

# North Kent Lotus Group



## Editorial

Slightly late, again, my apologies as usual, the likelihood is you'll be reading this after the AGM, assuming of course that a sufficient number of daredevil members are prepared to laugh in the face of the Corovirus threat and attend a social gathering!

Little to report at this time of year, although you will have seen a few emails getting arrangements in place for forthcoming events, it's good to see the light at the end of the winter tunnel getting ever closer and brighter. In the short-term though the AGM is the main point of focus.

The Group's code of practice states that those wishing to be considered for a Steering Group position should make themselves known at least a month in advance of the meeting, and to date there has been no expressions of interest in the vacant positions that have been publicised in recent newsletters, other than the web-master's. I shall be stepping down from the Coordinators role at the meeting, so we shall at the very least have to suspend the 'months notice' rule in the hope that someone steps up. It should be an interesting meeting.

There will of course be a full report of the outcome of the AGM in next month's newsletter, and it is my hope that the new Newsletter Editor will permit me one final editorial next month, to sign-off from this role. All-change, exciting times ahead!

Roger D

## **It may be a Tojeiro but the rear suspension was inspired by Chapman!**

The interest in Formula Junior started when, standing on a cold Paddock Hill on Boxing Day 1959, I saw Peter Arundell's Elva DKW just hold off Peter Ashdown's Lola to win the first FJ race at Brands Hatch.

Having raced my Austin Seven for 40+ years I finally succumbed to a temptation to race something else and answered an advert in Motor Sport '*For restoration - A Tojeiro FJ ex Macau GP*'. I was intrigued as I had only known John Tojeiro as the designer the AC Ace/Cobra chassis, various Jaguar engine cars and the Climax 1100 sports car and I have always been fascinated by small post war 'garagiste' constructors.

The suggestion was that it was the car commissioned by the Mercedes Benz agent in Hong Kong for the 1961 Macau Grand Prix fitted with a two stroke DKW engine but looking at my chassis it soon became obvious that this was not the same car.

The first FJ John Tojeiro built was for Francis Pound and had a BMC engine. Then Ackland Geddes, an heir to the Dunlop tyre fortune, the owner of Britannia Cars asked John about producing a Formula Junior powered by a Ford 1100cc engine to promote the 'racing heritage' of the Britannia GT, a Ford Zephyr engined GT with a chassis designed by Tojeiro, so John sold him his design and it was rebranded as a Britannia Formula Junior.

At the end of 1960 the Britannia Car Company went into liquidation allegedly owing Tojeiro money for his design and so to recoup what he could he took back the unused Britannia chassis', body and suspension components with the plan to rebadge them as Tojeiro.

Since John originally penned the chassis it was obvious that the rear end needed redesigning so the chassis were chopped off behind the cockpit and Lotus 18 inspired rear suspension grafted on.

As Tojeiro never kept records of the cars he built nothing was known about any Formula Juniors going to the USA until, via the wonders of the internet, I found various 1961 SCCA race results not only listing one Tojeiro Formula Junior but sometimes two entered in one race and the name Jay Heizer appeared again and again. Further Googling produced an email address of a professor at a Texas University by the same name. Contacting him he confirmed that he was indeed Tojeiro's US agent and he had imported two Ford engined cars in the spring of 1961.

My car was raced from 1962 to 1964 in Ohio, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Virginia, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. To date I can find no record of the other car competing beyond 1964 and according to Jay it was 'cannibalised for other projects'

The car then disappeared until 1972 when it was discovered, less engine, in a Pennsylvania barn by Denis Thompson, a NASA engineer who converted it into a Sports Car Club of America Solo II Autocross (Slalom Sprint) car with disc brakes and a 1600 Ford engine.

It was very successful in this form chalking up 30 FTDs and the runner-up slot to a Brabham BT29 Formula B car at SCCA National Finals at Salinas, Kansas before being sold on to Garry and Cindy Hart, with Cindy becoming SCCA Ladies champion with the car the following year.

In the late 70's and early 80's it was still being campaigned at various SCCA Autocross events in Mid Ohio and then it disappeared again until the remains resurfaced in Milwaukee in 1998.

It came back to the UK in 2004 and I was foolish enough to buy it thinking that having built my Austin Seven racer and rebuilt my Austin Ulster and Chummy from the chassis up that it would not be too much of a problem to restore the car to its 1961 specification. I soon found it not so easy when it is the only example left and there are no drawings and no photos to refer to.

It was missing the rear bodywork and the nose had been truncated to fit into a previous owner's trailer. The brake bits and other odds and ends came in cardboard boxes. It had a standard 105E Ford engine mated to the original VW split case gearbox and the rusting chassis was missing the odd tube, cut out to accommodate a later exhaust system and as a result had become somewhat twisted.

The body was a major problem until I was contacted by a chap, following a little piece written in Classic and Sports Car by Mike Ware about the car's return from America, who said that his late father had purchased a Britannia body from John Tojeiro in the 70's as he planned to build a single seater and it was still hanging in his mother's garage. Amazingly when offered up to the radiator and oil cooler on my chassis the nose ducting fitted perfectly and after some fettling it was transformed from a Britannia back to the nose of a Tojeiro!

