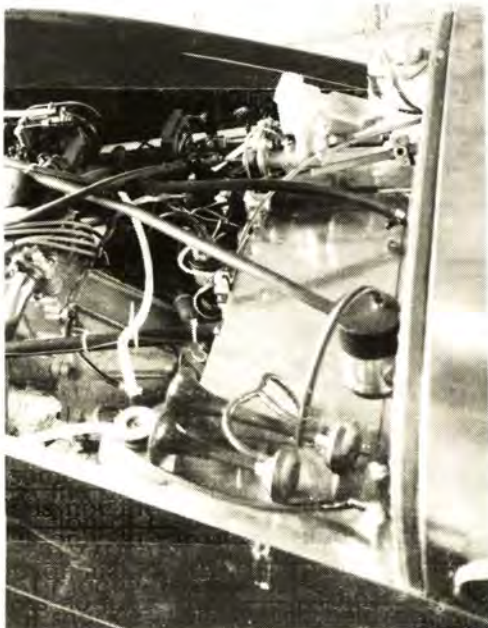


This car is a 1988 version of the Caterham. It is a standard cockpit model and uses the Ford RS2000 rear axle. The engine is a Kent 1600cc unit and has remained untouched after 86,000 miles having been 'rescued' from my previous 1980 7. The gearbox is Ford 2000E and went into the latest chassis without any alteration to the Caterham remote housing.

As will (or at least will not ...) be noticed from the pictures, is the heater unit. The heater fitted is that of the Triumph GT6 and is mounted inside the car, vertically on the scuttle panel. Apart from the advantage gained with space and cleanliness under the bonnet, the heater also has take off's for possibly ducting hot air to de-misters mounted on top of the dash. (Volkswagen items are ideal for this task and it is a modification that many Swiss cars have had done). Another major advantage of this set up (and from my point of view the most important), is that it is possible to duct cold fresh air into the cockpit - something that cannot be done with the 'standard' unit as it will only re-circulate the already warm air in the footwell. Air is fed into the heater from a set of forward facing louvres mounted centrally in the bonnet (my car uses the standard Caterham bonnet supplied for the cars exported to Switzerland using a CVH engine). For those amongst you who have taken your 7 on the continent and know of the extremes of heat that are generated around your feet, then this type of system is for you!

Another modification necessary, was to move the battery. The engine is of such high compression that a small 'Torque Start' item will not turn the engine over quickly enough and leave enough juice to give a decent spark to start. The obvious answer was to fit the larger version of this type of battery. This was obtained from a local tyre and battery retailer for the princely sum of £48.75, which compared very favourably with the quoted prices of the small item! The small battery mounting plate was removed from its resting place (under the carburettors) and with small modification, fitted to a position in front of the passengers footwell. O.K., if you want to go dry sumped this will create a problem - but, rest easy, Brise Alloy fabrications now have a pattern for a dry sump tank that will fit in front of the drivers footwell (see pics).



A point to note here is that the tank will probably not be needed to be touched during the life of the car except in the case of an accident situation, (filling with oil is easy with the tank in situ) whereas the battery will probably have to be got at - either for re-charging or maybe even for jump starting at some time in the future. An added benefit from mounting the tank in this place, is that the pipework runs are substantially less, therefore the pressure



drop is not so acute (and also your wallet isn't quite so empty if, like me, you've opted for Aeroquip hoses!)

The radiator used is that from a Triumph Spitfire and is of the 3 core type. This unit is capable of keeping 'hot' twin cams cool so should be satisfactory regardless of engine choice, also it is easily available so no problems if caught out on the continent or in the middle of Scandinavia! Fitting is straight forward as the Caterham chassis now has four lugs ideally placed to mount it on. (Another cheap alternative is a Ford Escort rad. but this is less effective.)

The oil cooler is simply mounted on the lower chassis tube behind the radiator with two jubilee clips and a small strap. (The electric fan works directly behind the cooler and although drawing air from the radiator through the cooler's matrix, this air is cool as it is passing through the radiator at it's lowest, therefore coolest, part.) The exhaust system is a 4-into-1 manufactured by Gran Fabrications and is made of highly polished stainless steel. It looks like chrome but should last the lifetime of the car unlike the chrome on mild steel versions currently available. The cost of the Gran item is also considerably less at around £220!

The shock absorbers are adjusted to the same settings as those that were on my last 7 and the car rides and handles ideally for my taste. ie. Rears adjusted to fully off and the fronts adjusted to 2 clicks on. Tyres are 195.60's on 14" Revolutions and are run at 18lbs/in. Other points that are different to 'standard' cars are the tonneau and the handbrake. The tonneau was specially made for the car out of 'double duck' material and was fabricated to give as much protection as possible. The tonneau is quite important to me as I do not possess a roof and the car gets used regardless of the weather conditions. A good idea incorporated was to run the zip from the centre between the seats to a point just to the left of the steering wheel - this gives more protection to the driver when he drives solo. Also, due to the smallness of the steering wheel, it was unnecessary to incorporate a pocket for to allow for it. (This was an area where the standard item always seemed to leak, leaving an annoying wet patch on the driver's seat.)

