

Note 68



The last front-engined Grand Prix car

The last front-engined Grand Prix car was the Ferguson P99 fitted with a 1.5L Coventry Climax FPF engine. It was also Four-Wheel-Drive (4WD).

The 1st race for this car was actually in one of the three 3 Litre Inter-Continental Series held in 1961 in the UK only, at Silverstone, fitted with a 2.5L Climax FPF. It failed to finish.

With the 1.5L Climax FPF Mk II engine installed it then competed in the 1961 British GP at Aintree driven by Fairman but, after having been push-started contrary to the rules when taken over by Moss, it was disqualified.

Later in 1961 Moss won the non-Championship F1 Oulton Gold cup race in wet conditions. This remains the only F1 race won by 4WD because several 4WD cars built in 1969 were unsuccessful and after 1982 the system was banned by FISA.

An interesting detail is that Ferguson tested the engine before and after the successful Oulton race, which was over 166 miles, at 152 BHP and 147 BHP respectively, both at 7,500 RPM. The loss was therefore only 3.3% (1049). Had the race been dry the car might not have been so competitive and the engine would no doubt have been given a harder time.

In 1963 in Antipodean races with the 2.5L Climax re-installed, it achieved a 2nd (Graham Hill) and two 3rds (Innes Ireland). A mountain climb in Switzerland (Ollon-Villars) was also entered driven by Jo Bonnier (result unknown).

In 1964 in the hands of Peter Westbury the 2.5L/P99 won the British Hill-Climb Championship.

Ferguson P99

DASO: The Ferguson Museum

