

XBC Awards Dinner 2018

Best & Worst Cars #01

Sunbeam Lotus



Not much humour here but

Amongst the best and worst would be the succession of Sunbeams and Avengers, great cars but most of them rotted out from under me including one where the full petrol tank dropped out the back dragging along the ground at 70MPH overtaking a lorry on the dual carriageway. Another had the diff seize solid driving over the Struie hills and another had the rear axle fall out stranding the car on Leith high street on a busy sat morning!

Best & Worst Cars - #01 Contd.

One of the [REDACTED] would have been the Lotus Sunbeam. I crashed it at Rumster Hill climb and I was still paying the loan off for another year.

I got the infamous CCC Mangler trophy for the damage done to it at Rumster, and for nearly 10 years that was my only Motorsport trophy.

The car was rebuilt by the Friend who bought it from me, and the photo above is as it is today.



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Best & Worst Cars - #01 Contd.

Never let it be said that Talbot got off to a slow start.

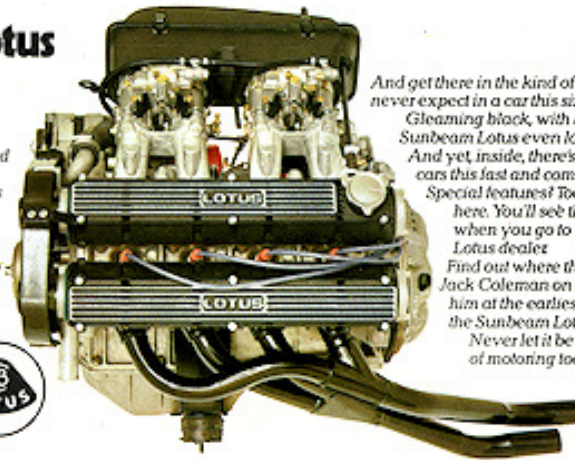
New Sunbeam Lotus heads Talbot take-off.

The birth of Talbot could hardly be celebrated in a more appropriate way.

Sunbeam and Lotus. Two of the great names in racing and rallying, joined together to create a road model of speed, style and impeccable pedigree.

The 2.2 litre Lotus engine alone is enough to tempt drivers who want a few more thrills to the gallon.

It provides an output of 150 DIN BHP. Gives you a top speed of around 120 mph and acceleration of 0-60 mph in about 8 seconds. Linked to a 5-speed gearbox, it offers all you need to get from A to B long before anyone else does.



And get there in the kind of impressive style you'd never expect in a car this size.

Gleaming black, with broad silver stripes, the Sunbeam Lotus even looks like a 120 mph car. And yet, inside, there's space and comfort that cars this fast and compact can rarely offer.

Special features? Too numerous to mention here. You'll see them all, inside and out, when you go to your nearest Sunbeam Lotus dealer.

Find out where that dealer is by phoning Jack Coleman on (0203) 303030, then see him at the earliest opportunity. Test drive the Sunbeam Lotus.

Never let it be said that the new spirit of motoring took off without you.

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 TALBOT**The new Sunbeam Lotus.**

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Best & Worst Cars #02

Austin Maxi



Purchased on HP as my first "decent" car for the sum of £500 in around 1985.

Within 6 months it went from pristine white to brown streaked white. It got a puncture so went to jack it up and the jack went through sill in every position that was tried.

I got someone to do the welding which cost about a third of what I had paid for the car. Two weeks later throttle jammed and blew the engine.

Replaced with an engine from an Allegro Sport just nothing sporty about it. It failed its MOT miserably and so was scrapped after just one year with still 2 years of the HP to pay off.

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Best & Worst Cars #03

Audi S6 Avant



There is a certain Audi S6 Avant that has been in my life longer than any other vehicle. It has done everything from daily driver to Sunday best to removal vehicle to competition car. It makes a great winter 4x4 and to top it off the wife thinks its great !

If asked then I would have to say that it would not be my favourite car. That would be a Mercedes Benz C43. My car was the only C43 that Mercedes had ever known to have a head gasket problem. Quoted £4K by Mercedes, £1800 by my local garage, instead I spent £10 on a bottle of K seal and didn't have any more problems in the following 3 months, at which point I sold it because we had got the dog and he ruined the back seats with hair & slobber.

The Audi hasn't been the most reliable car (reconditioned gearbox that has since failed again), it has numerous design faults but the

Best & Worst Cars - #03 Contd.



fact is, it is still here and whilst I keep saying I am going to sell it and get a proper race car, I never seem to get round to it.

Maybe I ought to keep it, make a few modifications and show the Scooby's why Audi ruled the world back in the days of group B.

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Best & Worst Cars #04

Bond Mini Car



BOND MINI CAR 250cc Villiers 2 stroke. Max speed 50mph with following wind. 50% more wheels than my previous transport and I was out of the wind, rain and cold.