Recreating the rear engine cover was still a problem as I had nothing to work from until Dennis Thompson eventually sent me a photo of the car as he discovered it in 1972, and from this I created a buck from which Lewis Barrow in East Farleigh fabricated the rear bodywork.

Dennis had gone out of his way in an attempt to unearth the missing rear bodywork as when he sold the car to the Harts in 1975, he had passed it on with the car. He telephoned all the Harts living in Ohio without success. He then pinpointed the house where they had lived on Google Earth and drove 150 miles to knock on the door. He was told that Garry did not live there anymore but his son lived down the road. He talked with the son who told him that they had cleared out his father's barn eighteen months before and thrown the tail section away. So near and yet so far!

Managing to source a used 1100cc 105E Ford FJ engine more problems appeared trying to fit the dry sump pump and tank in the space available and designing an exhaust to fit around the frame tubes. This was made possible using 2-inch plastic waste fittings to create a pattern to be recreated in metal.

Being offered an, in period, Hewland VW gearbox casing in place of the split case one seemed like a good idea as this would give the facility to change ratios quickly. It soon became apparent that all VW Beetle casings are not the same and resulted in more rejigging of the engine mountings to get it to fit.

In hindsight I should have also ditched all the original brake bits and rebuilt it with readily available BMC parts as finding Riley 1.5 (front) and Alfa Romeo (rear) cylinders and springs etc. proved problematic.

Finally, it all came together and having done some straight-line testing to sort out the brakes and gear change mechanism it was time to see if it would go around corners so we took it to a test day at Lydden Hill.

After about eight laps the engine temperature started to climb and I decided to come in and as I drove down the paddock road a lad ran up and said 'Here mate! Do you know that the back of your car is on fire?' At which point the ever-brilliant marshals discharged a couple of fire extinguishers over it and me!

Later explaining what had happened to Stuart Rolt, ace race engine builder, he told me that modern Spanish built Weber's, if they do not have the chokes blanked off, have a tendency to spray petrol out on sharp left hand corners, exactly like the Devil's Elbow at Lydden, and with a spit back through the carbs and you have a fire! Be warned.

The fire meant a total strip down, partial repaint and rebuild of the car as extinguisher powder is ultra-corrosive to aluminium! The next, much delayed, outing was a test day at Goodwood complete with intermittent sleet storms so again we did not learn too much about the car except that it could do with a heater!

Having decided to enter the Formula Junior race at the Silverstone Classic the first proper test was the free practice the day before. We were sent out with all manner of other single seaters and the whole session was spent trying to keep out of the way of incredibly quick Historic Formula One and Formula 5000 cars! So much again for learning about the car and, being the first time out on the Grand Prix circuit, where the corners went.

We survived practice and then when we lined up for the race came the realisation that it was a rolling start. Another first. Keeping station with 40 other Formula Junior on the formation lap needs the skilled concentration of a Red Arrows pilot.

Finally ten years after I got it home as a basket case and hundreds hours of researching it, grafting on it, talking about it, swearing at it, ignoring it, throwing money at it and setting fire to it the Tojeiro made it into a circuit race some fifty one years after it was last raced in anger. We manage to keep out of everyone's way, did not fall off the tarmac and managed to finish. Mission achieved.

Mike Peck





### **Contacts**

*Regalia & Clothing:* [www.arktrading.com](http://www.arktrading.com)

*Meetings:* 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday each month, The Moody Mare, Seven Mile Lane, ME18 5QY

**Web Site:** [www.NorthkentLotusgroup.org](http://www.NorthkentLotusgroup.org)

## North Kent Lotus Group

NKLG & significant motoring events 2020

Note: Events in black text will have some formal NKLG arrangement.

<b>March</b>		
11 <sup>th</sup>	NKLG AGM	
<b>April</b>		
11 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup>	BTCC Brands Hatch.	
12 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup>	Chatham Dockyard Car Show	
<b>May</b>		
9 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup>	Motors by the Moat, Leeds Castle.	
23 <sup>rd</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup>	Masters, Brands Hatch.	
24 <sup>th</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup>	Motorsport at the Palace.	
TBC	Valance Hillclimb.	
<b>June</b>		
13 <sup>th</sup> - 14 <sup>th</sup>	Le Mans 24 hr.	
<b>July</b>		
3 <sup>rd</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup>	Le Mans Classic.	
9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup>	Goodwood Festival of Speed.	
17 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup>	British Grand Prix.	
<b>August</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> - 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Silverstone Classic.	
22 <sup>nd</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup>	DTM Brands Hatch.	
TBC	Bexhill Car Show	
<b>September</b>		
11 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup>	Goodwood Revival.	
13 <sup>th</sup>	Edenbridge Car Show.	
<b>October</b>		
10 <sup>th</sup> - 11 <sup>th</sup>	BTCC Brands Hatch.	
<b>November</b>		
<b>December</b>	NKLG Christmas meal	TBC

In the pipeline:

- Run to the Shuttleworth Collection.
- Charing Gliding Club day.
- Run to Morgan Museum, Rolvenden.
- Evening fish & chip run.