

Heartbeat Imp

Heartbeat Vehicle Rally, Goathland, North Yorkshire, 2nd/3rd July 2016
Martin Parkes, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands

I bought EVN 450C in 2012 in the Norwich area. I'd seen the car advertised on eBay and after unsuccessful bid attempts on two separate occasions finally secured it thanks to the owner getting in touch with me after dealing with timewasters! I made the journey east with my car and trailer the following weekend and after a quick look round it brought it back to the Midlands to become the eighth owner of this 1965 Imp Super. I knew from the seller that the car had been on TV sometime in its life but was unsure which programme; all the owner knew was it was a medical drama of some sort.

The following months were spent inspecting my purchase and finding out about these great little cars as I'd never owned or worked on an Imp before. After fitting new distributor, plugs, leads and giving the carb a clean I managed to get the engine running. A general mechanical check and MoT later it was drivable and made its first appearance at a village show with a 'sixties theme to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. I couldn't believe the amount of attention this car received and the affectionate memories it rekindled in its many admirers.

Meanwhile, I'd carried out some research and found that my car had appeared in an episode of *The Royal* which was a 'sixties British medical drama that ran from 2003 to 2011 and was the programme the eBay seller had mentioned. The show – a spin-off from *Heartbeat* – comprised of one-hour episodes located in Elsinby which was a fictional rural seaside town, portrayed as being close to Aidensfield, the well-known but fictional setting of *Heartbeat*.

For the remainder of 2012 I did a lot of scraping, cleaning and rust proofing while also driving and showing the Imp at various local car shows. I was very lucky with this car as I had no previous knowledge of where to look to find rust and rot. The overall body condition was very solid and the only really bad areas were the bonnet and boot. These were replaced with fibreglass versions later in the year along with a full roll-cage and new seats.

2013 was the year of the Imp 50 celebrations so the Imp made appearances at Coventry in May for these events over the two days before being taken off the road for a full stripdown and re-build. As the aforementioned roll-cage suggests, it was always my intention to modify my Imp for road and competition use, though I should stress that all the mods I've done can be reversed if a future owner wants to convert the Imp back to standard specification.

My Imp ownership came about after competing for 20+ years in hillclimbing and sprinting in a Westfield. I'd modified this car as much as I wanted to and now fancied a change to some sort of sporty car (with a roof). A classic car with free road tax appealed. At the time I was working at a firm where an employee used to buy *Practical Classics* every month and in the corner of the canteen was a pile of these old mags. Gradually, at every break time, I worked my way through



Preparing to film a brief but spectacular moment of fame for EVN 450C (thankfully, a 'double') for Yorkshire TV's *The Royal*, a *Heartbeat* spin-off. The car also appeared in several *Heartbeat* episodes prior to its 'demise'
Photo: Paul Biggs Photography



Some would say there is a certain amount of fuzzy logic required for Imp ownership! Fuzz Townshend of TV's *Car SOS* was Martin's inspiration
Photo: Martin Parkes

them. One day I came across an article by Fuzz Townshend at about a modified green Imp he'd renovated and converted and so the seeds were sown for my next car.

With EVN now off the road I found the Imp Club's excellent Forum and club members' knowledge a great help in rebuilding the car and when a 998cc modified engine came up for sale I was well on the way to achieving my goal of a competition Imp. The engine was bought



Village show to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was EVN's first appearance in Martin's ownership
Photo: Martin Parkes

from Tom in Bristol and looked to be a George Bevan engine fitted with an Andy Chessman head, an excellent pedigree indeed. This was then given straight to Ben Boulton for stripping and bringing up to its current spec although it has since been to another engine builder for new rings, etc, as the old ones just wouldn't bed in



Now proudly sporting its chequered roof, EVN parked alongside the well-known ex-Peter Nunn Sunbeam Sport during the Imp 50 celebrations in Coventry
Photo: Martin Parkes

