SHED TIME STORY OF MY BERKELEY CARS

Once upon a time, in fact it was the Sunbeam Owners Fellowship rally JULY 2000.
My friend Colin Temple Smith arrived at the rally this year with out his Sunbeam S8 motor cycle, but driving a three wheeled car with a Honda four motor bike engine in it. A converted Berkeley T60 in British Racing Green.

We all had to have a go – the engine did howl as Honda fours do but seemed fun.

As can be seen by the smiles – Jackie seemed to like it. So sitting next to the driver, rather than behind them, as we have done for 30 years plus on our motorbike adventures was the way to go.

So the seed was sown, I need to find a Berkeley.



After a lot of searching and reading as I had never heard of such cars until now, I soon found that there were a very few about and the condition could be so very poor, with either rotted away steel chassis or with failing Glass reinforced plastic GRP a new material to me.
Then after joining the Berkeley Owners Club and getting a few BEC news letters an advert was seen in one edition, so a plan to look at it was made.
After a long long drive to Devon, after sloping of work early lunch time, (I was working in Southall West London at the time.) I got to see the T60 that I had in mind expecting some work and perhaps a polish to get ready for Jackie to drive.

Said to be tidy runner with MOT only just run out, it was getting dark and raining hard but it looked a treat.

I tested for "a bendy car "by jumping up and down whilst checking the door gaps for movement, it was solid as a rock. So I thought, that's good.

The engine rattled as bad as any running engine could run. Engine is a two stroke so not much inside to be wrong with it I thought, and by now was dark any way.
I was carrying out the inspection with a torch by now!! .

I took the man at his word and did the deal, after all he even offered a load of old engine and gearbox spares plus a Hard Top to go with it.

First T60 purchased from South Devon 31-08-2001
Chassis 1664
Formerly VDP 875 re reg at some point in time as YSL701 in British Racing Green.

This was to become the Strawberry Patch T60
From 2004 BEC Newsletter.

Strawberry Patch T60

For many years my wife Jackie has been a long suffering pillion rider, with me completing the Lands End to John O'Groat run and other trips across UK and even Europe on my 1952 Sunbeam S8.
I first became interested in Berkeley Cars several years ago at a Sunbeam rally when I first looked at one and after Jackie went for a ride in it. A modified HONDA four powered T60. I began to think that the Berkeley would be much more user" friendly" for her and yet still cruise at around 50 mph as we do on the Sunbeam.

A few months later August 31st 2001 to be exact I found a Berkeley T60 being sold as a "tidy runner "with MOT in the BEC newsletter.
It turned out that the MOT and road Tax had just expired and the engine didn't seem that far behind them either!!. Obviously it needed attention. It did just about start and run. (Although rattle is perhaps a more apt description) but so badly that the car could not be driven. Having travelled about 200 miles to see it I was happy to do the deal with out to much more of an inspection , Its MOT after all, had only just run out and surely the engine repairs would not be a problem for me.
We tailored it all home and eyed up the gap between my hedge and the house. It was just big enough for the car to pass through.
Thinking that I would be able to sort the engine out in a few weeks and get it back out on the road, we pushed it onto the strawberry patch between the hedge and the house.
How wrong can you be?
Under closer scrutiny, in clear light of day, every thing on the car , absolutely everything was either worn out , seized up, rotten, damaged or in some way unserviceable.
Sure now it had been "grounded" on a mound of earth or something , before I inspected it .When I tested it for a "Bendy car" by jumping up and down in it , it was as solid as a rock – that bit was proved true ! , As now it was very very bendy.
The engine had been so badly got at, Tuned for Speed was the intension but the result was both barrels were now scrapped, as were the pistons. The con rod's, big ends and main bearings were all badly worn and even the stud threads in the crank cases were stripped of thread.
With the engine out and the bench seat removed, more horrors came to light, most of the rivets were pulled out, the inner wing side panels were split, but covered over, sandwich by plates each side. The long steel chassis "Sill" panels were rusted away where they should have been riveted to the floor and flanges. This car originally had aluminium cross members with the long Sill panels made of steel – an attempt by the factory to stiffen the car perhaps, early versions had all Aluminium panels.
I suppose, given the nature of the beast, that any car not actually in regular use, and not properly tried and tested, is therefore likely to be found in a similar condition, Restoring motor bikes was my hobby and I am able to tackle most jobs, but I really was not prepared for this, A temporary workshop structure had to be constructed around the car (Still sat on our Strawberry Patch)
Using 6 ft x 6ft fencing panels, fence post, some long 4x2 timbers and some clear plastic roofing sheets from the Garden Centre we soon had an 18ft x 12ft "shelter.
The house was one wall, the hedge the other, the other two sides were nice new fence panels. But now had the car covered over, in the dry.
Jackie's second Green house got partly took over, for dry storage of parts and bits I was taking off, Soon to be completely full of car bits.

