

Lowflying

March 2018

for Caterham and Lotus Seven enthusiasts



Lotus Seven Club



THIS MONTH'S INTERNATIONAL EDITION: SEVENS UNDER A SOUTH AFRICAN SKY • THE GREAT RIVER ROAD TRIP • A SEVEN IN THE STATES • MORE FUN THAN SHOULD BE ALLOWED • REMEMBERING DAVID WAKEFIELD • NEWS AND EVENTS

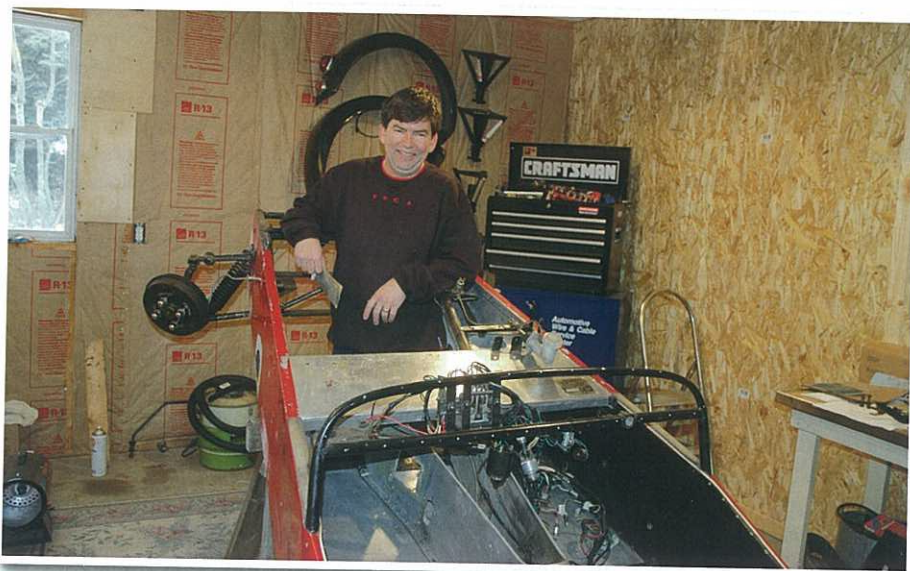


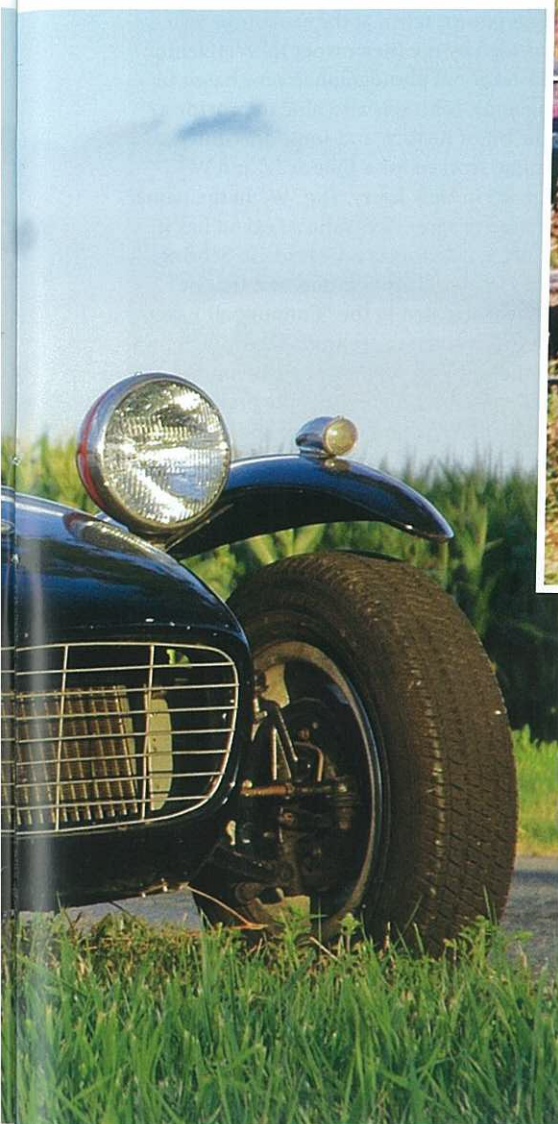
A Seven in the States

When **John Donohoe** purchased his Lotus Seven back in 2000, he could never have realised quite how much ownership would change his life, nor how much he would end up learning about the car's history before he became her custodian.

