



My Stonehouse Memories of the 1960s

1959-70 - Roy C. Edwards



My Brother Tony

It would be remiss of me to write this story without recognising the influence of my big brother Anthony Frank John Edwards, born in 1936.

Tony was my introduction to heroes such as Geoff Duke, John Surtees, Stirling Moss, Mike Hawthorn, and many others, when growing up in Slough, Bucks. He went to his first British Grand Prix at Silverstone in 1952, to see these men in action. We loved the stories of Le Mans with Jaguar, Aston Martin, Ferrari and Mercedes.

After our move to Stonehouse, he got a job as an apprentice motor mechanic at Strettons Garage in Gloucester, and rode his bicycle to work in the summer time, and the train from Bristol Road, Stonehouse in winter. In his spare time he worked with a local racing team based in Worcester Street, Gloucester with John Denley and Cheltenham driver Ivor Bueb, with their 500cc Cooper Norton Mk IX.

Tony worked in a number of local garages, and took a life long interest in motor sport especially Jaguar cars.



Dad Frank, Mum 'Tilly' and Me, in Tony's MG TA - 1958

Times they were a - Changin

Dedication

The saddest event during my life in Stonehouse at this time, was the passing of my mother on the fourth of April 1959. Her breast cancer had been a problem for more than a couple of years. To me she was everything.

Growing up in Stonehouse, I had been in the company of good friends, whether it had been during my secondary school years, or enjoying the excitement of Rock'n'Roll. My primary activity during the nineteen sixties was participating and enjoying the thrills and spills of motorsport.

Soon after our arrival at Stonehouse in 1953 we made friends with a couple of neighbours who were like-minded motorsport fans - the Dowler brothers. Tony, the elder, was a similar age to my brother, Steve was around my age. It was thanks to him that I was introduced to one of his Marling school friends - Barry Powell.

At this time in my life I reignited a friendship with a chap who had been a football friend whilst at Stonehouse



Steve G, Mike, Barry and Steve D, at my brother's wedding 1961

Secondary School - Michael Cole. He lived on the Park Estate, and had a longtime friendship with Steven Gregory, whose company and friendship I appreciated and we all got on together rather well.

Cars and Adventures

I obtained my driving licence and a car in 1959. I passed my driving test (second attempt - over-confident first time), and paid £165 for my first car, a 1946 Hillman Minx. There were not many 18 year old apprentices driving their own cars. At this time, most of the lads used motorcycles.

This car enabled me to get to many Rock'n'Roll concerts and dance activities at



Mike Cole and I with my 1946 Hillman, at Gloucester in 1959

the 'Glen' in Bristol and at Cheltenham Town Hall, with friends Hazel Blanch from Cashes Green and her friend Glenda Davis from Stonehouse, along with Barry and other friends. Mike Cole used his dad's 1939 Hillman when we had too many people to fit in my car.

With my Stonehouse car friends, we formed a little clique that used to spend a great deal of time at my parents' house in Bridgend Stonehouse, much to the annoyance of many of the neighbours! Around this time we used to visit a local scrap yard owned by Stan Hailes, at Morton Valence, on the A38, where the Showman Travellers now store their equipment, and for about £5 we could buy an old vehicle, put on some good boots and fix any obvious problems, and use it to get to places like Severn Beach and Weston S.M. for a week-end visit. 'Times they were a-Changin'.

My brother was a member of a number of Motor Clubs, and it was one of the Hobbs Brothers living on the Bridgend Estate who introduced him to The Stroud Motor Club. Tony competed in a number of local club events, as well as those at the BARC (British Automobile Racing Club) West Midlands group, near Worcester.



Tony's second MG TA in 1960

It was at one of the Driving Test events held in the car park of the "Mitre Oak" near Worcester that our gang got involved with participating and learning the rules, regulations and procedures for organising motor sport activities for RAC Motor Sport affiliated clubs.



1956 Standard 8 arrives at Haven Avenue in 1960

In 1960 I exchanged my Hillman for a 1956 Standard 8. This car was then slightly modified with engine and suspension mods to make it more competitive and I took part in a BARC sprint at Wellsbourne, near Stratford upon Avon.

On the social side, we had decided to learn ballroom dancing, with some lessons in Stonehouse Church Hall. In our attempt to meet more young ladies, we used the car to get to regular Saturday night and special dance occasions at the Cheltenham Town Hall. On the way home, we stopped off in Gloucester to visit an Indian restaurant in Northgate Street, and had our introduction to Biryani and poppadoms.

