

The Wishbone Saga

by Desmond Finnan

Eleven years ago I set about a great challenge, something I had never attempted before in any form – to build a car! This mental exercise was made even more demanding by my choice, a Tornado GT40 replica, and it took 4 years and a lot of help from the Enthusiasts Club and, in particular, Roy Snook and Brian Magee. I achieved SVA approval and registration; I was on the road!

Now of course, the excitement began, driving everywhere in my new supercar. In the end this wears a bit thin, and I wanted more than this to alleviate my low boredom threshold. I think a lot of members go through an initial gestation period of ownership; some get bored and move on to other toys, for me I wanted another challenge.

This led to the lure of track days and circuit driving. My first venture was to a GTD Club track day at Goodwood, and the offer of a few laps in my car for £50. Fantastic value for money - and I was hooked! I am now a track day fanatic, attending about 5 or 6 a year in both the UK and France, and this year at Spa, many of them as the only GT40 running.

This year, the Enthusiasts Club decided to have the AGM at Donington, incorporating it with a track day at the circuit. A great idea that worked perfectly.

My day ended when, on the last session, my car failed! Under heavy braking for the chicane, the passenger side front lower wishbone sheared.

Luckily I was able to get the car carefully back to the pits without body damage, and then to investigate the failure. The question that needed answering was - why did it happen? Was it driver abuse, or a bad weld, or was the part just not fit for purpose?

I have to admit here and now, I was warned some time before that such a problem was feasible, that this sort of failure was not unknown, and that I should consider sourcing replacement parts of stronger construction. This was advice I regret not heeding. I was lucky; no physical damage to the car other than the broken part, and more importantly, no physical damage to me or other track users, but a big scare nevertheless.

My car in its early days had to have 2 bent lower



wishbones replaced with the latest development parts from the manufacturer. I have also had a wishbone fail at the shock absorber mounting, following an argument with a pot hole. The *coup de grâce* was the wishbone failure at Donington.

While considering the situation, before the get you home service arrived, I looked at Glenn Mason's Southern GT front suspension. This appeared to be more meaty than my present one, so upon getting home I contacted Mick Sollis and ordered a set of lower front wishbones. These were made in record time, but on fitting them, I couldn't get the front setup right. On further discussions with Frank Catt at Wealden Engineering, I was advised that this suspension should be fitted as a whole, not in part, with a modified location for the lower shock absorber mountings. The new parts are made from 25x3mm CDS (cold drawn seamless) tube, fully TIG-welded (not MIG) as opposed to the 1"x16swg parts originally fitted.

These were subsequently supplied by Mick and were fitted by Wealden Engineering as part of other development work they were carrying out. In Frank's usual way, Wealden then realigned the suspension geometry, front and back, and achieved dramatic improvements in the way the car handles.

Now that I have a fully rose-jointed front end, which is adjustable thanks to Mick Sollis' fabrication and Frank Catt's installation, I hope to see an improvement in my driving at Spa later this month.