There was a time when I thought that an E Type Jaguar was my dream car; when I was about 8 years old, my friend Kenny Kratzer's mum crammed him, two others and me into her E Type Coupe for what was to be my only ride ever in an E Type. When I was 12 years old, my mum drove a 1970 Triumph GT6+ (probably better known as a MkII to most of you) that at the time I considered a baby E Type coupe. Sadly, it was long gone by the time I could have driven it, and later when my dad became the overly proud owner of an XJ6... well, that put me off Jaguars forever. You have to meet my dad – a great guy, but... I'd best leave it there!

Several years later, Classic and Sports Car featured the Lotus Seven. I was as familiar with Lotus as the next guy (*James Bond drove one right?*) but I became intrigued as I perused





Robin Read's book "Colin Chapman's Lotus." Reading that this simple car provided the true minimalist, purposeful, high performance driving experience, I set my sights on owning one — I just hadn't yet settled on whether it would be a Caterham or an older Lotus.

I began to watch Sevens more closely at the vintage race events I attended with my wife and two young kids, and accidentally stumbled upon 7/B1135 at a sports car dealership in Birmingham Michigan, about an hour from home. After a test drive — my first experience of a right hand drive vehicle, and my first ever time of even sitting in a Lotus Seven — I jokingly suggested to my wife Linda that we should purchase it as a gift for her 40th birthday (never mind that she was only 38 at the time). Somewhat surprisingly, she agreed! Mind you, this is the woman who loaned me \$275 to buy a 1976 Kawasaki KH400 when we were first dating, so I suppose it shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise!

The year was 2000, and we picked up the car in August. I sent the chassis number details to Lotus Seven Historian John Watson for him to confirm that it was indeed a genuine Lotus. He responded that without also having the frame number, he couldn't be totally certain about



Right: Earliest known photo of 7/B1135, provided by now professional photographer John Heseltine. Note the nearside exhaust of the 1,147cc Triumph engine and the amateurish roll hoop

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the provenance. However, once I had the car home, I was able to scrape away a few layers of paint to reveal the number — relief!

In the meantime, I removed the customised 7" front and 9" rear Elan-centred wheels as well as the 11" wide rear wings, and the 13" red leather-wrapped Mountney steering wheel. I located a set of Triumph Herald wheels, cleaned them up and fitted them, along with the car's original rear wings that amazingly had remained with it and survived! 'Updated' back to its earlier spec, I enjoyed driving the car for some 5,000 miles the following year.

Almost immediately after buying the car, I signed onto the Sevens mailing list at Se7ens.net where I found a community of Seven owners. Nine out of ten messages were related to more modern Sevens however. I took this up with John Watson who offered to request a Lotus-

specific list from Se7ens.net, to discuss the challenges and original details of early Lotus Sevens. That list was created, and within a few weeks, we had a dozen or so subscribers. It was at this point that I offered to build a simple web page to catalogue the subscribers' cars with a photo and bit of history for each - SimpleSevens.org. Before long, I had over 100 Lotus Sevens shown on the site, and it continued to grow. I added history, stories and more until quite frankly, it grew out of control. I am now in a continual update process and see no end in sight!