With this car we travelled down to the Goodwood Race track, near Bognor Regis. We used to leave the Crown and Anchor Inn after closing time on a Friday night loaded up with portable cooking equipment and



Doug Harris and Sprite at Goodwood



Gorden Jenner and Gwen Solomon, Myself and Barry Powell, Mike Cole, Bob Gregory, with girlfriend Marilyn Stockwell. Steve Gregory took the photo. Park Estate 1960

beviies, and journeyed south. We slept in the car, Mike and Steve G made our breakfast ready for an early morning opening of the track. We would meet my brother's friend, (later a respected Stonehouse businessman), Doug Harris, who participated in racing with a modified Austin Healey Sprite. Doug was the person who offered me the opportunity to try my hand at learning to navigate on a motor rally. Brookthorpe farmer Mike Warner was another Goodwood entrant in his Triumph TR2 and later on with a very special Austin



Mike Warner and his Healey 100 at Goodwood

Healey 100. We would also go to the Silverstone, Mallory Park and Castle Coombe race tracks with these chaps and really enjoyed our days out. With our commitment to motor sport we thought it would be good to come up with a name for our own team. With the help of a few beers, we arrived at *Scuderia Eldory*: Edwards-Dowler-Cole and Gregory.

A major British event had happened in 1959 with the introduction of the Austin 7 and the Morris Mini Minor, made by the British Motor Corporation in Birmingham. As much as we admired these new machines, which sold for £496.96, they were beyond our limited income, even with the newly discovered Hire Purchase. However, the following January, BMC announced the 'MiniVan' which would be sold without Purchase Tax for £360. A pick-up version was announced later in the year. As *Motoring News* had said at the time of the MiniVan announcement, "A Racing Car for £360". Not quite a reality but it made a good headline.

In 1962 I tried to buy a Pick-Up version, but found there was a considerable delivery delay, so I placed an order for a Green Mini Van from the Kingscote and Stevens garage in Gloucester, where my brother was working

at the time, and paid for it on the "Glad and Sorry" with a minimum deposit. As a non smoker and limited drinker, I had more disposable



My second Mother "Dottie" and New Van

income than most of my peers and they took the Standard 8 in part exchange.

Other friends living on the Park Estate, Roger Lavis and John Couling joined the MiniVan brigade, as did a fellow I met in Stroud, who lived at the time in Andoversford, Alan Coulon. Tim Davis from Ryeford did in fact obtain a Mini Pick-Up.

Eldory to EMCOS

Gordon Jenner, another good friend had, with a few of his friends in the area, formed themselves a motor cycle club they called the *Vikings Motor Cycle Club* and organised a couple of friendly Motor Cycle Gymkhana events in local farmers' fields. Our gang went along to have a look and share in the fun, when it occurred to Mike and I that this was good, but we could do something better with our car friends. Soon after, at a pub in the Slad Valley, *Scuderia Eldory* met with other friends such as Alan Coulon and his friend Tony Adcock, with the intention of forming an official RAC Motor Sport affiliated motor club.

Some of us were already members of clubs who abbreviated the clubs' titles to just capital letters, such as, BARC and the BRSCC (British Racing and Sports Car Club). We liked the idea of using initials as a brand name, as this would make

people ask "What does that mean?" thereby opening a conversation to explain its meaning. After considerable consumption of beers at aforesaid pub, we arrived at a title for our proposed new motor club, EMCOS - Enthusiasts Motor Club of Stonehouse. It had to be known only as EMCOS. Being in the print trade, a number of us were very conscious of making the club a brand name. We could promote it on transfer stickers to be attached to the rear of our cars or vans, so that anyone following would see the name and think what does EMCOS mean? And, if the opportunity arose, try to enrol them as members.

That is the story of how the motor club called EMCOS came to fruition. From a house in Haven Avenue, Stonehouse, used as a base for Scuderia Eldory, by a group of local lads, who thought they could progress their enthusiasm, from Eldory, to EMCOS.



