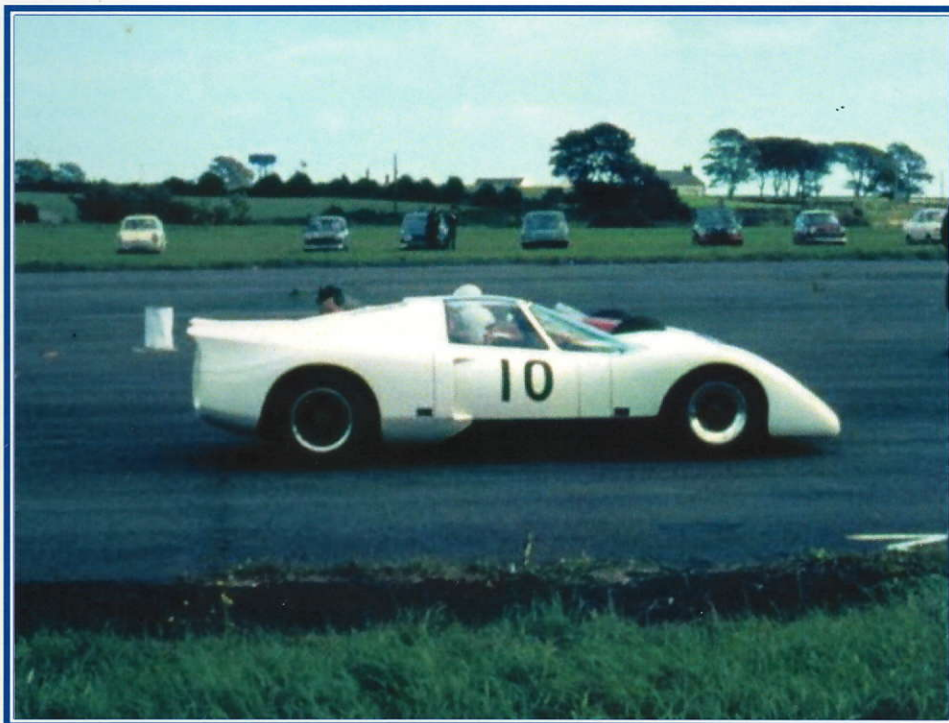


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DOSSIER

CHEVRON B16 'DBE-16'

Allen Brown



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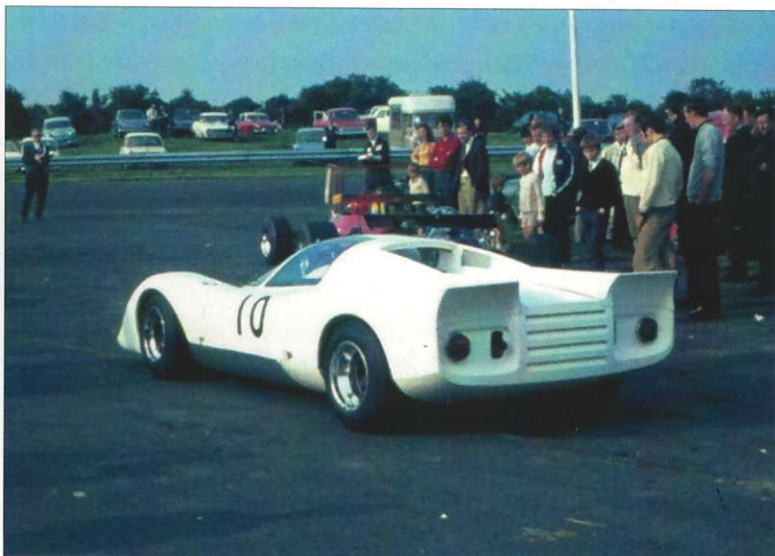
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CHEVRON B16 'DBE-16'

One of the most attractive cars of its generation, the B16 bridged the gap between the classic grand touring cars of the 1960s and the two-seater racing cars of the 1970s. Chassis DBE-16 was sold in mid-1970 to amateur racer Archie Phillips in Ulster but later raced Internationally with its second owner Adrian Wilkins. After a crash in 1971, it was bought by Pete Smith to salvage parts for his new Chevron B21.

