



TIN-TOP STARS HEAD BACK INTO BATTLE

The Super Touring Trophy captured the imagination at last year's Silverstone Classic, and in 2013 three ex-BTCC rivals joined in the fun. By SCOTT MITCHELL and KEVIN TURNER

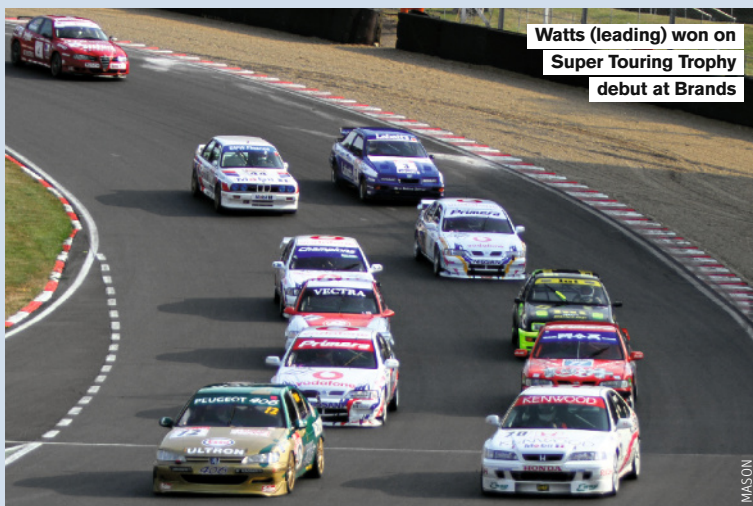
Between them, John Cleland and Tim Harvey scored 33 British Touring Car wins and three titles. Along with Patrick Watts, they really forged their reputations during the Super Touring era, so the trio couldn't resist when a four-event historic series for the cars arrived this season.

Watts got really serious by buying two ex-works Peugeot 406s, while 1989 and 1995 BTCC champion

Cleland got hold of the Vauxhall Vectra he raced in 1997.

Harvey has yet to take the plunge, but a chance to test his old Ford Sierra RS500, now owned by Paul Smith, led to a race outing in the Silverstone Classic last month.

Needless to say, all three made their presences felt, providing some fitting tin-top drama, and AUTOSPORT caught up with them to see what things were like second time around.



JOHN CLELAND
Vauxhall Vectra (1997)
Brands Hatch Superprix
Grid: 5th Race 1: R Race 2: 3rd

The last time I drove a car on slicks in anger was in 2005 at Bathurst. It came back to me how hard the cars were. We could never get any ventilation in them; I'm 15 years older and a lot less fit now, but it was great. I had great fun and it brought back memories.

In the first race I had a component in the suspension break and the consequence of that was I started at the back in the second event. We made some bits for it overnight and made

some changes. They weren't quite right, but it was better.

I hit as many kerbs as I could early on in race two to see what I could break and it all worked very well. We guessed at the set-up because we never raced with Triple Eight on the Grand Prix track – we used the Indy circuit.

My sons Niki and Jamie worked really well on it. I think they came away thinking it'd be good to set up a team to run other people! They had to take the engine and gearbox out after we tested at Knockhill so they know more about it than some of the Triple Eight guys did.

I remember some of the things that car did and it still does them – they're

not nice! I did begin to wonder why I bought it. I didn't win anything in it at the time, but it's chassis number one and the engineering in the car showed me why Super Touring got so expensive.

I had great fun battling with Dave Jarman's Nissan Primera, but it was more about getting the car out in one piece and improving it for next time out at the Oulton Park Gold Cup.



➔ P96 SUPER TOURING TROPHY

Watts, Cleland and Harvey
pose with their old cars
at Silverstone



PATRICK WATTS

Peugeot 406 (1998)

Brands Hatch Superprix

Qualified: 1st Race 1: R Race 2: 1st

Silverstone Classic

Grid: 1st Race 1: R Race 2: NS

I was attached to that car because it was the last touring car I drove professionally, I had success in Australia and it was the first car my daughter remembers me driving. It's a lovely bit of kit – those cars are the ultimate touring car. It's probably an era that will never be repeated.

It's fantastic to drive against other similar cars and also it has the sentimental value. I had a go a couple of years ago in the Ginetta G50 Cup and it

took me a few laps to get used to braking so late and turning into the corners, because it was so different to what I was used to. You don't forget all this stuff, it just takes a while to realise.

Having said that, that was two years ago and I jump into the Peugeot and think, 'How am I going to comprehend the cornering speed?' but actually it was very easy. A two-year layoff from the Ginetta was like it was yesterday, but the 12 years from not driving a slicked vehicle to the Ginetta was a big jump! So that was the jump that John had and I sympathise with him. I don't believe I'm any slower around a race circuit than I was 14 years ago, but I might not take the risks – it makes a difference owning it and paying for it!

I dinged it at Silverstone but that was down to cold tyres. We only had one warm-up lap, I thought the tyres would have heat in them but the rear came round at Copse and kept going.

On Sunday at Brands everything went to plan and was really enjoyable. I'm not pretending winning was the same as in period but it was fun.



Watts took pole
but crashed at
Silverstone

➔ P102 WATTS RACE OF MY LIFE

TIM HARVEY

Ford Sierra RS500 Cosworth

(1989-90)

Silverstone Classic

Grid: 3rd Race 1: 3rd Race 2: NS

I loved the Cosworth and those Group A cars. If you could offer me any of my cars over the 30 years that would be the one I would want to own. The car is very, very special to me. It's very evocative because everything is as it was. It's like remembering smells as a child, or things in your gran's house – it was like being moved back 23 years.

I knew I'd be a bit quicker on the straights; Patrick knew it as well. He said, 'Look, just remember you can't win

this on the first lap.' I very quickly replied to him, 'Just remember, you've got cold rear tyres!' Of course when it started I went straight past him, held him up for a few corners and he went straight off at Copse on lap two with exactly that problem. Even afterwards he said, 'I can't believe I fell for it,' so the old mind games are still going strong!

But I absolutely loved driving the car, I was driving it quite hard but that's how they are meant to be driven. It's just unfortunate we had an overheating problem; I think the poor old girl was only fit for gentle demonstration runs.

I've since put Paul in touch with Dave Mountain of Mountune and I may get in the car on the Monday at Oulton Park after Knockhill BTCC. I'm sure the new engine will be a lot quicker than it was and we've got a bit of work to do with the handling too.

My goal would be to genuinely challenge the Super Touring cars on pace and race with them. I think they should be able to do that. I'd like to have a go in a proper Super Touring car as well.



Harvey led at Classic
in his old RS500

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