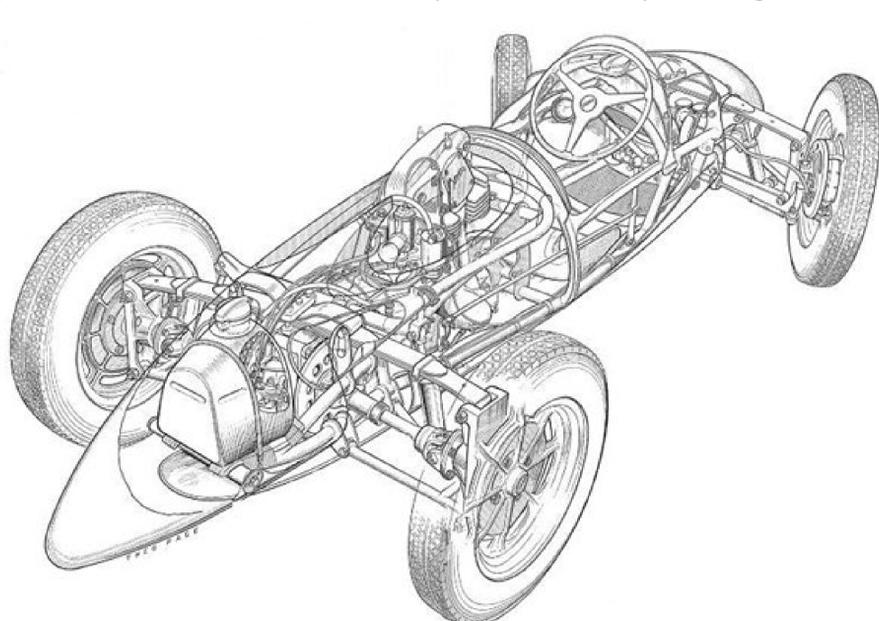


GOING BACK IN TIME

DOMINIC BISHOP TELLS US OF HIS LATEST COMPETITION CAR AND THE WHOLE NEW APPROACH TO MOTOR SPORT WHICH HAS RESULTED

Back in 2022, I purchased a 1952 Cooper Mk6, 500cc race car. I had always wanted one since I first started hillclimbing back in the 1980s. Having been a member of Woolbridge and the 500 Owners Association from when I had my Jedi Mk1 car, the lure of an old 500 car running on methanol was too strong to resist. "Henry" was purchased from a lovely chap in Ringwood called Ainsley Barwick. It came fitted with a 1954 Triumph Tiger 100 Twin 498cc, but also in a box was a 1952 Jackson JAP engine which I intend to fit in the car over this coming winter.

Having fettled the car in an attempt to get it running properly with the Triumph, I have encountered lots of issues, mostly around spark and fuel. The spark issue was easy enough to sort out with the Lucas KF2 magneto, but the fuel issues continue to trouble the running of the car. The Triumph is fitted with twin AMAL Mk1 Concentric Carbs, running 450 main jets. As the car is normally on full throttle, that drinks about 0.9 litres of Methanol per minute. A thirsty little thing!



The car has the twin side tanks and an electric pump, which was causing its own problems. Carbs like gravity feed and don't take kindly to pressure. However, without the fuel pressure, the car would under-fuel and run out of go. I tried a bigger fuel pressure regulator, doubled up and put flowing Ys into the fuel pipes, and cross linked the carbs, giving double the flow, and to be fair the car ran well at the 500 O.A. meeting at Wiscombe back in May. The main problem there was that I had not changed the primary drive gear and found it was set up more for circuits than hills.



(I have since purchased a full range of primary drive sprockets for the Triumph. I have been told a man can't have too many sprockets).

Thinking it was now sorted, I went to Shelsley Walsh for the VSCC meeting. Even though you put the car away working well, the garage fairies had been busy, and Henry was again misbehaving when I got there. First the carbs wouldn't stop leaking, so take them apart and clean everything, put back together and set off. On the first run I didn't make it all the way to the finish but stopped about 100 yards short of the finish. A bit embarrassing having to be towed over the line by a 4x4. The second run I did make it to the finish, but only just, and on the third run the car behind caught me up and had to be given a re-run. The car would fly off the line and go well for the first 150 -200 yards but would then seem to run out of fuel again, and unless I backed off the throttle and let the fuel catch up, I wouldn't have not got to the top at all.



Having been a big enough nuisance, I decided not to bother with the fourth run and pack up early. As the meeting was still in full swing, I had to push my car from my allocated garage space down the access road to the camping paddock the other side of the main road where the trailer was. As it was a hot day, I had already changed out of my race gear and had shorts and open toes shoes on. When I got to the main road, a car was coming, so in a rush to get across, I managed to fold my big toe under and run over myself with the back wheel of the Cooper. One Broken Big Toe! School boy error and totally my own fault. Still the show must go on and I continued to pack up and then drive the three and a half hours home towing the car behind. Not the most comfortable drive I have ever had.

Since then, I have taken the car to bits again and gone back to basics. I have now fitted a period cylindrical fuel tank mounted above the carbs, with a separate stopcock for each, so they should get better flow. I am working on now keeping the gravity tank full by having the pump fill the top tank to a level, and then overflow back to the side tanks. This should keep a constant level of methanol in the top tank, and just use gravity to feed the carbs, as the top tank is also vented to atmosphere. Having had the car for a while now, I have attended the Cooper open day in Surbiton (No sign of Tom, Barbera, Margo or Jerry) to see where my car was made some 71 years ago.



It was an fascinating day out with lots of interesting Cooper cars and people to talk to. I now understand more about the tie up with John Cooper and Downton, which is great for my other job as Downton Motor Club Secretary. The old Cooper workshop is now a Porsche specialist but remains virtually the same as back in the day. It still has the little foot bridge from the workshop back door, over the stream leading directly into the pub. Those were the days.

I have also managed to get the DVLA to give Henry a V5 logbook and period numberplate, with the help of Peter Jackson from the Cooper Car Club and a dating certificate. Does that mean I can now drive him to the shops? No not really, but it makes life easier if I want to take the car abroad to other races such as Zandvoort which was on our calendar for this year.

Unfortunately, with the toe, I had no chance of putting my race boots on so, had to cancel my entry for Brands Hatch and Goodwood. A shame as I was looking forward to my first season of circuits as well as competing on the hills. Still, the toe is on the mend and I'm looking forward to more events to finish off the year.