My best mate and I drove from Doncaster to Torquay for a weeks holiday. We stopped off at Brands Hatch for the British F1 Grand Prix. The total outward journey was 360 miles. Brands Hatch and “the return of power” was the high light with the F1 cars running to new rules and a 3 litre formula. It was fantastic to see the greats of the day, Hill, Clark, Brabham, Surtees, Stewart.

The Bond was a great learning exercise:- 1st break down when chain broke, 1st accident in snow, 1st long term girl friend who was amazed to find we had no reverse gear when I got boxed in and had to get out and push backwards, and finally my 1st attempt at an engine overhaul which was unsuccessful as piston circlip jumped

Best & Worst Cars - #04 Contd.

out and scored the bore. Despite the car being noisy and cold in winter my girl friend became my wife.



When my father (George) and I collected the car it was still in the show room. I was encouraged by the sales man to drive it out. My father was outside and ready to guide me round the sliding plate glass door. I tried a couple of times to get moving but stalled. Third time lucky and with a bit more throttle I gently let out the clutch. The Bond jumped forward and we headed towards the open door but realised I was not going to get through. I attempted to correct the steering but disaster

I clipped the door frame, shattered the window and George had to jump out of the way of the shards of glass which cascaded down around him. Fortunately he was not hurt and the car was not damaged. I had to pop up the stairs in the show room to the managers office to apologise for my over enthusiastic exit.

(I only touched the frame work by a tiny amount.)

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Best & Worst Cars - #04 Contd.

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Best & Worst Cars #05

Morris Marina Estate



Bought new after careful comparison with Ford Cortina Estate. What a big mistake that was. It started to rust after 18 months and the gearbox failed after 2 years caravanning.

The most concerning problem occurred while on the way to work on night shift. The car over steered on a right hand corner at a farm entrance which could have been due to cows but at the next left hander grinding noises were heard from the rear. I hit the brakes but my foot went to the floor. Hand brake applied but did nothing. Had to drop a couple of gears and run onto the verge to stop.

The rear wheels looked okay so decided to rattle them. Right rear was ok but left rear moved and dropped the wheel arch onto my hands.

Best & Worst Cars - #05 Contd.

It was 10.45pm pitch dark with only the sheep in the field behind me to help. The only way out was to pull my hands round the wheel and walk to work. No mobile phones in those days.

I flagged down a passing motorist who phoned my place of work once he got home and the van came out to pick me up.

I sold the car shortly after this incident which was caused by a half shaft nut working loose.

The odd thing is that I experienced two loosening half shaft nuts on my [REDACTED] earlier this year but found them before my driving experience was repeated.

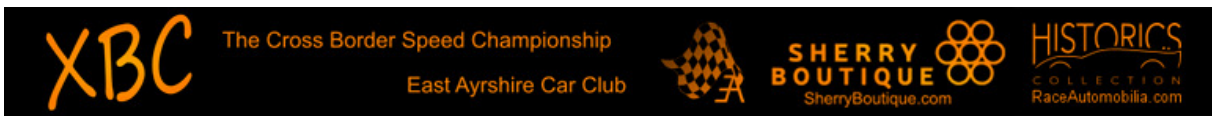
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Best & Worst Cars #06

Ford Popular



Our first family car was a very basic 1957 Ford Popular pretty much well worn out when we bought it in 1964. Ford's policy was to have the lowest priced car on the market which was achieved by continuing to manufacture their pre-WW2 designed 2 door saloon with cart sprung transverse springs, gutless 1172 cc side valve engine, 6 volt battery, and void of all frills such as an oil filter, a water pump, a heater, a demister, or electric wipers.



Best & Worst Cars - #06 Contd.

Only the driver had a wiper driven by engine vacuum but that would fail to work when ascending hills. No hydraulic brakes or discs, just crude brake shoes activated by rods linked to the foot pedal !

On the Saturday after purchase we set off on a cold December day with year old baby on a 160 miles round trip to visit parents at Dumfries. We had travelling rugs and copious amount of toilet paper for sealing windows and around the doors together with gaps in the wooden floor. Engine had 5 pints fresh oil in the sump with every drop burned off by the time we got there. Constant clouds of black exhaust prevented use of the mirror until we came to a long bend near Sanquhar and we saw a police car tailing us. To our amazement and great relieve it turned off, and we could only guess the cops simply did not want their car filthy from our cremated Castrol !

As every drip of oil had been consumed my father suggested we should get train home following day and he would source a replacement engine. He found a similar engine within couple weeks which had been in a motor boat and had water cooling pipes in the sump. The sump was swapped with the original.

We did some reconditioning to various other parts of the car and with baby number 2 coming along really meant we needed to keep the old Ford Pop.

It actually provided yeomen service for another 3 years of family every day transport and for holidays down south.

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Best & Worst Cars #07

Vauxhall Chevette 2300HSR



For sprint events (following 2 years with an uncompetitive heavy Jaguar) I bought a 2.3 litre Vauxhall Firenza ex rally car and after 5 years of fun with it I purchased an unusual find, a freshly built rolling shell Chevette HSR replica.

Beautiful workmanship of a full bodied HSR with roll cage but with no engine, no gearbox, no rear axle, no front/ rear suspension, no radiator, no brakes, no seats, belts, nothing.