What happened next is disputed. Pete Smith says he kept the chassis from 1972 until deciding to rebuild it in the mid-1990s. However, Paul

Weldon acquired the car that is the subject of this dossier in the late 1970s that was said to be Adrian Wilkins' former car. This car was rebuilt and used extensively in historic racing for many years. Its identity was not disputed during that time and the existence of another claimant to the identity of DBE-16 only emerged during research for this dossier. This dispute remains unresolved at the time of writing.



Phillips' Chevron B16 in its first appearance, at Kirkistown in August 1970

DRIVERS

John Archibald '**Archie**' Phillips was a regular in the Ulster motor racing scene during the 1960s. A garage proprietor, as were many of his rivals in that era, Phillips raced an MGB from 1965 onwards, but as the class system altered he found his cars pushed into production sports and then modsports. In 1967 he bought Leslie Porter Ltd, the garage business of one of Ireland's great motor racing pioneers, and expanded the Phillips car sales business across Belfast. Perhaps best remembered for his very successful Riley Elf in the smaller saloon car classes, Phillips was tempted into GT racing when his modsports MG Midget started to be beaten by Chevron B8s and Ginettas. After the Chevron B16, he raced a F2 car in local events for two more seasons before retiring. He died in June 2014.

Born in Ipswich in 1946, **Adrian Wilkins** had a fleeting career in motor racing, fuelled by the financial power of his uncle, Dick Wilkins. 'King Richard', as he was known in the City of London, dominated the Gilts market in the 1950s and 1960s and became senior partner of the stockbrokers Wedd Jefferson, which he merged with the firms of Esmond Durlacher and friend Nigel Mordaunt to create the Stock Exchange juggernaut Wedd Durlacher Mordaunt & Co, which in turn became Barclays de Zoete Wedd. A keen horse racer, speedboat racer and bon viveur, he supported the career of Stirling Moss and became a close friend of the Queen Mother. A man "of generous instincts and generous proportions", he is very well remembered in many circles. Nephew Adrian also went to work at Wedd Durlacher Mordaunt and was a partner by 1984. After many years in the City he moved to Suffolk and ran a business offering guided tours in classic cars.

GT RACING IN THE LATE 1960S

British club racing was very formulaic in the late 1960s, especially in the north of England. It usually started with a race for GTs, often mixed in with Production sports cars ("Prodsports") and Clubmans Formula cars, then some saloons and maybe some single seaters such as Formula Fords or Monoposto, then the feature race and finally a free-for-all *formule libre* race. The GT race changed with the fashions, as did the definition of a "Grand Touring" car. In the late 1960s, the emphasis was on "Grand Touring Prototype" which encompassed cars that looked like road cars and were equipped suitably but, being prototypes or experimental GTs, would not yet have been built in any quantity. From this primordial motor racing soup in the north-west of England emerged Derek Bennett, whose Clubmans Special proved highly successful at his local Oulton Park and further afield. Bennett was a capable driver, as he proved driving a Brabham BT14 in libre racing, and a very talented engineer. For 1966 he was approached by a number of drivers asking if he could put a roof on one of his Clubmans cars to make it eligible for GT racing.

DEREK BENNETT ENGINEERING

Bennett preferred the idea of building a GT car from scratch and talked Alan Minshaw, of Demon Tweaks fame, into ordering one. Minshaw later sold his order to ambitious local Lotus Elan racer Digby Martland and Bennett, who was becoming increasingly excited by the prospects for his new design, started building a second car for himself and then convinced another Elan driver, Altringham jeweller John Lepp, to take an option on a third. Martland's and Lepp's were built around the 1600cc Lotus twin-cam engine, as used in the Elan, but Bennett decided to base his around the 2-litre BMW 2002 engine which he'd seen race successfully in Chris Williams' "Lotus-Brabham", a curious amalgamation of Lotus 23B chassis, Brabham suspension and BMW engine.