Along the way, I managed to visit England for the 50th Anniversary of the Lotus Seven (another happy surprise that my wife was game for!) where I was asked by Steve Winterberg of the Lotus 7 Club whether I would be willing to take on the role of Area

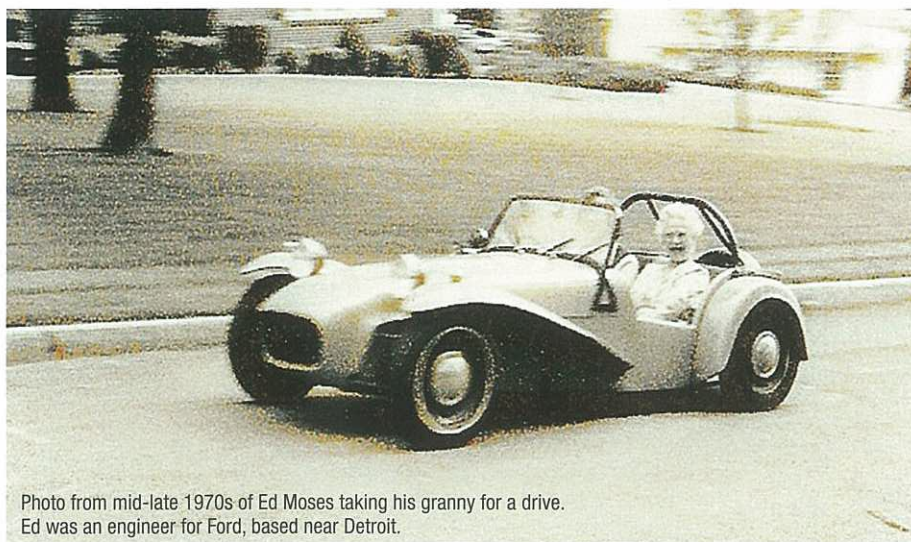


Photo from mid-late 1970s of Ed Moses taking his granny for a drive. Ed was an engineer for Ford, based near Detroit.

representative for the USA. This was about the point that I began making contact with Seven owners here in the US, particularly in Michigan. Although we don't get together often enough, we've had as many as seven Sevens together for a gathering on one occasion... And I try to get them to join the Lotus Seven Club every time!

My wife and I had a wonderful time at the 50th — I got to shake hands with Hazel Chapman for heaven's sake! Waiting to be introduced, I heard her chuckle to someone else "...said I'd probably never sat in one before — I used to bloody race them!" And more recently, I spearheaded the gathering of a record number of Lotus Sevens to show at the USA's Lotus Limited Lotus Owner's Gathering (LOG) in Gettysburg Pennsylvania. In fact, the 2018 LOG will take place in Cleveland, Ohio, just a few hours from my home, so I am planning to make a push to break the Seven record once again! A friend of mine has promised to bring all three of his Sevens — Two S1 Sevens, and an early S2. And I'm looking forward to seeing a few of you there again!

I could easily write pages and pages about the experiences I have enjoyed through owning this fantastic car, my investigations into its history, tracking down previous owners and even getting to meet the New York dealer who originally supplied it, Sy Kaback... I could talk about the letters I exchanged with Gil (Mac) McIntosh (*one*

of the small team that, with Colin Chapman, developed the Lotus 7 chassis design. Ed) and about meeting Peter Warr (former team boss of Lotus Formula 1) here in the USA at the 50th Anniversary of Lotus at Road America. I could even talk about the time that Lotus Engineering in Michigan put my 948cc Seven on their rolling road dyno to find out the true power output of the (then) smallest engined Seven!

Instead, I'll stick to documenting the owners and engines that Lotus Seven 7/B1135 has had so far:

She left the factory on 8th June 1961, and the Lotus records indicate an 8G10RS 948cc motor, which indicates a "Gold Seal" factory refurbished engine. It turns out that 12 out of 16 948cc-engined cars Lotus delivered to the dealer Sy Kaback were marked as having been fitted with these "Gold Seal" engines. When interviewed, Kaback said '*I placed orders, and took what they sent me, and sometimes what they sent was actually what I had ordered! Never knew anything about factory refurbished engines!*' Sadly, he no longer has records from his early days as they were lost when the building that housed his offices collapsed (but that's yet another story!)

