

A TALE OF AN HISTORIC CAR, AND A MORE HISTORIC DRIVER, GOING HISTORIC RACING

Malcolm Verey tells us why he took the F.I.A route to historic racing and about the fun he and Willie Green have with his Tiger.

I had not raced since 1966, and up to then, really not much. You know, not much money, getting married. Some years later I did hill climbing, testing, track days, sprints; but in 2001 I got myself a race licence again!

I had acquired the ex Proteus race car, an aluminium C Type which found itself in Spa in September 2003 (or was it 2002?), for the annual British Sports Car Race run by Barry Sidery (Sideways)–Smith. I had persuaded my drinking friend and mentor, a certain Willie Green, to share the drive. Unfortunately, after a fairly hairy practice session on the Saturday morning, I was persuaded by Willie and others to join them for lunch, prior to the 3pm race – well you can guess the rest – never made it back for the race did we! But, judging by the dents of the protagonists, viewed later, perhaps lunch was a good idea after all!

Next day I was volunteered to do the pit board for an AC Ace in the 'Gentleman Drivers' GT Race, and in which race Willie was showing the opposition how to make a Ferrari stay in front. This looked like a very interesting Race Series with some excellent driving and great cars. Later that day, at the bar, I enquired about entering this Series, and was informed by Willie that they were very oversubscribed and only wanted proper and desirable cars of the early sixties period.

Ok, I said, I will get rid of 're-creation' C Type, what should I buy? Well, how much have you got to spend? I said how much do I need to spend to get a car that might get an entry? Well, around £250,000.00 might do it! As you can imagine the conversation came to a halt and we got into some serious eating and drinking.

However, some days later, Willie called me and said that a Sunbeam Tiger was a car that might get an entry as, there were none of these competing in the series, except a Le Mans Lister Tiger occasionally.

Well, having checked out a few, I settled on EOL 577C, found in nearby Chichester with an owner Who was prepping this ex-concours car for

racing but was being 'posted' to Australia with his company, hence the reason to sell. Having eventually agreed a price, I set about getting it prepared for the essential FIA papers needed for the Series.

Now the fun started! Having obtained 100 pages or so of appendix K Regs from the MSA and two lots of homologation papers, my then engineer and myself set about establishing what we had to do to comply...



Firstly, out with the 289 unit, and obtain a 'correct' 260 which I had built to a legal race spec by Huddart Engines. But did you know that if you chose the homologation papers that specify the Borg Warner Gearbox you can have bigger valves! But I had a Ford box, which is tougher, so standard valves it was. Nevertheless, 280 HP was ok. Secondly we had the axle sent off to BPA to check it over and replace all moving parts. We had to chuck away the anti tramp bars, the lowering blocks etc. The gearbox was rebuilt, all suspension parts





feeling sorry for us! But hell, we have had more smiles than most over the past two seasons, with no rebuilds (just lots of brake shoes and pads), and we have normally finished in the top third of our races against some very capable opposition (Cobra's, E-Types, 350 GT Mustangs etc. etc.), so that's ok.

EOL 577C and I, minus the sadly retired Willie Green following his terrible accident at the Goodwood Revival last year, are refreshed ready for the 2006 season with a new triple plate clutch & lightweight fly wheel.

We have new paint due to illegal immigrants climbing all over the car in the trailer coming back from Spa last year. I now hope that Willie's excellent recovery to date will get him back in the saddle.

replaced, new, proper 13" Minilites were purchased and, of course, the requisite 550x13 Dunlop L tyres. The roll bar had to comply to regs of course. The wheel spacers had to go. We did put some decent brake shoes in the rear and some efficient pads upfront; but even so, it was hell to stop with the standard drums, callipers and discs. The inspection for the papers took place and Jeremy Hall from the M.S.A. was most helpful (and very knowledgeable); you could not get away with a disguised 289 with him! And no electronic ignition either. Plus standard manifolding and carburetion is required.

To finish, a message to those with standard Tigers, Historic Racing is great fun, the cars are reliable and tough and it is rather nice to race a car that is original and correct – even with no brakes! And don't forget throw away the Panhard rod.

The HSCC have their Classic Sport Car Series and Historic Roadsports Races; both of which accommodate Tigers. Top Hat have their Cloth Cap Races; and of course the Gentleman's Drivers Series, now run the Master Series.

Well, eventually, after a lot of messing with set-up over several races, I got the hang of useless brakes, quirky handling and started to have fun, but the best was to come. At a Silverstone race I noticed the car would go around some corners with some control, but others it would throw itself unpredictably towards the greenery. Technical discussions took place, many opinions passed about the capabilities of the owner, but eventually the consensus was the Panhard rod should be chucked away. Bingo; Verey and Green got going (not stopping!).



The two hour races we enjoyed needed great care as pads were gone after one hour and a half, so sideways into corners was the order of the day!

Tigers make you smile, but don't expect to win, but I guarantee a Tiger gives more fun for your money than a lot of other cars out there. If anybody wants advice or help on getting Papers and sorting specs out, call me on 0788 400 1090.

In 2004, in the wet at Estoril we even won our class! We were honoured to get the Spirit of the Series award for 2005, which makes me wonder if they were

Malcolm Verey 2006