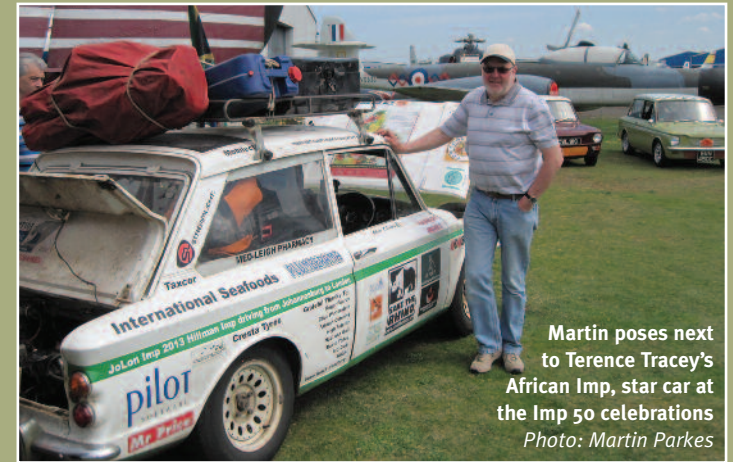
and my oil consumption was more than my fuel!

Ben also built me a standard Mk3 transaxle as the castings on these are stronger than the early ones. Twin 40 DCOE Weber carbs (which I had reconditioned by a local guy at Carbcare before re-fitting). A Janspeed manifold also came with the engine package.

During the rebuild everything in the lower half of the car was replaced/uprated with either new or reconditioned items. The list of new parts is long but includes a new aluminium petrol tank from Alloy Racing Fabrications, Mk 2 Fiesta disc brake conversion using the kit supplied by Colin Valentine, reconditioned steering rack, high-efficiency radiator, adjustable shockers and dashboard fabrication and electrics done by me!

Club spares, Malcolm Anderson and eBay were great sources of parts for my rebuild which was finally put back on the road just before the Imp National at Huntington in August 2014. All my hard work paid off when I was awarded 2nd in the Roadgoing Competition Imps class and the trophy was presented to me by Rosemary Smith.

I've deviated a little just to fill in the background of this car and how and why I came to own it. While it was off the road a friend filled in more of the car's film/TV background, saying he thought he saw my Imp in an episode of *Heartbeat* he had been watching on one of the satellite channels. I recorded the repeat later that day and sure enough there was EVN 450C being worked on in the garage which in the fictitious village of Aidensfield – actually Goathland in North Yorkshire. Hoping to find



Martin poses next to Terence Tracey's African Imp, star car at the Imp 50 celebrations
Photo: Martin Parkes



Martin with David Lonsdale – *Heartbeat*'s village idiot
Photo: Elaine Parkes

more, I programmed my Sky + box to record all the episodes which I then proceeded to watch (on fast forward – I'm not a fan of the programme!) to discover that it appeared in a total of eight episodes of this 'sixties cop series. It was never a key character's car but was in the background of many scenes and was even featured driving past at the start of a particular scene. Needles to say I now have all these small extracts recorded on a DVD for posterity!

Every year there is a 'sixties weekend at the York Moors Railway and as part of this event owners of vehicles that appeared in *Heartbeat* are invited to show their cars on the village green in front of the small row of shops that featured in many episodes. This year Elaine and I decided it was about time EVN made an appearance. Not wanting to drive it all that distance in one hit we found a farm B&B just outside Pickering. We arrived early evening on Friday after a four-hour journey and headed off on the last 20 miles to the event on Saturday morning after a hearty breakfast.

We displayed the car on both days. On Sunday lunchtime there was a personal appearance by the actor David Lonsdale, who played village idiot David Stockwell. He makes the journey every year to sign calendars for charity and then walks around the cars and chats to the owners. We returned home on the Monday.

So that is my truncated story of my Imp ownership so far. I love taking the car to shows and doing classic runs. It still amazes me the attention it gets from everyone, the stories people tell me of their previous Imps and the questions I get asked. I've still got outstanding jobs to do on this car, as have most Imp owners I talk to, and hope to maybe do some more sprints in it next year, we'll see!

**It wouldn't be a Heartbeat Weekend
without Claude Jeremiah Greengrass!**

Photo: Martin Parkes

