

Name: Andrew Kemp

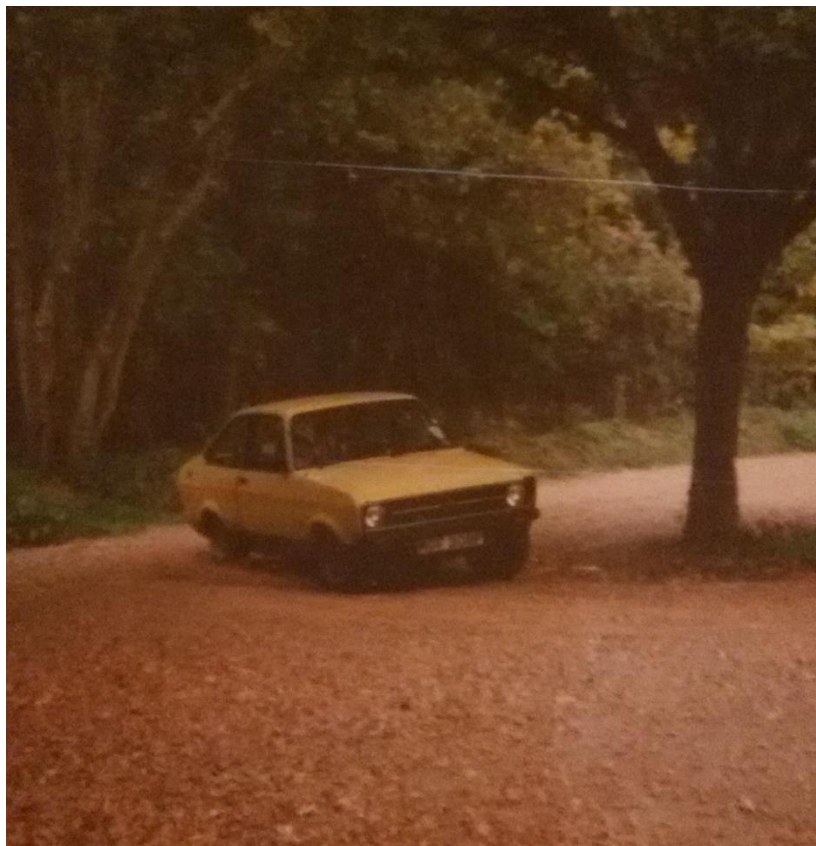
Current 750 Formula Car: Racekits Falcon

I have been fascinated by machines since I was little... I liked to take things apart to see how they worked as soon as I was able to use tools... sadly for my parents, my ability to put things back together again came much later in life....

My first driving experience came, as it does for many racers, in karting- but not in the usual fashion- we had a large garden and my dad built a go kart using a Suffolk Punch lawnmower engine and drive mechanism (the blades were removed, even in the 70's that would have been considered dangerous) and a simple frame and swing axle front end. I spent many happy hours circuiting the garden in that.

Later in my youth we acquired a sit on lawn mower and that also had a trailer so I could back a trailer at age 9.... that came in handy years later with the race trailer.

As a teenager I aspired to be Colin McRae and once I passed my test I used to use the army woodland nearby to play 'rally driver' between the trees on a pine cone surface, with vehicles as glamorous as a 1.3 Marina coupe and a Mk 2 escort (but the smoking 1.1 litre 40 bhp version).... at the time, I wanted to slide and drift cars but the cars I had didn't have the power to do it on tarmac, plus too many friends had accidents on the road and I didn't want to be a statistic.... I can tell you now, getting a Marina to enter a corner in a neutral drift on pine cones is a truly hard skill to master...but if I ever have the need to pass through two closely spaced trees at night, sideways, on gravel or pines cones, I know I have the skill set to do it...



I had been navigator for my dad in MCC classic trials so it was natural that that was the first motorsport I entered. The steep off road hill climbs did not suit my woefully underpowered cars but it was fun and great for learning good clutch control. Later I did a few sprints, and some trials, mostly in a 2 litre Vauxhall Carlton estate on 150 000 miles, it was not competitive but great fun none the less.