Peter Gethin was brought in to give the car its first test drive, inevitably at Oulton Park, and lapped six seconds faster than John Miles' record in the all-conquering Willment Lotus Elan. A watching John Lepp wrote out his cheque on the spot. A week later, on 23 July 1966, Martland raced his Chevron GT for the first time, qualifying on the first row for the opening race on the program, a combined Clubmans and GT race. He won comfortably, establishing a theme for new Chevron designs of working "out of the box". Bennett's hastily-completed car won its class at its first race, at Crystal Palace a week later, and in the same race Martland was finally able to beat the Miles Elan and finished second to the mighty Ferrari 250LM of David Piper. Miles later commented that "we were never beaten by another Elan but when Digby Martland and the Chevron GT came along, I knew the writing was on the wall". Miles borrowed a Cobra and moved up a class; the Chevrons or Martland and Lepp thereafter dominated in the smaller class.

In early 1967, Bennett's car was shipped out to Daytona for its first International outing, but back at the factory Chevron were fulfilling orders for their 1967 GT car, based on Bennett's BMW-engined prototype. Retrospectively, the two twin-cam cars would be called the B3s, Bennett's prototype the B4 and the new 1967 cars the B6s. Chevron acquired help from BMW to improve their version of the BMW 1991cc engine and Specialised Mouldings produced fibreglass bodies to replace the aluminium bodies of the 1966 cars. Six GTs were produced for 1967, for Martland, Ian Turnbull, John Bridges and Alan Harvey plus one for Bennett himself and a twin-cam-engined car for Peter Taggart. Lepp kept his 1966 car and won the Motoring News GT title by dominating the 1600cc class while Martland lost points to Tony Dean's Porsche Carrera 6 in the 2500cc class.

For 1968, Chevron's ambitions grew further and enough 2-litre BMW-engined cars were built to qualify for FIA Group 4. The car came to dominate its class in British club racing, particularly near its home in the north, but was also very successful in the 2-litre class across Europe in 1968. As 2-litre racing continued to grow in 1969, the B8 became the most popular car in the category and 20 more examples were sold that season. John Lepp and John Burton were very successful in the new cars as were new names such as Guy Edwards and the up-and-coming star Reine Wisell in Chevron's works car.

CHEVRON B16

Two-litre sports car racing had been growing in importance for several seasons and for 1970 the FIA announced a European 2-litre Sports Car Championship. As well as the expected Porsches and Abarths, this also attracted the attention of Chevron and their rival British constructors Lola as well as a host of smaller companies. With the success of the B8, Chevron were perfectly positioned but would need a new car and, even more importantly, would need more power. Chevron's original B6 and B8 GT coupés had used the 1991cc BMW engine but the development potential of this engine was poor and Chevron now approached Cosworth to build an enlarged version of their dominant Formula 2 FVA engine. With a different crank and longer stroke, the resulting FVC had a capacity of 1790cc which would grow to 1900cc and eventually 1970cc when private builders such as Alan Smith developed it further.

Chevron's classic GT B16 was introduced in September 1969 and was expected to be the car to beat in 1970. However, Lola leapt ahead by producing their Lola T210, an open or "Spyder" design, weighing 70 kg less than the B16 coupé and won several races in the hands of their experienced European agent Jo Bonnier. Chevron won the 1970 series thanks to the performance of Brian Redman, who won the final two races in a hastily-produced Spyder version of the B16 and snatched the title from Bonnier's Lola.

CHEVRON B16 DBE-16

Amongst the early customers for the Chevron B16s was Archie Phillips, a Belfast garage owner and one of the leading drivers in the province. Phillips was the leading driver in Modsports for some time in Ireland, but in 1970 he found his cars outclassed by the mighty 2-litre Porsche 908 of John L'Amie as well as the recently acquired Chevron B8s of Eddie Regan, Bosco O'Brien, Gerry Cruise, Richie Heeley and Phillips old sparring partner in MGs, Derek McMahon. His answer was to jump one level ahead of his rivals and buy the latest Chevron B16.

