

wounded then... A car with a good history is well worth saving. Anyone looking for a restoration project could do a lot worse than that particular vehicle...."

In 1981 the Courtneys were racing the Jackson Special at Ohakea and mentioned to local Masterton sports car enthusiast John Wilson that they had the remains of the A40 Special. John dwelled on the idea of the project and subsequently rang the Courtneys, who said that if he was keen enough to travel to Kaikohe and back, he could have the Amon car parts for nothing. John and a mate did the trip in a weekend – a solid twenty-six hours of driving.

By 1983, after 500 hours of labour and the outlay of \$700, the A40 Special was re-born. Many parts were new but the chassis, parts of the body and some mechanical bits dated back to the Des Herrick days. Interestingly, when I contacted speedway historian Gordon McIsaac regarding the A40's early midget history, he instantly recognised the chassis as coming from Des Herrick's number 66 Speedway car. Gordon was a Des Herrick fan, having been in the pit crew for the car from 1947 to 1950, and he bought out a huge scrap book just on Des Herrick and his cars.

John Wilson's restoration was in many ways "in the style of" the car's early guises, as he didn't have any photographs on which to base the missing body panels. In any event, the A40 Special has had a number of forms over the years:

1. The original 1947 B4 Ford Des Herrick speedway midget
2. The modified 1948 Hudson Terraplane speedway midget
3. The early 1950's Herb Gilroy/Ralph Watson lengthened chassis circuit car
4. The 1956 re-bodied Dave Lichenstein/Chris Amon circuit car
5. The 1983 John Wilson restoration (the current form)

After running the car in a few events, John put it up for sale in order to concentrate on other projects. Wellington sports car owner and racer Bill McElwee became the new owner, and raced it at Manfield and Ohakea. However, other projects got in the way, and the A40 Special was put into storage in the late 1980s.

I often had thoughts of trying to track down Des' speedway midget, as it had frequently been the topic of conversation when I was a child and our family went to the Speedway at Western Springs. Des was my father's cousin, and he had gone on to drive a Cyril Goldfinch-built midget that had some sort of ownership connection with my grandfather. A couple of years ago, I started some casual research, which ended up with me contacting Bill McElwee earlier this year. Following a trip down to Wellington to view the car (in remarkably good condition in the back of a printer's workshop in Miramar), a deal was done and after more than 55 years, the Des Herrick midget/A40 Special is back in family ownership. I intend to get the car running without undertaking any major restoration. I think that the patina that it has is all part of its history and it is not one of those cars that fits comfortably with being made into a "perfect restoration". I will also keep it in the style that it now is, as that is what it has evolved to, and it would be wrong to try and "turn back the clock" and make it into something that it was forty or more years ago. The only things I intend to do are putting its drum brakes back on the front and redoing the dash and steering wheel - the last owner altered these when he was considering getting it road registered to be able to run in street parades! I intend to primarily use it as a hill-climb car and hope that work on it can get underway soon - however there is the Lola to finish and then there is the Lotus to finish and ...

Roger Herrick



Above: Some of the remains, as found by Fred Courtney, from which John Wilson rebuilt the car. Below: Current condition, and Roger Herrick's starting point...

