

Recovery back to health after six years away – Part Two

Matt Doncaster

At last, (I heard the *Impressions* Editor cheer from here!), Part Two of my account of the return to glory of my Singer Chamois Coupé. As you might remember, Part One was published way back in November last year, and in it I detailed my plan and timeline for some major improvements to my car. However, there's a saying in my business (I'm an RAF flying instructor) that no plan survives first contact with the enemy, and how true in this instance, with major delays to parts delivery blighting my intentions.

However, if you've not read November's first instalment of how I've managed to get my Chamois Coupé back on the road, you'll not know that I was on the cusp of an MoT in September having not had the car on the road for six years. And now it's taxed, insured and MoT'd thanks to a replacement rear brake slave cylinder I bought off eBay (what a great resource that is), an old set of front brake pads that I found in my spares box, and a little good fortune in so much as what wear was present in one steering arm bush was insufficient for it to fail the test. So since passing



Never was the expression
'Boys and their toys' more apt!
Photo: Matt Doncaster

the test I've delivered my four-year-old daughter to nursery in a rally car – she loves 'Little Green Car', and was beaming from ear to ear all the way there, strapped in under the four-point harness with her intercom headset on – I've taken the car to work where it was admired by so many people including Lotus Europa and E-Type Jaguar owners, and it's just so nice to be back on the road in the car where my involvement in motorsport started.

So what now? Well, I've fitted a set of new alloy pulleys to the engine, which look superb as well as allowing me to go ahead with the modifications to the engine and an increased rev limit approaching 10,000 rpm; a new cam (R20) is on the workbench ready to go into the fantastic cylinder head that Stuart Brownsey at Rodwell Motorsport worked for me in the New Year. The new front brakes arrived from Fenn Lane Motorsport and have been fitted with Green Stuff pads sourced from Rimmer Brothers in Lincoln (they've transformed the braking and increased my confidence since, before this upgrade, hitting the brakes really was a bit of a hit and miss affair depending on a number of factors, and not what I needed when trying to stop from speed). The heated front screen also arrived and was professionally fitted with a plan to amalgamate a number of switches into one place within easy reach just below the dashboard. I've replaced the worn steering arm with a new one from Malcolm Anderson and a bias pedal box will be sourced and fitted when I find the time, again with a rather nice looking adjuster being mounted just below and to the right of the steering wheel. So all in all, some major improvements that I've wanted to make for quite some time, and the best is yet to come.

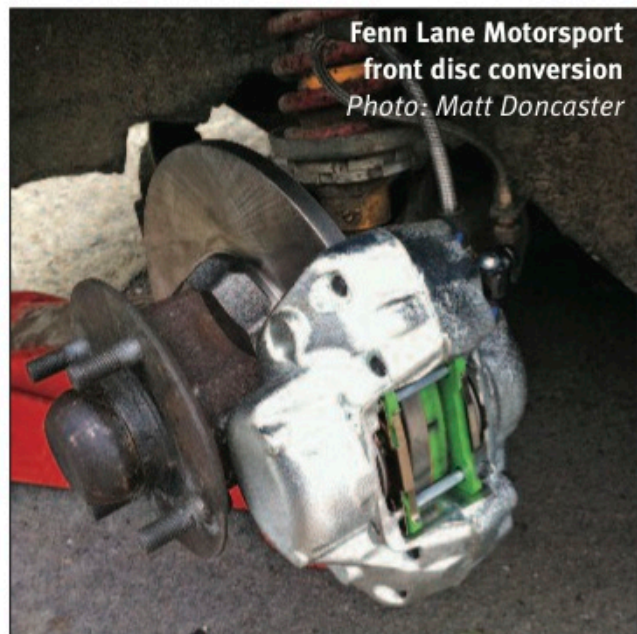


With the engine upgrades planned, Little Green Car should really fly, and then I'll start to plan some events. I've joined the Historic Rally Car Register, and some of their events obviously suit the Chamois as I'm not intending to take the car into the forests and it's really good on

A cylinder head to drool for
courtesy of Rodwell Motorsport
Photo: Matt Doncaster



Tarmac (I've got a more modern, slightly more beaten up rally car for gravel). Equally, there's the Richard Burns Memorial Rally which I've competed on twice in my other car since 2008, and that's a really good, fast, fun event over two days at RAF Marham, raising funds for the Richard Burns Foundation. The Chamois has finished the Tour of Mull twice before as well, but that might be an event too far – also, while there's the phrase 'If you don't want to crash it, don't build it', who really wants to, and Mull is hard-core to say the least. We finished back in 2001 and 2002, but it was close, and maybe I'll write an article about that at some point as well. Suffice to say, I'd



Fenn Lane Motorsport
front disc conversion
Photo: Matt Doncaster

recommend the Tour of Mull to anyone, but there's a right and a wrong way of approaching it. We learned some valuable lessons on both occasions, the biggest being if you're not prepared to recce for a week before the event to make your pace notes resemble the road, you're asking for trouble! So hopefully you might see a report or two in the future detailing what we're up to, and if you happen to see us on an event, please come and say hello.

As an aside, the car made a star appearance at a recent event at work – the Empire Test Pilots' School at Boscombe Down – and over the last year, my colleagues have made some

mighty fine car purchases. As a result of this, at our Families' Day last month we paraded our cars along with our aircraft for the benefit of the crowd and caused a lot of interest.

That's about it. I read so many articles in *Impressions* that are accompanied by horrific photos major bodywork projects, extensive rust, etc, so I'm really relieved not to have just written a similar one! Like any Imp project though, there'll be jobs to do and improvements to make for years to come, but isn't that why we do it? I've taken a break recently, but getting the tools out again and reenergising this project has been really good fun, as it always was, and long may that continue.