My dad had been racing in the Formula for some time by this point and I'd been to a fair few races to watch, and I was interested in it massively but made the mistake many observers do, I think, in that I felt that it was 'proper' motorsport and thus a level above my humble messing around.

Then I got the chance to drive the Darvi he had been racing, at a celebratory event at Silverstone, for 3 parade laps... this is possibly 15 years ago.... I was behind an Austin 7 special and it felt very slow but I had no idea if I was allowed to pass, being a parade and all.. Then a couple of 750 Formula guys whizzed past so I tagged on to them. Then I regretted it- we entered a corner and I just followed them, saw where the corner went, realised I was about to wreck his car before his race that afternoon, and on a parade lap as well, because it was clear the car would never make the corner. Of course, it easily did, and then I finally realised how quick they are. One of the 750 guys asked after if I enjoyed it and I said "yes ", which was true. He then said what a shame it was we had to go slowly and I tried to look like I thought that too!

Years later, my dad decided to start Racekits, with a reworking of the Darvi that he had re-bodied piece by piece over the years but the rule change to allow transverse engines came before the first kit took off so he designed the Falcon. That was the point I came onboard, to design and make the bodywork. Such a short sentence and such a long process.... the best bit was that I was making the body before the car existed although we had a good idea of the dimensions... It didn't really matter as the panels were all designed to overlap in one way or another to make it easier to build and avoid odd panel gaps.



Now the race meetings were more fraught as I was much more involved in everything, and some long running and undiagnosed fuel pump issues lead to many hasty head gasket changes until we realised the issues. Then the great thing happened- I finally got my license. Best thing I ever did, no doubt.

I had a test day at Mallory which went well and I got 60 laps in, enough to realise what the car could do, and I felt confident at my first race as the lap times at Mallory were decent. I was very lucky in my first race for many reasons, the primary one being that it was at Rockingham and nobody else had raced there either as it was our first time there. I qualified 5th, which I was disappointed with, in hindsight I realise it wasn't a bad result but hey, we all want pole 😊

At the very first corner I fell off the track ... not the plan... in my defense, the fluid had gone from the front brake circuit so I only had rear brakes, and I dropped to 9th place. However the race was red flagged and at the restart I got a great start and took the lead. Then I had no idea what to do- all the advice as a rookie is how to be lapped safely... I clung on for a few laps until Ed Pither took an overdue first win and I finished second ."Ok, I'll just go one better tomorrow" I thought, and I've been trying to do that ever since....still, second place with no front brakes and nursing a water temp of 116 wasn't bad I guess. That was 7 years ago and I'm still trying to go one better 😊



One of the key selling points of our formula, beyond the freedom to design your car within a very free set of rules, is how close yet fair and safe the racing is. I have watched 750 MC races now for 20 years and I'm pretty sure we have by far the least number of accidents. I have been wheel to wheel with most drivers on the grid at some point and I have never felt uneasy about it. I truly think the driving standards in our formula are something we should be proud of. Everyone is so competitive but so fair and mindful too. It's been a pleasure and an honour to race alongside you all.

I think I've now done 24 races albeit over 7 years, so I'll stop calling myself a rookie but since Bob has been racing since 5 years before I was born it's easy to feel like the new boy! There is a reason people stay in this formula, I believe you cannot get the combination of cornering speed, low cost, engineering freedom and driving standards in any other series. Plus the willingness of other drivers to help out at a race weekend is truly wonderful. You are all a credit to the formula and a pleasure to know and race against. so I thank you all.

Having raced in the 750 Formula I can't imagine racing anywhere else

And as a side note, it brings me great joy to see people building Falcons and racing them- we have no desire to take over the series and we never will. I think a transverse car and a front engined car can be truly comparable, and no one car will ever take over given the design freedoms, but perhaps we have made an easier access for people who may well go on to build their own designs in the future. I am truly honoured to have given others the chance to race and in some small way contributed the amazing story that is the 750 Formula.

Andy Kemp