As I was then working away from home, I was only able to work on the car on Saturday and Sundays, so progress was slow. At the end of the first year the strawberries had mostly been trampled to death, and the ground turned to mud, but still reasonable dry, Conditions had been enhanced by the addition of a temporary power supply and lighting.
The T60 by now was totally stripped down, reduced to its smallest components.

The second year saw all the replacement metal panels cut and bent, the GRP repairs mostly completed and the major body parts riveted back together. The existing four coats of paint had been removed, revealing that the original colour was yellow.
Around this time I was given a load of old paving slabs, these were soon to make the work much more enjoyable – That's after laying them under half a car that was perched up on piles of bricks not easy. Once slabs were down it made for a much better environment for the paint spraying that was to come. Strawberries that had been threatening to reappear lost all chance of coming back now.

Jackie sat in the, as purchased, T60 on the Strawberry Patch.
With the end wall the" hedge "and the new side walls going up.





Work under way on T60 in a nice new shelter with tarp covering the hedge in an attempt to keep warm.
Not much room though.



Pictured above is the Punt, showing the house wall at the end of the "shelter", The Hedge with Tarp on it was the other end.

Roomy it was not.

So had to take over Jackie's Greenhouse to keep boxes of bits safe and dry.



Once the punts GRP flanges were repaired and all the cracks and splits in it were dealt with it was on with making the metal work chassis, sills. Cut and bent from an 8 x 4 sheet of aluminium from the local steel merchants. I use some ancient hand Tin Snips, nothing "new" I can buy works as well.



Sill's and cross members both under construction. The mix of steel sills the long parts and the alloy cross member was a late car specification. I reverted to the older spec of all alloy construction.

Cutting out with tin snips and bending in the vice is much easier with Aluminium than with steel, so Aluminium got used through out. At this time was unable to replicate the oval hole flanges so I made stiffeners to rivet on around the holes.

All lines were just copied across from the old patterns – nothing got measured.

BEC now have a proper former to make oval holes



My bench and four inch vice, where all the "folding "magic happens. The dozens of clamps, forming bars and big hammer are in hiding somewhere.

Below the repaired punt and metal work sat on the piles of old bricks and planks. Note the neat hand brake arrangement and how the gear stick is packed out to let the Hub arm inside it, move with out touching the cross member.



Inner wings.

These were all split I made new ones by tracing out the shape and hole positions directly on to the new sheet aluminium. Including the holes for the suspension parts and rivets, these holes drilled 3/32 as guides only.

At this time I was unable to make flared cooling holes so I did nothing. I just cut out the holes with tube type hole cutters and the electric hand drill .Best done flat clamped hard on to scrap wood.

The straight edge flanges were simply turned up with mole grips and knocked up against a steel former.

The holes around the edges are drilled so that tape can be wound through, this to aid the bonding back into the body. No need to make shaped holes for that.
All this done before the final bending is done.

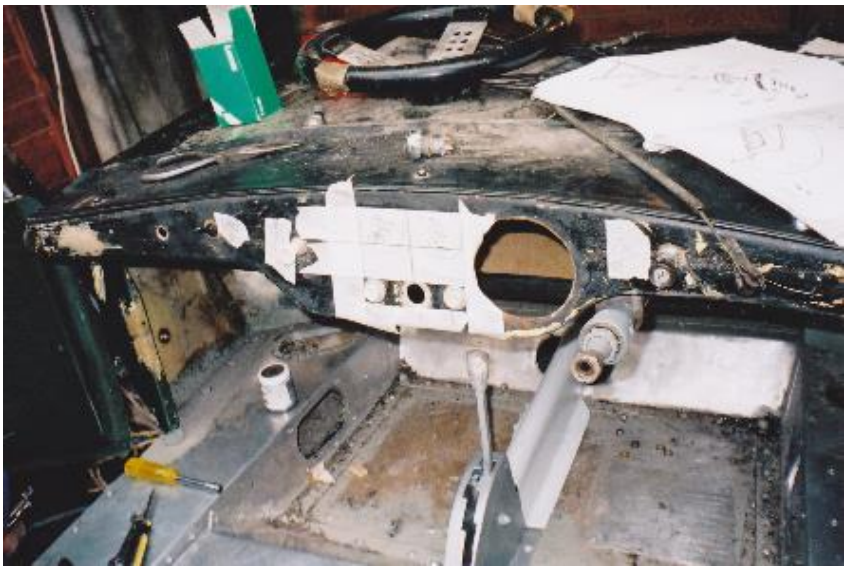
Care should be taken when removing the old inner wing; I found it advantageous to leave some GRP upstanding, so the new one had some place to fit up to.
Factory will have had jigs perhaps.

All aluminium used was 1.5mm grade 1050.



Body
First fix in process. Temporarily bolting everything back together
Ensuring every thing is in its correct place and is fitting together nicely.

This is setting the holes in the dash board ready for switches and Speedo



Good to be small- ish

