

The Caterham Maple Leaf News

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An historian's view of the 7



Many of us drive a Seven because we remember Lotus, not only as a formidable team in Formula One, but also for winning the FIA F1 World Championship six times in the 1960's and 1970's. Some owners are enthusiastic enough to re-badge their Caterhams with the Lotus emblem, whilst many hanker after actually owning one of the Sevens made by Lotus between 1957 and 1973. The point of this article is to assist those contemplating the purchase of one of the original cars.

When buying an old Lotus Seven, some of the more important points to look out for are: (1) Chassis Plate and Chassis Number, (2) Frame Number, (3) Road Registration Number and Logbook, (4) Paperwork, (5) Original Specification and lastly (6.) Condition. I say 'lastly' because whilst money can rectify the condition of a car, it cannot readily give a car either proper identity or history. When buying any car it is important to consider the difficulties that maybe encountered when selling it at some time in the future; so if you have to make excuses for what you see at the outset, beware!

1. - CHASSIS PLATES: It goes without saying that a car, without a chassis plate, may be a car without identity. The reasons for chassis plate removal are many. Some of the early racers took them off to display with their trophies, some went abroad to countries where new imported cars are heavily taxed and are now fitted to cars bearing little in common with what they are purporting to be and sadly, others have been removed even less honestly. Replica chassis plates are readily available at most autojumbles but are easy to distinguish from the genuine articles as they are photographically produced as opposed to being stamped out; so their smooth feel gives them away.

2. - FRAME NUMBERS: Most Lotus Sevens have a frame number stamped directly onto the chassis. The frame makers [Progress Chassis, Unirads, Arch Motors, Grinston Engineering, etc.] used the number to identify the frame. As the frames were stored at the manufacturers and at Lotus and because of the way they were selected and transported, there is no sequence for them in the records. So whilst a car with chassis number 1234 might have frame number 5678, chassis number 1235 might have frame number 4321.

Cross-referencing chassis number and frame number, can be a useful rough check as to the authenticity of a chassis, but is no guarantee that it has not either been re-newed or faked.

Various frame numbers are to be found in front of the passenger seat on Series One and some early Series Two cars, on the top front member of the footbox on Series Two and Series Three cars and under the GRP. body by the seatbelt anchorages on a Series Four car. The numbers were stamped on using a punch and covered with paint and can be very difficult to read without cleaning first and the help of good light and a glass.

3. - REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS AND NUMBERS: Both the current [V5] and the earlier Green [V.E. 60] log-books can tell a lot about a car. As well previous owner's details, there are also Date of Registration, Chassis No., Engine No., Cylinder Capacity or Rating and Colour. Obviously a car with a date of registration commensurate with the date the kit left the factory is preferable to one of the age-related numbers that the DVLA issue to 'barn finds' or cars being re-imported from abroad, etc. The other information serves to confirm details that you may find on the car.

People often tell me that their car was never registered because it was only ever used in competition. This, in fact, is fairly rare and without documentary evidence [e.g. race programmes or results] should not be readily believed.

Detail in the factory archives varies from car to car. Some records have chassis number, frame number, engine number and even Weber carburettor numbers, whilst others may only show chassis number and frame number. Anyway it is often possible to do some quick cross-referencing to determine whether a car is right & with this information decide whether or not to buy it.

To be continued in the September issue....

Article written by Lotus 7 Historian John Watson (UK)

This newsletter is published by 7CARS, Canada's only used Lotus/Caterham 7 dealer. Further information on our current stock of quality used 7s can be found at www.7cars.ca email: sevencars@shaw.ca



NEXT ISSUE

LOTUS 7 Historian

Next month we will once again hear from John Watson, as we continue to look at some of the historical facts that make the 7 unique. For further information on Lotus 7 Historian John Watson, please visit his website at:

www.lotus7register.co.uk

LOTUS 7 CLUB



For those of you who have yet to join the Lotus 7 Club let me encourage you to take the leap. The club's monthly magazine 'LOW FLYING' is a superb publication with excellent articles from enthusiastic owners.

For further information on joining the club use the link below:

www.lotussevenclub.com

SEVEN facts?

The Lotus/Caterham Super 7 is the only British Sports Car to have ever been banned by the FIA for being, 'Too fast to race'

THAT'S A FACT!



Lots more room yet...!