The debut of the new B16 was due to be at Mondello Park in early August, but Phillips crashed it in testing at Kirkistown before the event, so its first appearance came at Kirkistown on 22 August where he electrified the meeting by setting a fastest lap of 59.0s during the libre race, beaten only by a handful of F2 cars, and finished in a very fine third place. He also won the handicap race at the end of the event, which merely proved that the handicapping committee hadn't caught up with him yet.

He then raced the B16 at Bishops Court on 5 September, the old RAF airfield proving an incongruous setting for a battle between a Porsche 910 and a Chevron B16. Phillips dropped out of the libre race after going onto the grass at the hairpin but had the chance to battle with the Porsche in the handicap race, although neither car featured in the results. The big International at Phoenix Park was the following weekend and in the Embassy

Trophy for sports cars, Phillips was opposed by L'Amie's Porsche and Barrie Smith over from England with his 5-litre Lola T70 Mk 3B. In pouring rain, L'Amie led from Smith with the Chevron in third place but the Lola developed a misfire and Phillips pushed past to take second place at the finish with the B8s a long way behind.

The Ulster season ended early as usual with the Gambles Simms meeting at Kirkistown on 19 September. With no Sports/GT race on the schedule, L'Amie and Phillips were again in with the libre cars and this time it was the Chevron that beat the Porsche, Phillips finishing very well in second place with L'Amie two places back.

The next day, the white Chevron was down south in the Republic at Mondello Park for the County Kildare MC meeting where Phillips would fight the hordes of B8s in a Sports Cars and Specials race. Ken Fildes started best in Eddie Regan's B8 but Phillips was soon past and won very comfortably, setting a new class record of 1m 0.4s and winning by 26.8s. He was out again in the libre race later in the programme, finishing fourth behind the quicker single-seaters. Another Mondello meeting on 4 October saw a comfortable victory for Phillips over the B8s in the Osbertstown House Trophy Sports Car race followed by an excellent second place in the libre race, with only Tommy Reid's Brabham BT30-FVC getting the better of the pristine white Chevron. There was one more meeting in Ireland, at Mondello Park on 18 October, but Phillips did not attend.

1971

Despite Phillips' success in the B16, it was clear that the sports car category was not taking off in Ulster as hoped and he decided to move on again into the F2 category for 1971, buying a brand new Brabham BT36. The B16 was sold to Adrian Wilkins, a 25-year-old stockbroker who had raced the ex-David Good Chevron B8 in 1969 and for whom the B16 was an obvious next step.

Wilkins raced the car in two major British events over the 1971 Easter weekend, the Rothmans International Trophy meeting Oulton Park on Good Friday where a race for Group 5 and Group 6 sports cars supported the F1 race and the Yellow Pages meeting at Thruxton on Easter Monday where the sports car were supporting the European F2 race. Wilkins qualified very well at Oulton Park, 2 seconds ahead of the next G5 car, and was leading his class by a distance in seventh overall when fuel starvation ended his race. He then had a very strong race at Thruxton, qualifying seventh among an International field and finishing sixth to win the Group 5 class. Wilkins also set a new class lap record at Thruxton and Autosport described it as 'an excellent drive'.

Wilkins' next race again supported a non-championship F1 race, this time the BRDC's GKN/Daily Express International Trophy at Silverstone. Wilkins was again fastest of the G5s in practice and broke the G5 lap record on the third, fifth and sixth laps of the race until he tangled with fellow B16 driver Brian Robinson at Copse, spun off and was unable to rejoin. The Londoner's next known outing was the Martini International Trophy at Silverstone in June, a round of the European 2-litre Sports Car Championship, and the biggest sports car event of the year in England. With so many G6 cars in the field, the G5s were well down the grid and Wilkins was only third quickest of them. He finished third in G5 in Heat 1, tenth overall, and second in Heat 2, 12th overall, after Robinson's retirement, which left him second in G5 and in eighth place overall. Despite being one of the quickest G5 drivers, he was eight seconds, nearly 10%, slower than the pole position G6 car and was probably having second thoughts about Group 5.

