

MY FAVORITE CAR.....Chris Harris-Evans....My Second Car was.....

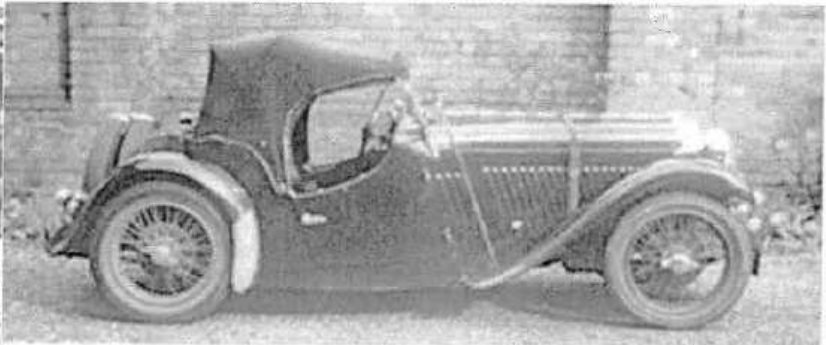
My second car was a 1935 Singer Le Mans sports two-seater. I was 18 years old having only just learned to drive on an old Morris Minor.

The car was advertised in the local paper and although I had never heard of a Singer it piqued my imagination enough to go out and take a look at it. It was similar to the popular MG sports car and immediately I was captivated and told the owner that I would be back. I persuaded my mother to loan me £30 and returned at the weekend to buy the car. I was very naïve and consequently devastated to learn that the car had been sold the day before but the seller was good enough to give me the name and address of the buyer. I immediately went round to the purchaser and discovered that he had bought the car for his son but, to the consternation of the son, he was willing to make a quick £5 profit so I left with the Singer sports.

The Singer Le Mans was a sports car competing with MG, Riley and Aston Martin sports cars of the era. It was available as the 'Nine' with a 972cc four cylinder engine or as the '1.5 litre' with a six cylinder engine, both had an overhead camshaft and hydraulic brakes. The 'Le Mans' name was adopted after the success of the Singer race team at Le Mans in 1934, where two 1.5 litre cars finished 7th and 8th overall and a 'Nine' finished 15th, first in the 1 litre class. Unfortunately the Singer reputation suffered the next year when all three cars entered in the Tourist Trophy race spectacularly crashed with the same steering failures.



Singer Nine, #48, next to Aston Martin
at Le Mans in 1934



My 1935 Singer Le Mans in 1963

My car was a 'Nine' with the 972cc overhead camshaft four cylinder engine with twin SU carburetors. It looked very impressive in British Racing Green with a black top and twin spare wheels at the back behind the slab fuel tank with a quick-release filler. Performance was impressive compared to my previous Morris and the hydraulic brakes inspired confidence compared with the push and hope cable brakes of the Morris. One downside was the gear shifting. I was used to double de-clutching for the non-synchromesh gears of the Morris but the Singer was much more difficult with permanent mesh gears and dog clutch engagement.

At this time my elder brother, who was training to be a lawyer, used to go out to a country pub every Friday night with his lawyer friends. He usually borrowed my father's car but one Friday it wasn't available so he borrowed my Singer. The next morning at breakfast he mentioned that there appeared to be something wrong with the car and on further interrogation I discovered that it had stopped on the way back. My brother and his friends had diagnosed a lack of water in the radiator and refilled it with recycled beer but this hadn't helped, so they had towed it back behind one of their friend's cars.

When I went out to investigate it was immediately obvious in daylight what the problem was as I could see a big hole in the side of the crankcase. Fortuitously I had recognized a Singer engine in a local junk yard so I purchased this and replaced the broken bottom end while transferring the sports cylinder head, cam and twin carburetors, from the original engine.

The repair lasted for the rest of my ownership but after selling the car to a friend I heard that the bearings promptly failed. I assumed it was the new owner's aggressive driving.