The handbrake is that from an MG midget and is mounted neatly on the passengers side of the centre tunnel. This is a mod that has been done by many other 7 owners and a mod that I have carried out on the last three of my own cars. (At a recent Somerset meeting two 1988 cars had utilised the standard handbrake but had mounted them in a similar place to that of the MG item.) It's

Members' Matters

worth remembering that it is virtually impossible to reach the handbrake in it's original position when wearing a seatbelt - especially in these days of compulsory use.

A couple of points need to be raised reference the build, one of which is if you fit the bush in the dash prior to fitting the upper steering column (as per the manual) you won't be able to get the column in!

Double check the fuel tank sender connections - mine were shorting and also the unit was fitted to read full when empty and vice versa. If the short hadn't been spotted while the tank was empty I dread to think of what might have happened with a full tank of fuel and a little spark! ... Check it.

Not dangerous but none the less annoying was that the topmost mounting bolt for the rear wing had been drilled exactly in line with the shock absorber and was therefore impossible to fit.

There were other things that were at fault (not least the abysmal quality of the fibreglass!) but this is not the place to air them. However, if any one else has had problems with their build, quality of components, or the manual, then let me know and I will ensure that the information gets to the people that matter to try and improve things. Conversely if you'd like to give me a call I may be able to assist with any build problems (except de Dion suspensions as I haven't yet had that experience!)

A roof for the non-roof brigade

Those of you who know me will know that I don't possess such a thing as a roof for my 7 - even though I use the car daily and run up an enormous mileage. However, 'the lady' sometimes looks as if she's not very happy when it's absolutely pouring and there's a great deal of traffic on the road (or when we seem to be on roads with continual traffic lights and roadworks!) which of course means that we cannot maintain the required 35 or so miles an hour of forward motion that's required to avoid the ingress of the rain! To be absolutely honest neither do I but I refuse to become a hood-up person - partly because I now find the (covered) cockpit of the 7 so claustrophobic and devoid of excellent vision and, partly because past experience has taught me that just after you



put the hood up the rain would stop and the sun would come out which meant that quite often the hood remained up when it should have been down! End result = missed some great 7 weather! (Obviously this is a situation that doesn't occur when you don't have a hood to put up in the first place.)

The brief was to find an alternative to the "up and down" of the permanent in-car umbrella and thinking of it in that way the solution became obvious.

A roof panel was made up from a piece of vinyl which was made to fit the screen at the front in the normal way but was then attached to "lift a dot" fasteners on the roll over bar. This in fact proved quite effective even in a torrential downpour recently encountered and still left me with the feeling of being roofless.

The panel folds up into a very small area and will not cause a problem with stowage but - in the wet/dry/wet British

climate - to make things even easier, the panel can be rolled and simply secured to the roll over bar ready for immediate use. I use a couple of releasable cable ties which are ideal for the job (and also many other uses on and around the 7!)

You should see from the photographs that there is another press stud on the top of the door - this actually makes the whole structure very rigid - surprisingly so - and gives good protection from the elements. My doors are higher than standard but the system will work just as well with the standard doors - but I am not sure about the latest "folding" types.

Give it a try - you may find that you didn't really need that standard roof anyway (it really is surprising just how often you don't need a roof) and the whole thing is not going to cost an arm or a leg.

be seeing you **David Mirylees**

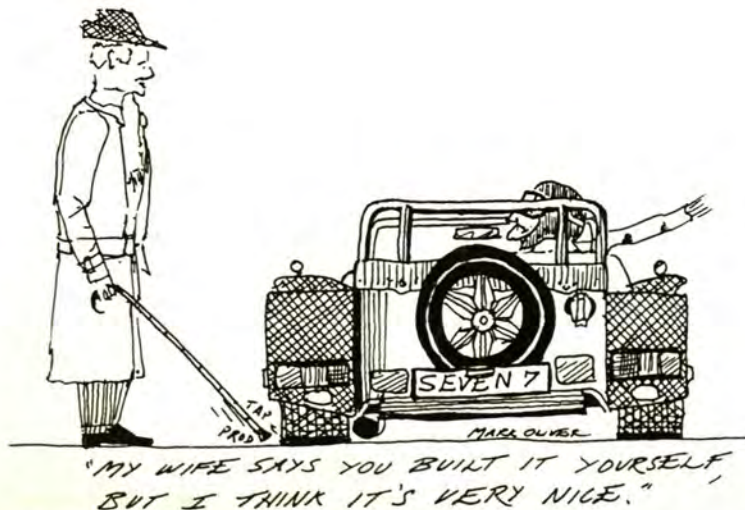


WANTED: 1 x Stainless Steel Exhaust System to suit Lotus Twin Cam Engine. SHAUN BRETTE 0562 885591 Ed's note - Gran Fabrications, Nottingham 761864 are good.

FOR SALE: FORD 1700 x FLOW engine 500 miles since built. 160 + BHP using Burton parts, Sach clutch, complete with 45 DCOE Dellortos, dry sump and pump, micro dynamics ignition with rev limiter, full spec available, £1500 o.n.o. Bullit G.box Quafe gears £275 o.n.o. both available for testing in car. Paul 0273 517063

FOR SALE: 1 x 185.60 x 13 Good Year N.C.T. tyre. 0273 517063

FOR SALE: Twin cam head. Offers. Keith Monk 044368550



"MY WIFE SAYS YOU BUILT IT YOURSELF, BUT I THINK IT'S VERY NICE."