The annual Croft International meeting was headlined by a Formula 3 race but also attracted a good national field to a supporting sports car race. Robinson now had his B16 working very well and dominated G5, leaving Wilkins to contest second place in class until a spin at Sunny dropped him down to tenth overall. The next major 2-litre sports car race in England was the Evening News Trophy at Brands Hatch at the end of August where Wilkins did not start after the roll hoops of the Chevron B16s were found to be missing a safety certificate. March's Robin Herd was eventually found and agreed to sign the necessary paperwork, but by that time Wilkins had gone home.

Wilkins' final appearance of the season was another very well-supported event, the Iberia Trophy at Thruxton in September which supported the FIA's European Formula 3 Cup and was the final round of the RAC Sports Car Championship. In practice, Wilkins recorded a good 1m 20.0s time, well up with the fastest Group 5 cars, but then went off at Hangar and hit a marshals' post, doing serious damage to the Chevron, but escaped shaken and concussed.

THE PETER SMITH CAR

Wilkins continued his ambitious move up the motor racing ladder in 1972 by buying a brand new Formula 2 March 722 which was run for him by John Coombs Racing. The wreck of the Chevron was sold to fellow sports car racer Pete Smith so that he could use salvageable parts to build up a new Chevron B21. As well as the suspension, fuel system and bag tanks from the B16, he used the bodywork from a B19, together with the new B21 chassis. At the end of the process, Smith says that the damaged and stripped B16 chassis and body was pushed into one of his sheds and largely forgotten until the early 1990s, when he decided to repair the B16 and restore it to original condition. Smith started to accumulate the parts required but, while doing this, discovered that other B16s had appeared in historic racing in the intervening period claiming the DBE-16 identity. He found Adrian Wilkins and obtained a letter from him stating that Smith bought the car from Wilkins, and in due course was issued with papers by the HSCC. Curiously, the HSCC did not contact the owners of the other B16s that claimed that identity, so no other interested party was able to contest Smith's claim. When complete, Smith's car was sold to David Yates, who lives just a mile from the Oulton Park circuit, and he and his son Sam Yates have raced it in HSCC events. David Yates still has the car in February 2015.

