

# OPEN COCKPITS & STRAW BALES

## MOTOR RACING IN THE 1950s

Bryan Apps

The 1950s was a great time to be British: we had just won the war, with a little help from our friends, and we were to celebrate both the Festival of Britain and the Queen's Coronation. The Empire held sway and we proudly watched her sons conquer Everest, run the first four minute mile, and produce the world's first jet airliner. The post-war decade was also a great time to be a motor racing enthusiast. To begin with there were the Alfa Romeos and E.R.A.s, dusted off after six years of enforced rest, and in 1952 the brief appearance of Hermann Lang in a 1939 Grand Prix Mercedes in Argentina. Entirely new racing cars were being crafted in England, Italy and France in what was little more than a cottage industry and, also in the 1950s, Jaguar and Aston Martin echoed the epic victories of the 'Bentley Boys' at Le Mans.

In *Straw Bales and Open Cockpits* the author, through his superb paintings, captures the excitement of the cars and drivers who risked everything in what turned out to be the final days of unrestrained competitive motor racing, when cars were still operated by controls which any motorist would easily recognise today, racing drivers were clearly visible in their open cockpits, often with only thin leather helmets to protect their heads. National colours and large racing numbers made the cars and their drivers easy to identify as they sped past only yards away from where one stood. But with the thrills came increased dangers for the drivers with little more than straw bales between them and disaster. So many great racing drivers lost their lives in the course of those ten years and all of them are remembered here.

This book inevitably majors on the Formula 1 World Championship series which began at Silverstone in 1950, but some notable non-championship events are also included and, in addition, the Monte Carlo Rally, the Mille Miglia and Le Mans.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

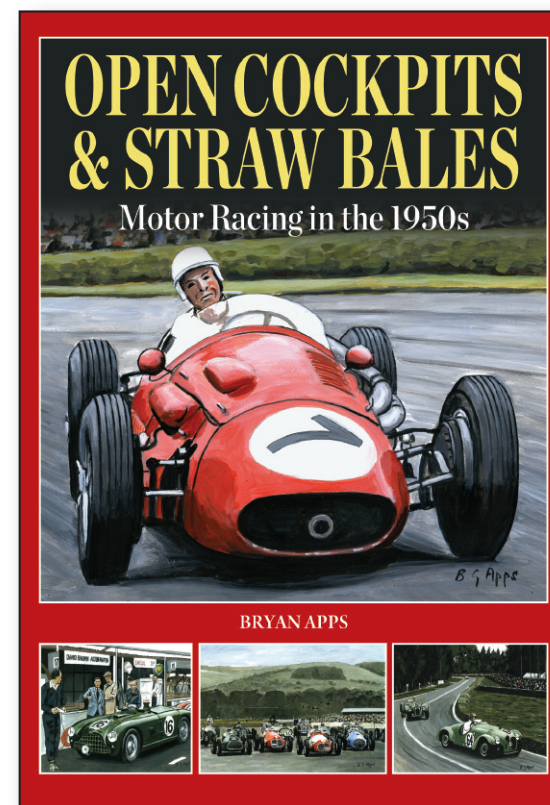
**Bryan Apps**, an Oxford graduate, has been an Anglican priest in the Diocese of Winchester for nearly 50 years. When he was a young curate in Andover his 97 hp Mobile Church attracted the interest of the international Press. His passion for motor racing was ignited at the age of twelve by a visit to Goodwood in 1949, and he corresponded with Raymond Mays, who was both the originator of the E.R.A., and the instigator of the B.R.M. His paintings of racing cars and drivers from the earliest days of the sport are wonderful evocations of their period and they led to lasting friendships with Manfred von Brauchitsch, Ken Tyrrell, and many of the most famous racing drivers from before and after the Second World War. His previous books include *When Motor Racing Was Fun*, *Silverstone Shadows* and *When Toys Were Fun*.

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Above: Stirling Moss and Denis Jenkinson in their 300SLR Mercedes Benz immediately before the start of the 1955 Mille Miglia.

Top left: Alberto Ascari driving the Tipo 125 V12 1.5 litre two stage supercharged Ferrari in the 1950 Swiss Grand Prix at Berne.

Left: The CR5 Cunningham on its way to third place at Le Mans in 1953.

Below: Example of a double-page spread.



Reg Parnell overtaking Felice Bonetto's 159 Alfa Romeo in the 1950 4.5 litre Thin Wall Special during the First Heat of the International Trophy Race at Silverstone.



Ascari's Lancia D24 closing up on Claes's Cisitalia to win the 1954 Mille Miglia at 87.27mph.