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Coys Historic Festival a cracker

Drivers sprint in pre-war team race. Rupert Wood and Invicta won mock start but German Alfas dominated race

Modern race circuits have to work very hard to create atmosphere in this commercial age, but the Coys Historic Festival on July 30 and 31 succeeded in brilliantly camouflaging modern Silverstone with nostalgia. The centre infield was packed with fascinating machinery - supercharged S-type Mercedes-Benzes to steam lorries; Birdcages to a Beechcraft. Every corner turned revealed fascinating surprises. Even the car parks brimmed with classics.

Memorable highlights outside the racing were the Fangio tributes. Sadly the Alfetta and Ferrari 166 displayed

didn't run, but the maestro's nephew was on hand to demonstrate his uncle's German GP-winning 250F. The motoring art show was bigger and better than last year, with a wealth of established and new talent. Selling cars is hardly entertainment, but the Coys auction had an upbeat style with a dramatic stage and disco music. Exciting machinery wasn't just limited to the racing paddock - the club displays were particularly impressive (see pps 120-1), and some felt there was just too much to see.

The only complaint was directed at the new Silverstone grand prix circuit,

which may have found praise with the Formula 1 circus, but was cursed by many entrants. The attrition rate among the glorious entry was higher than ever. And it wasn't just the cars that protested. Dickie Attwood, who was sharing David Piper's awesome Porsche 917K '010' with Ross Hyett, mourned the loss of fabled high-speed corners like Stowe and Abbey: "This circuit's no fun with a really quick car," reported the ex-BRM and Porsche team driver. In the pits, mechanics struggled to rebuild broken transmissions for Sunday's action. Several drivers said they



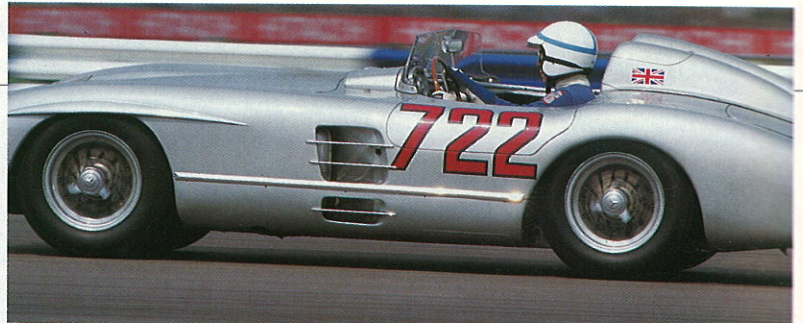
Fangio's nephew - Juan Manuel II



Fangio tribute with '57 German GP-winning 250F, Alfetta, 300SLR, W196 and Ferrari



Epic wet drive: Harper won with Vanwall on Sunday



Stars everywhere. Above: Surtees/300SLR. Below: Chris Rea/275LM



Left: Mercedes Kompressor Club's S-type

Right: superb motoring art show



Cobra/Ferrari wars relived. Hitchens heads the '64 GTOs of Sytner and Owen-Jones with the E-type of 'Whizzo' Williams



Impressive stage for Coys auction. Ferrari 275GTB made £100,000



Left and below: hero of early laps of touring car race was Swede Ulf Larsson powersliding his Falcon Sprint





wouldn't return unless the old circuit could be revised.

But, if the drivers were grumbling, the action on the track wasn't affected. This outstanding weekend produced some of the best historic racing this season. Highlights included John Harper's performance in the Vanwall VW10. After a frustrating day in the first part of the Chopard 100-mile GP car race, when an injection cable broke, Harper stormed back on Sunday with a heroic drive in challenging, wet conditions from the back of the grid. By lap four he gunned past leader Nigel Corner's 250F to take a Vanwall to victory for the first time since the '58 Moroccan Grand Prix.

Although several races had a familiar formula to previous years, the 1960s GT race is still unique. Where else would you see four Ferrari GTOs driven hard and fast? Particularly if two are rare '64 'notchbacks'. The added drama in this group came from the Cobras of the

Shepherd brothers and Steve Hitchens. The opening laps of the race were marvellous, as Hitchens's Cobra was hounded by both '64 GTOs and 'Whizzo' Williams in Corner's Lightweight E-type. This year, it was the Jaguars' turn to shine, as 'Whizzo' squeezed by and then entertained the crowd with glorious powerslides around the slippery track.

Another virtuoso performance came from Swede Ulf Larsson in the FIA Historic Touring Car race. Ulf had his white American compact sliding like a sprint car on the loose. The Falcon cried "enough" after three laps, but the crowd applauded as he returned to the pits. Fifty two classic tin-tops started this one hour enduro, but not even the works BMW team could challenge the Alfa GTA of rally ace Sandro Munari and Maurizio Ambrogetti which led from start to finish. This race was packed with star drivers - Quester, Aaltonen and even Moss.

The Innes Ireland Trophy race produced a superb grid of early rear-engined racers, and American Duncan Dayton impressed all on his first visit to Silverstone with his Lotus 18.

A new feature of the festival this year was a pre-'70 Le Mans car race. The David Piper collection - Porsche 917 and a clutch of prototype Ferraris - added glamour to a mixed grid. It was great to see GT40s, the Lola Aston and a Porsche 906 back racing at Silverstone. Attwood in the 917 won overall but hero of this group was Jonathan Baker with a dramatic charge in Starkey's Lola.

Other winners were Peter Groh's Alfa 8C Long Chassis in the pre-war sports car race, and Frank Sytner's D-type in the '50s sports car race. The latter saw a particularly aggressive drive by BRDC secretary John Fitzpatrick in a borrowed Lister which had him black-flagged in Sunday's wet race.

A superb weekend of nostalgia on and off the track.

Above: alarming moment for Brooks at Stowe as D-type spins in front of pack



Battle-scarred Lister of John Fitzpatrick harries Frank Sytner's D-type



Attwood's 917 struggled on new circuit but still won



Winning Alfa GTA of Sandro Munari and Ambrogetti



Rainmaster Ricketts and Romulus



Determined battle: VX4/90 chases Merc 300 SE



'Danger Mouse' Stretton chases back in Cooper T51



Wooden monocoque: '93 Wallace



Jolly paddock pose...



Historic reunion of Lagonda V12 Le Mans team...



...which inspired artist Lawrence



Lotus 18s of Americans Duncan Dayton and Joel Finn head outstanding grid for Innes Ireland Trophy Race, before huge crowd