



Keift Formula One at 2007 Historic Winton

The Keift Formula One vehicle featured at this year's Historic Winton must surely hold the record for the longest build time period of any important race car. It was commenced in 1953 and finally completed 49 years later in 2002, when it made its much-belated race debut.

Cyril Keift, a British industrialist manufactured a series of 500cc Keift F3 vehicles which won more than 130 races in post war British motor sport. Stirling Moss was a Keift F3 works driver and the little cars provided a huge headache for the dominant Coopers of the period.

During 1952, Keift was largely instrumental in persuading Coventry Climax to build a new 2.5 litre Formula One engine which was nicknamed the "Godiva".

By the end of 1953, Keift had also constructed a completely new Formula One car which was fitted with a wooden mock up of the Godiva engine.

When finished the Godiva, a light weight V8 was producing 268 bhp with exceptional torque between 3500 and 7000 rpm.

It would have been the most powerful, lightest and most compact of the 2.5 litre era - but it was not released because Coventry Climax believed that the power outputs being claimed by Ferrari and Maserati at the time were far superior. This was later proven to be incorrect.

Only 5 prototype Godiva engines were built and without a suitable power plant, Cyril Keift's Formula One project was abandoned.

The engines and a load of spares were left neglected in a cellar at Silverstone for many years until they were re-united with the remains of the Keift Formula One vehicle in the mid 1990s.

Australian motor racing guru, Bill Morris eventually purchased the package and a total rebuild was commenced in 1998 by Greg Snape, who was working in the UK at the time. It was finished in 2002 and ran at the Silverstone VSCC meeting.

The Keift has a multi tubular frame, a de Dion rear end with a transverse leaf spring and front suspension comprising coils and double wish bones. It is fitted with alloy wheels plus knock off hubs and has disc brakes all round.

The Keift will be on display in the pit area at Historic Winton and will appear in competition events throughout the weekend.