

Several small Sunbeams

(and a couple of Clans)

Simon Browner, Tavistock, Devon

I first met Simon at the Singer Owners Club National Day in 1981 or '82. The Imp Club had only recently been formed and was invited to the event. I attended with my Chamois Coupé (EPP 16G), Peter Nunney attended with his well known Sunbeam Sport (PJN 81) and Simon won Best Visitor's prize with his Sunbeam Imp Sport (GOK 724L). I subsequently caught up with him at the club's Knebworth meet in 1983 and the Bristol Classic Car Show later that year where my Chamois and his Imp were on the club stand. Despite being long-term members we didn't see each other again until the 2010 National at Bridgwater. It was wonderful to receive the following letter from Simon and I was amazed to hear of all the Sunbeams and Clans he had owned over the years. Hopefully we won't have to wait quite so long for another letter, Simon! GP



1983: First large Imp Club meeting at Knebworth. Simon in light blue T-shirt
Photo: Grahame Pearson

I had driven to Knebworth that day from my home in Bristol in our Sunbeam Imp Sport GOK 724L. It was a very hot day, the car was loaded up with four adults, and I can recall driving too fast along the M4 with the heater on in order to try and keep the 998 Hartwell just shy of overheating. It was a great day though, possibly a defining one for the Imp Club, with so many cars and a lot of interest.

I had moved to Bristol by then, from Sutton Coldfield where I spent my formative years. Our garden backed on to a workshop in Newhall Street; I looked over the wall one day and saw some pallets loaded with what looked like complete Imp Sport units. One of the guys working there told me the business was Rycam Engineering and they were just starting production of the Mirage sports car and these were 998 units supplied through Tim Millington at Chrysler Competition Department in Coventry. I was given some brochures. As many people know, the car was subsequently redesigned as the Scorpion and production moved to Innes Lee Company in Telford.

I was prompted to write something when I saw the photo of the Imp display at Knebworth 1983, in the March 2020 issue of *Impressions*, page 28. I am pictured in the photograph next to John Simister, the club's first Chairman, and Adrian Chant, the club's first Spares Secretary.

famous car in action at Mallory Park, and from then I decided any Imp I owned had to be a Sunbeam!

GOK 724L was actually my second Sunbeam Imp; the first was an early one, KWD 31D, finished in Ming Blue metallic with a light blue interior, acquired just after I passed my test in 1972. It was bought in Sutton Coldfield from an Aston Villa footballer Ray Graydon. I doubt whether any Villa



1976: Anne, Simon's then girlfriend, now wife, poses with GOK 724L
Photo: Simon Browner

premier league players are still running around in Imps! Sadly I have not been able to find any photos of KWD 31D.

I had to share KWD 31D with my mother. It was either a Sunbeam Imp Sport or a Mini and frankly it was no contest!

KWD 31D required a replacement short

engine at one point; I still have the old invoice showing a total cost of an Imp Sport short engine and labour coming out at £95 all in!

A chance came along in August 1974 to acquire Sunbeam Sport GOK 724L. I think it cost about £500 secondhand with 15,000 miles on the clock. The accompanying photo shows it parked in Silver Birch Road, Erdington, Birmingham outside the student accommodation of my now wife Anne.

Anne subsequently tolerated me taking the car to Team Hartwell in July 1977 for a 998 engine to be fitted, and which then gave brilliant service up to 150,000 miles or so, when the car was sold to a purchaser from St Albans in the early 1990s.

I caught up with



1977: Anne again, this time with Simon's first Clan
Photo: Simon Browner

1985: Second Clan outside the Browners' Bristol home
Photo: Simon Browner



John Simister at the NEC in 2019, he told me that a while ago that he had come across the car, apparently still in St Albans but if anybody knows what has happened to it, I would love to know. It was getting a bit corroded when sold, not helped by a poor partial restoration

and respray prior to sale. (Unfortunately, there is no MoT history for the car showing on www.check-mot.service.gov.uk though it could be sitting in a barn somewhere. GP)

Anne has also put up with a couple of Clan Crusaders. I drove with a friend to Lampeter to collect NYH 10L (yellow) and a year or two later to Folkingham to buy PNK 167L (Blue). She did, however, love commuting from Bristol to Bath in a Turquoise Metallic Sunbeam Stiletto, VOV 578J,

between 1981-1985 or so – we both wish we still had that one. (Same MoT history comments apply. GP) VOV 578J was a low-mileage one owner car from the old Rootes dealer Yenton Garage, Erdington, Birmingham.