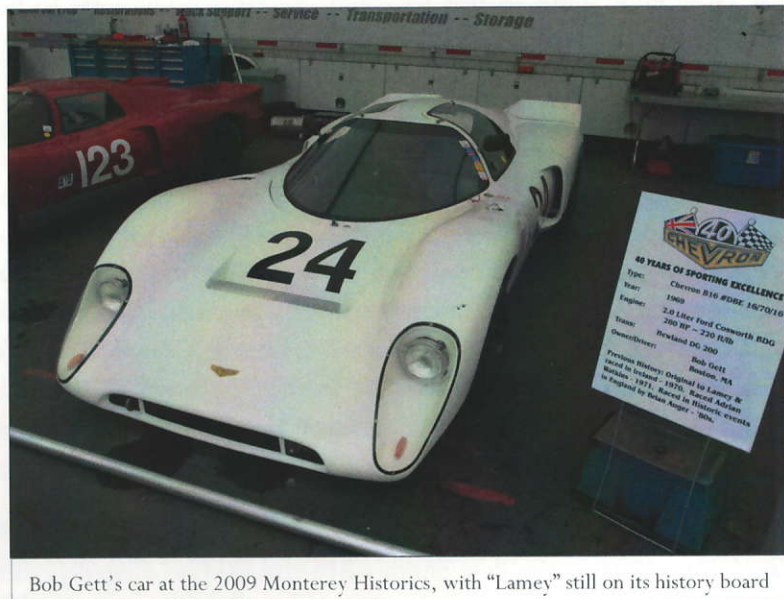
THE PAUL WELDON CAR

In 1977 or 1978, while Pete Smith's B16 chassis was (allegedly) tucked away in a shed in Yorkshire, Paul Weldon of Church Green Engineering in Shaftsbury, Dorset acquired a Chevron B16 that was said to be the ex-Adrian Wilkins car. Weldon recalls that the car had been acquired by somebody at the Chevron factory in Bolton and rebuilt by them. The frame appeared to have been repaired at Bolton rather than by Arch Motors as it had the blue-green finish associated with Chevron rather than the grey colour used by Arch. It had been built up with a hotchpotch of bodywork, nose from one car, rear from another and doors from somewhere else, but was largely complete. Weldon remembers that it did not cost much. He visited Chevron in 1978 or 1979 to get the bits he needed to complete the car, notably a windscreen, but this was in the dying days of Chevron, after Derek Bennett's death, and nobody seemed to be interested in helping him. Eventually he was taken aside by one of the fabricators who offered him the bits he needed out of a lockup near his home. The lockup was full to the ceiling of B16 bits and Weldon was able to get everything he needed.

The car was completed at Church Green by Roger Tolson, fitted with a Swindon-tuned Cosworth FVC and, according to a history prepared by Nigel Hulme in 1985, sold in 1980 to John Heath, a London jeweller who had been racing a Chevron B8. Weldon was unable to confirm this detail in 2014, so it is possible there was another owner at this point. Heath recalls buying it via the late John Etheridge and that it then had a FVA engine. Heath had it prepared by Noel Appleton, augmenting the white livery with a green flash over the roof. He tested it at Donington Park but they had problems and did not race the car. Heath sold it on via Graham Cook and David Inman of Romans of Woking to Brian Auger, the Kings Lynn farmer whose son David had impressed in a Skoda Super Saloon in 1980. Graham remembers taking Auger's ex-Max Aitken roadgoing Ford GT40 in part-exchange. The Auger family had now bought several historic cars, including a Mirage M1, a Lola T280 and the Chevron to drive in historic racing. Historic racing for sports cars of this period was very much in its infancy at this time but the newly-opened Donington Park had held a few races. Both father and son raced the Chevron in 1981 and Graham Cook's recollection is that David shunted it. Shortly after this, the Augers emigrated to Queensland, Australia where David Auger continued a very successful career driving Alfa Romeos in Australian saloon car racing. In 1985, they sold off their whole collection of historic racing cars to Nigel Hulme back in England. Hulme was mainly after their fabulous BRM-engined Mirage but he also took a Lola T70, an incomplete Lola T530 and the Chevron as part of the deal. The Chevron was of little interest and he sold it to German collector Ernst Schuster.

The car was shipped to the US where a full rebuild was conducted by Pete Lovely Racing of Washington, USA, and the FVC engine was rebuilt by specialist preparer Dave Vegher. Schuster retained the car until 2000 when it was sold to Bob Gett in Boston, after which it was race prepared by KTR European Motorsports of Ayer, MA and used regularly in US vintage racing. Its many appearances at major historic events include the Monterey Historics in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2009; the Zippo GP at Watkins Glen in 2001, 2002 and 2007; and the Legends of Motorsport meetings at Mont-Tremblant in 2010 and 2011. By 2009 the car had a non-standard Cosworth BDG engine and was noted as having a non-original Chevron chassis plate dating from approximately 1982.

The Chevron was sold in mid-2013 to [redacted] who continues to race it in west coast vintage racing. The car was always described as the ex-Wilkins car and this identity was not challenged, despite the emergence of Pete Smith's car in the 1990s.