Autocrossing with the all conquering 'Scuderia Eldory' Mini Van

My brother's help was once again invaluable, as Mike and he set about modifying and tuning my van. Their help was considerable, as we fitted competition camshafts, modified brakes and carburation mods, installed a rev. counter, seat belts and modified gear linkage. We added an Austin Healey silencer and cream paint to the roof and grill. It looked and sounded fine to me. With this machine I entered a number of Autocross events easily winning my class of competitors for vehicles under 1000cc. In fact, when Mike or Steve drove it they were also successful. Scuderia Eldory had a Winner!

Whilst having a lunchtime meal at the Globe Inn, Stonehouse one Friday in 1964, we saw an advertisement in The Autosport Magazine. It read: Ex-Works 1959, Austin A40. Monte Carlo Rally, Ladies' Class Winner, driven by Miss Pat Moss.

Mike and I made a phone call there and then, booking a viewing at lunchtime the next day. The car was at the showroom of David Hiam Motors, at Collesbourne, in



The Ex Pat Moss 1959 A40 Mk 1 arrives at Haven Avenue in 1964

Leicestershire. We made the meeting, got a reasonable price for my van, didn't elaborate too much on what we had done with it, but thanks to our friend Gino Fatica in his Gloucester works, it had only recently had its bodywork tidied up and looked pretty good. Michael was apoplectic about the deal, 'Get it Get it' he had shouted when I was calmly looking around the car. They showed me the car's competition history. It had been driven by Pat and other notable drivers of the time, David Siegle Morris and Vic Elford, in a number of International Rallies in Europe.

This car looked like an A40 Mk1, but in reality it was hand built, one of only two cars built to this specification for the BMC Competitions Department, with the help of the Donald Healy Motor Company in Warwick. It was more like a reworked "Sebring Austin Healey Sprite".

Working on this car and learning to drive it to some of its potential was my goal. Gradually, after competing in local and national rallies, I was able to have a great deal of motorsport fun with it. I took part in Road and Special Stage Rallying, Autocrossing, Hill Climbs and Sprint events, achieving a modicum of success. I even took part in a practice day at the Castle Coombe race track. Wonderful fun and at considerable financial cost. I think it was around 1968/69 I sold the car to a friend named Jim Blockley, now another successful ex-Stonehouse school boy in the local business world.

Ferrari Fun

With our shared enthusiasm, my friends and I were able to help each other in pursuing



The Ferrari 250 GTO that lived in Stonehouse in 1963/64

European Motor Sport Travel

Our band of local friends had been fortunate to travel to a number of European races.

In 1966, Alan Coulon and David Coombs, from Minchinhampton, went to Spa Francorchamps in Belgium to see an eventful Grand Prix. Tim Davis from Ryeford went to France for the Le Mans 24hrs for an epic race - Ford beat Ferrari. In 1967, Mike Cole borrowed his father's Hillman Minx to take Alan Coulon, Dave Powell a young man living at one of the houses in the Reddings, Stonehouse and myself, to France and spent a week camping at the race track of the Le Mans 24hr race. We had a memorable time. The race was good as well although Ford once again beat my beloved Ferrari.

Some Music Memories

My interest in popular music was widened by my friendship with Barry's sister Pat, who introduced me to American folk music: Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter Paul and Mary, as well as Julie Felix, and then the Rolling Stones. She was always one step ahead of popular tastes. Barry helped develop my interest in the Blues and Chet Atkins. By then, Johnny Cash was high on my list of popular singers after the epic TV show at San Quentin in 1969.

During this period of time, many people were obsessed with British pop music, but for me they were imitations of my early 1950 American rock stars, other than Cliff and 'Move It'. The Beatles' early work contains many renditions of classic rock, and their version of 'Twist and Shout' is phenomenal. Always good to remember they did evolve from a Skiffle group. Many years later John Lennon, who was always my favourite, made a great album of Rock'n'Roll classics.

Memorable Occasions

The Kennedy brothers 1960-68. In 1965 we said farewell to the great 'Ex' Liberal MP and Wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill, in 1966, we won the Football World Cup.

our interests. Mike Cole's engineering talent got him the job maintaining the Ferrari 250 GTO owned by the Hon. Edward Portman, after it had been serviced by staff at Plough Motors.



The Maranello Concessionaires Ferrari 330P at Goodwood 1964

Eddie enjoyed meeting Mike and offered him a job driving around Europe for a year, in a large van with this racing sports car inside for him to race at a number of tracks during 1964. Eddie organised a temporary secondment, for Michael to work for the racing team of Ferrari UK distributors, Maranello Concessionaires, at the Tourist Trophy race at Goodwood in 1964.