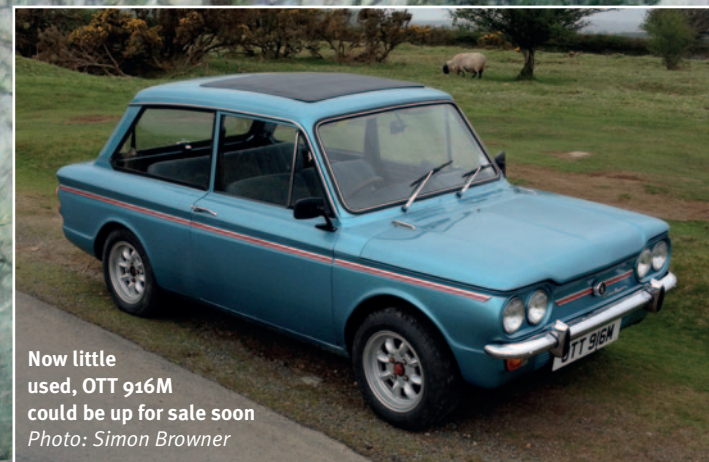
Unfortunately due to student impecuniosity I was unable

to keep either Clan. I recall driving to South Norwood near Crystal Palace in NYH 10L in the late 1970's, having offered to deliver the car to its new owner. (I used to know this car and its owner when I lived in Kingston. It still exists. GP) A photo of this Clan was featured in a recent issue of *Impressions*, I think, and it sounds to me as if it is still living in South London! I would love to have it or PNK back one day.

After the usual gap without owning any small Sunbeams while our children grew up and left home, I spotted Sunbeam OTT 916M advertised in Plymouth in 2007, and could not resist it. It's subsequently been used for MCC endurance classic trialling in the Exeter and Lands End trial events, in the more gentle non-damaging class O section, with reasonable success. More about



1987: Much missed by Simon and Anne, their Stiletto outside a pub in Witney
Photo: Simon Browner



Now little used, OTT 916M could be up for sale soon
Photo: Simon Browner



After several years with neither Sunbeam nor Clan, OTT 916M arrived in 2007 and was used for classic trialling. See also Centre of Attention
Photo: Bob Blackman



for *Impressions* about long-distance MCC trialling if the Editor thinks it would be of interest. (*Most definitely! GP*)

Rather like GOK 724L, OTT 916M also started with an extremely reliable 875 cc unit, but I could not resist another Hartwell unit and purchased one of the last ones to be assembled personally by Ray Payne, I understand, and that now runs reliably in the car with an R17 cam and Weber 28/36 carb.

I was also fortunate enough to be pointed in the direction of another Sunbeam, UWP 123F, which was acquired from Burnham on Sea in 2014, having already been converted to a 1040 cc Ben Bolt engine by a previous owner, possibly Colin Ellis (?).

I have to mention that work commitments and lack of expertise has meant I have had to rely to an extent on others to keep the Sunbeams going over the years and I must in particular thank Nigel Lenton (Taunton) and Robert Pidgeon (Coach House Classics near Plymouth) for all their help and guidance.

Finally, I was saddened to read that Imp Club founder Richard Knight passed away recently. I contacted Richard in 1980 after seeing his advert (*See page 28. GP*) and joined the club at that time, having previously been a member of the short-lived Imp Variants Owners Register (IVOR) which fizzled out. I am well aware of the tremendous energy and commitment Richard put into the club in its formative years to establish its sound foundations. He would be very proud.



that another day (I enjoyed Cliff Morell's excellent *Seven Trials Imps* article in October's *Impressions*).

It would be good to see more Imp engined vehicles in MCC endurance events; I was inspired by Bill Rosten's 1966 green Imp to have a go at those. I would be happy to put together an article