The next definite evidence of my car's existence are photos of the car on a trailer, in yellow with a black nose, but now fitted with a 1,147cc Triumph Spitfire engine (with associated nearside exhaust). This and

other photos taken at the same time were provided by the then owner John Heseltine (professional photographer, now based in England). John was also able to provide a little bit of history, and some anecdotes... He had worked for a time at "Z and W Mazda" in New Jersey. The "W" in the name referred to racer Ray Walle... Legend has it he drove a factory stock Mazda to Sebring, raced it, and drove it home, and that he also participated in the "Cannonball Baker Sea to Shining Sea Memorial Dash" aka the Cannoball Run, the illegal cross-country road race. But I digress... Walle presumably installed the Triumph engine and ran the car until the late 1960s when Heseltine bought it from him. Then in 1973, the car was placed for sale on the lot of Z and W.

Ed Moses saw the car there while at school, and purchased it. Ed reports running the 1,147cc until it failed dramatically. At this point, inspired by a 1974 Road and Track article about Jim Gallagher having installed a Mazda rotary engine in a Lotus 7, took seized opportunity presented by a friend of his having rolled his Mazda to do the same. He got the rotary engine to fit OK, but when he attempted to re-install the steering column, he realized that whilst Gallagher's car was LHD, 1135 was RHD, so the rotary engine's intake blocked the steering column. So the engine came out again until a another friend turned up with a totalled Cortina, out of

More recently, I spearheaded gathering a record number of Lotus Sevens at the Lotus Owners' Gathering in Gettysburg Pennsylvania



My son and his not-quite-yet-fiancee 'track touring' during the 2014 Mid Ohio Sports Car Course vintage race event



which came a 1600 Twin Cam which went into the Seven instead...

In about 1984, Ted Byers bought the car with the Twin Cam in it, and contacted John Watson. Watson told him the original engine would have been the BMC 948, so Ted pulled out the Twink and installed a 948. In about 1996, Ted decided to sell the car, and listed it in Hemmings Motor News

from where it was purchased by a speculator and ended up going to auction.

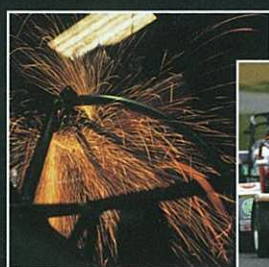
Eventually, exotic car dealer Auto Europe ended up with the car, and 'sold' it to Doug Davis, although the title still had Ted Byers' name on it. Finally, I saw and purchased 7/B1135 in August of 2000. I ran it regularly, the 948 being plenty of motor for me in such a light car, but when the clutch started

slipping, I swapped the drivetrain for a lightly tuned 1,275cc race engine that I happened across. I am currently in the process of slowly and methodically building up a very light and well balanced 948cc engine that will hopefully go back into the car in the spring of 2018 in time to be run it ready to go to the next Lotus Owners' Gathering in Ohio. My philosophy for this Seven has been that anything I decide to change should aim to take it back to its original spec (you have to forgive me the temporary 1,275cc engine for now). As I make these 'reverse upgrades' I seek out old original parts (the dash panel is an example) that show the patina of their 50+ years of wear. It is not my intention to make the car look 'like new' or 'better than new'. It's always to make it look like it is actually a 57 year old car that someone might just have added a few go faster bits to — the 948cc engine I'm building to put back in the car has an original Speedwell aluminium head for example...

So, in the fifty-five years since leaving the Lotus factory, the owners and engines of Lotus Seven 7/B1135 could be summarised as:

- 948cc BMC gold seal owner: Sy Kaback
- 1,147cc Triumph owner: Ray Walle
- Mazda Rotary, 1,600cc Holbay owner: Ed Moses
- 1,600cc Holbay, 948 BMC owner: Ted Byers
- 948 BMC, 1,275cc BMC (and soon to be 948cc again) owner: John Donohoe *LF*

Sole manufacturers of Lotus & Caterham Seven chassis for over forty-five years



All chassis body unit repair & restoration is carried out using only correct specifications and production tooling.
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