

"The press centre was not a priority of our choosing, but FISA said that they wanted it, along with the television link around the circuit," he added.

To improve the spectator's experience, the terracing from the start line, around Copse and towards Becketts was raised and concreted, and other sections were also raised, but the concreting of these had to wait until the following year to allow the ground to settle.

In a separate interview with *Motor Sport* Walkinshaw said: "FISA has made it clear that only circuits which develop will grow with the sport, and we know what that means. We made all the changes to date to comply with our agreement with FISA. The latest changes, however, have nothing to do with that. They are being made because we want to bring motor racing in Britain into the nineties, and to bring our facilities up to the standard of those in other areas of the sport or entertainment business."

John Watson

"I think the first time I visited Silverstone was in the late sixties, it might have been '67 or '68 for the International Trophy, and my best friend and I went over because his sister worked for John Surtees or Lola or something. So we got taken up to the circuit and then tucked into the back of a van, covered by tyres and blankets, and got taken into the pits. So we were on the inside of the circuit, and that was the first time I'd been there.

"There was a Formula 1 race, but there was also a big sports car race and I was watching through a little gap between the pit wall and the timing and scoring at Woodcote, and it was such a visual experience. Woodcote was still a fast corner and I'd never seen racing cars travelling at that level of speed, and the sound of the V8s was very powerful.

"The first time I raced there was '73 in the Grand Prix, and that was in a Brabham, which Hexagon of Highgate had leased from Bernie and painted in the international racing colours of Highgate, North London, which was brown.

"I managed to avoid being caught up in the notorious Jody Scheckter drop in Woodcote, where he was just too quick, too wide and too inexperienced.

"In 1977 the Brabham BT45B was a very effective Grand Prix car, with the flat 12 Alfa Romeo engine, and the nature of that circuit played to the strengths of the car. I was on the front row with James Hunt, and I led off the line, and for 30 odd laps James and I had a battle for the lead.

"But we had a fuel pick-up problem so I went into the pits and they put more fuel in. I went back out again and within another ten or so laps, I had to retire – a huge disappointment. I think it was very generous of James to say later that he was doing all he could to find a way past, but he couldn't achieve that. Had he found a way past then I don't know what would have happened.

"That home win in 1981 was a very special win, a very special day. The lead-up to that Grand Prix was that at the Spanish Grand Prix at Jarama, which was two races prior to Silverstone, I finished third and scored the first podium finish for the McLaren MP4/1. At the French Grand Prix at Dijon I finished second, and then I thought, well we're coming to Silverstone, a circuit that primarily is a power circuit, so the turbo-charged cars are going to be at an advantage. Nevertheless, the media were asking, will you win at Silverstone?

"And I don't know what I expected. Obviously I had hopes, but the pace of the Renaults in particular, and to a lesser degree the Ferraris, meant I was somewhere on the fourth or fifth row



of the grid. When the race started I was running behind Alan Jones, who was running directly behind Gilles Villeneuve, and I described Villeneuve's driving that day as being like that of a hyperactive child.

"His Ferrari was a dog, and that's a compliment – it's an insult to a dog – and in the chicane he had the car bouncing over kerbs. To watch, it was amazing to see the car control, but he was holding up Alan, certainly holding me up and inevitably he lost control of the car at Woodcote. Alan was so close behind he couldn't see where Villeneuve was through the tyre smoke. I was far enough behind and I was looking through the corner to the exit as well as watching what was happening here.

"Anyway, I managed to slow down enough to avoid everything, but in the process of doing so the engine stalled, so I had to quickly think – fuel pump on, select a lower gear and bump start it. It just caught and off I went again. And my team-mate, Andrea de Cesaris, who was directly behind me, had been looking at the gearbox of my car. He hadn't been looking through the corner, which is what he should have done. Andrea could have won his first Grand Prix but he realised there was an accident, hit the brakes and turned sharp left, and had his own accident.

"So I then started all over again, having to re-pass people I'd already overtaken. Eventually, Piquet had an accident, something on his car failed going up into Becketts, Prost had a problem with the Renault and then Arnoux, who was leading, had a problem as well. I was catching him at a point when his problem was evolving, overtook him, and I think he then retired before the end of the race.

ABOVE John Watson crosses the line to win the 1981 Marlboro British Grand Prix in his Marlboro McLaren-Ford MP4/1. (LAT)

"At the point when I got into the lead of the race I could see all around the circuit, suddenly there was a mass rising. I was acutely aware of it, but what I was also aware of was that some four years earlier at Dijon I'd been at the point of having my second Grand Prix win and on the last lap ran out of fuel. So what I did was to shut down the expectations or the premature acknowledgement, as I didn't want to let what was going on, which I was aware of, interfere or intrude into my focus.

"By then I had a comfortable lead and Ron Dennis was hanging over the pit wall slowing me down, and the only way I felt to do that without losing rhythm was to reduce the rpm, because if you lose rhythm you make mistakes. So for the last three or so laps I was only revving the engine to 9,000rpm, as opposed to 10,600rpm. And it made hardly any difference whatsoever to the lap times, but the key was to maintain the momentum and the rhythm and not start to try to brake earlier or do other things. And then, once finally I took the chequered flag, I was able to acknowledge what had been happening around the circuit for the previous eight or ten laps.

"I'd never been on a lap of honour during a track invasion. I'd seen it because you were used to the crowd coming on to the track at Monza after the race, but I'd never been on the flat-bed truck that took you round on the lap of honour as the winner and suddenly receiving this level of adulation. And I thought, Jesus Christ, I've never seen this in my life – is this for me? I was a relatively self-effacing person and I turned to Jacques Laffite and said, 'What is this all about?' And he said, 'Look, this is their way of saying we've had a good day and thank you very much.'