Paddock shot Goodwood 1964 Mike, Alan, Steve G, Myself and Jan

During the summer of 1965, Eddie invited Mike and me up to his home near Ramsbury in Wiltshire, to see his new car, a Ferrari 275LM sports racer. He wanted Mike to look after the racing preparation of this car from where he worked in Gloucester. Mike drove the car from Ramsbury and we stopped outside my parents' house in Haven Avenue. My Father took some photos which were not the usual location for a Ferrari photoshoot, and then Mike and I took the car to Gloucester.



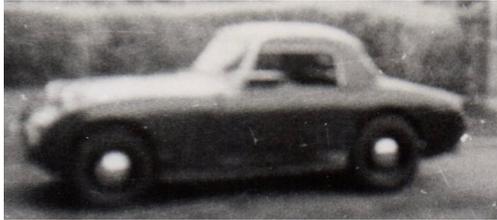
Ferrari 275LM at Haven Avenue



My Hillman Imp at rest in Stonehouse 1968

Eddie Portman gave up his motor racing later in the year, but arranged a full time job for Mike at Maranello Consc., he worked for them during the summer. Not too happy with the job, he then got himself employed by The John Willment Racing team looking after an AC Cobra. Mike rebuilt their shabby looking car to the standard he always did, and this car, driven by Jack Sears, won the 'Redex Trophy' at Brands Hatch.

Upon his return to living in the area, he joined Dave Powell in starting their own car repair and tuning business in Stroud, called 'MIVID'.



1959 Sprite at rest in Haven Avenue 1969

Around this time, a car known as the Hillman Imp was creating a sporting interest, so I went looking for one to buy, which I did in 1968. But not, shall we say, one of my better decisions. I bought a highly tuned version from a local dealer, but even with Tony's help we could not get the ignition system to work correctly in its modified condition. Every time we entered an event, Autocross Hill Climb or Sprint, sometime during the day it refused to start or rev. correctly. Only after I had sold it in 1969, did Tony manage to find a very special reference on how or what we should have done to solve our problem. The car was part exchanged for a 1959 "frog-eye" Austin Healey Sprite in need of attention.

Over a period of time, I fitted a fibreglass hard top to the car, had the electrical wiring replaced, fitted wide wheels and tyres and had the engine modified by 'Bill Baker' - a very specialised motor engineer working in Churchdown. It was a good fun car to own, but I never got round to using it competitively.

The End of an Era

In 1970 I spent a lot of time attending race tracks and had some memorable moments. Such as, seeing a Porsche 917 for the first time, and meeting international motor sport journalist Dennis Jenkinson at Thruxton, and meeting him again at Brands Hatch for the BOAC 500 Mile race for Sports Racing Cars. I was taking my seat in the grandstand at Casino Square in Monte Carlo for the Grand Prix practice session, who should come and sit beside me but DSJ. He said "Good morning Roy, nice to see you again young man". I never thought in my wildest dreams as an excitable Stonehouse schoolboy, that I would ever be able to sit in such a place as this, and on first name terms with one of the icons of motor sport. The debt I owe to my friends from this small area of Gloucestershire is enormous, without such people it would not have been possible to have such memories.

The 1960s had given me some wonderful fun and adventures, but time passed on. Most of my friends were married, some had children. I had, after quite a hard time, managed to gain an employable competence, and fate took me in another direction, when I gained employment as the Composing Technician at the Gloucester College of Art, Printing Department.

And that's another story.

May 2020 - During Covid19 - RCE

Special memories of these times.

It was very lucky for me, that when my Father remarried in 1961, he gave me a rather special second Mother Dot Morris, who was a local lady who worked in the old Co-op in Stonehouse High Street. Dot was amazingly tolerant of a somewhat confused young man, and was a very supportive mother. She organised a Twenty-First Birthday celebration for family and friends, with a Garden Party on 1st July 1962.



The 21st Birthday Party 1962, at Haven Ave.

Unfortunately her health deteriorated after this time, and she never had the end of life experience we all deserve, passing away in 1977.

Mr Harold Wilson, leader of the Labour party, who managed to win the election in 1964, made a speech about the need to develop "White Hot Technology". This had a tremendous influence on me later in life as, thanks to my Father's company Intertype, I was introduced to the Computer World of Bits, Bytes and K - The Future.