Bob Gett's car at the 2009 Monterey Historics, with "Lamey" still on its history board

COMPETITION HISTORY

Formule libre Kirkistown - 22 August 1970	10	Archie Phillips	3rd
Handicap Kirkistown - 22 August 1970	10	Archie Phillips	1st
Formule libre Bishops Court - 5 September 1970	10	Archie Phillips	Result unknown
Handicap Bishops Court - 5 September 1970	10	Archie Phillips	Result unknown
Embassy Trophy Phoenix Park - 12-13 September 1970	10	Archie Phillips	2nd
Formule Libre Kirkistown - 19 September 1970	10	Archie Phillips	2nd
Sports Cars and Specials Mondello Park - 20 September 1970	10	Archie Phillips	1st
Formule Libre Mondello Park - 20 September 1970	10	Archie Phillips	4th
Osbertstown House Trophy Sports Car race Mondello Park - 4 October 1970	10	Archie Phillips	1st
Formule Libre Mondello Park - 4 October 1970	10	Archie Phillips	2nd
RAC Sports Car Championship round Oulton Park - 9 April 1971		Adrian Wilkins	Retired (fuel starvation)
Yellow Pages Sports Car Trophy race Thruxton - 12 April 1971		Adrian Wilkins	6th (1st in G5 class)
GKN Sankey Trophy Silverstone - 8 May 1971	62	Adrian Wilkins	Retired (spin)
Martini International Trophy Silverstone - 5 June 1971	37	Adrian Wilkins	8th (2nd in Group 5)
The Jock Leith Trophy for Sports Cars Croft - 10 July 1971	25	Adrian Wilkins	Retired (spin)
Evening News Trophy Brands Hatch - 31 August 1971		Adrian Wilkins	Did not start (rollhoop certificate)
The Iberia Trophy Sports Car race Thruxton - 19 September 1971		Adrian Wilkins	Did not start (accident in practice)

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

The car now owned by _____ has a continuous history back to 1978 and has been believed throughout that time to be DBE-16, an identity that was unchallenged for near 40 years. However, if Peter Smith's claim is true that DBE-16 remained with him in Yorkshire, then that identity cannot be correct. The difficulty with reaching such a conclusion is that we only have Pete Smith's word that he kept the B16. He has no photographs of it prior to its restoration, nor any witnesses to the restoration.

There is nothing more that can be done to resolve this issue through paper records alone. The next step should be a detailed examination of both cars to see whether they exhibit evidence of construction by Chevron in 1970. The best person for this investigation would be Paul Owens.

OWNERS

DBE16

1. Archie Phillips (Belfast, N. Ireland)
2. Adrian Wilkins (Edmonton, Middlesex) 1971
3. Pete Smith (Wakefield, West Yorkshire) 1972

THE PETER SMITH CAR

1. Pete Smith (Wakefield, West Yorkshire) 1990s
2. David Yates (Little Budworth, Cheshire) 2000 - 2015

THE PAUL WELDON CAR

1. Paul Weldon (Shaftsbury, Dorset) 1977
2. John Heath (London) 1980
3. Brian Auger (UK, then Queensland, Australia) 1981
4. Nigel Hulme (Crawley Down, West Sussex) 1985
5. Ernst Schuster (Munich, Germany) 1987
6. Bob Gett (Boston, MA) 2000
7. _____ 2013 - 2015

SOURCES

A wide range of sources were used to construct this history but the following specific sources should be noted:

1. Autosport reports on Irish racing, August-October 1970
2. Oulton Park Good Friday meeting report (Autosport 15 Apr 1971 pp29-30)
3. Thruxton Easter Monday meeting report (Autosport 15 Apr 1971 p11)
4. Silverstone International Trophy meeting report (Autosport 13 May 1971 pp28-29)
5. Rothmans International Trophy meeting report (Autosport 2 Sep 1971 pp27-28)
6. Feature article on Auger family (Autosport 12 Mar 1981 p29)

Also telephone conversations between September 2014 and February 2015 with Adrian Wilkins, Nigel Hulme, Paul Weldon, John Heath, David Inman, Graham Cook, Pete Smith and David Yates.

Legal disclaimer: The information in this document is based on the sources shown and no guarantee is made of its accuracy. This information should not be used as the basis of any financial valuation of this car or relied upon in any transaction.



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