Super project and parts were easily available. Sourced steering rack, engine mounts, springs and shocks, Manta B axle and other parts down south on business trips.

Best & Worst Cars - #07 Contd.

Used 2.3 single cam engine, gearbox and radiator from the Firenza and had a whale of a time building a competition car which performed superbly right out of the box.



After a while I sourced a twin cam 2.3 Vauxhall motor with all the right bits and the car was even better and must rank as my "██████████ Car Ever".

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Best & Worst Cars #08

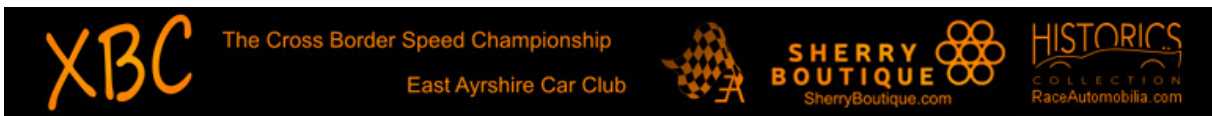
Matra Bagheera



Owned 4 over the last 40 years. Two in the 70s as our company cars. We just always tried NOT to turn up to a customer at the same time as it really looked like we were ripping them off with flash sports cars (it was 1976). Left hand drive beauties.

Both bought from new. SO sounds good so far THEN one of them the front pop up lights just dropped on journey home one night. Turns out the support metalwork at the front had basically rusted AWAY (the car was 2 ½ years old !! The popup lights were fun too as they used the vacuum from the inlet manifold to provide the pull to lift them. Used the rear cross member between the swinging arms as a store. Of course they rusted and leaked, so you would have to keep revs above 3000 or the lights dropped !! Made driving at night on twisties interesting.

The other one was less than a year later, at traffic lights a “boy racer” pulls alongside and revs. Brother LAUNCHES the Bagheera



Best & Worst Cars - #08 Contd.

only for the engine and transmission to tear itself out the rear of the car and end up on the ground. Yes the rear subframe had rusted so badly.

Of course the cars were sold on the suggestion that they used Matra Simca parts – and they did, the Simca 1301/1501 engine suspension lifted from front to back. So you think parts would be simple. NO. First Matra took the Simca parts and then modified them, so had to wait 5 months for rear arms. Second, and fun at every service, was the car used parts bins of the major manufacturers, but on an irregular basis. So one Bagheera might have Citroen brakes, Peugeot Hubs and Renault drive shafts. Next on it might be Simca Hubs or Peugeot brakes ... etc etc. A NIGHTMARE. Pretty much had to know which day the car was built on to find out what parts it used.

So now I own a LHD and a RHD one and given the first stories, BOTH are sitting off road having rusted to near nothing. Despite a task every two years to basically replace, welding part by part along the length of the chassis. Impossible to keep up. Last crazy Matra purchase is a galvanized chassis - one of only TWELVE made as they were “test” for the next cars galvanised dipping line.

SO the GOOD part is three seats abreast, lovely lines (from most angles) a real talking point AND ... one day I will get the two rusted heaps into one working car, just cant decide if to do LHD or RHD.

Best story around the Matra was when going to our offices car park at Charing Cross and met a suited man looking in the windows of the Bagheer as I approached. He asked about the car, in great detail, went over it and he said he loved it, never seen anything like it and really wanted on. So I then asked what car did he have ? and he humphed and said “that red Esprit” over there. I tried to swap him - loved the Lotus Esprit look too.

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Best & Worst Cars #09

Alpine A610



What I consider my [REDACTED] car, still owned, is the Alpine A610, but of course being French it has a horror story and “bad” side. Its history is usually well known, it is the car from the BBC Eldorado soap, driven by the VERY dodgy Marcus character (played by Jesse Birdsall).

A friend was senior manager at Renault Leasing UK and knew I loved Alpines. He found out they had lent the BBC the A610 on lease 4 years earlier, it got “Lost” and when Renault asked for car back they found it in a container in docks at Southampton ! Fraser got the car shipped up to Edinburgh, serviced and became mine. A GREAT car. BUT typical idiosyncratic French cock-up design, you could accidentally kick the handbrake OFF as you climbed out the car. At Knockhill one day I was approached by Tim Harvey who used to have one as company car when he raced for Renault and he said how much he loved it and soon we were out on track.

Best & Worst Cars - #09 Contd.

In return for giving him a shot, I got an hours tuition. We went a second faster in the A610 around Knockhill than he had managed in the Peugeot 405 BTCC car that weekend.



Sadly I buried it in the tyres at Brands at over a ton, but being me, we jacked it up, cleared the tyres and the underbody of kitty litter, bent some bits back into shape and I drove home.

160mph through speed camera flashed on the A1. Oops. Later that week realised the rear number plate had come off in the crash at Brands, so the picture was there, but no registration Lucky.

Sadly, that car's Achilles heel is that the number one cylinder overheats easily – especially if pushing the massive T27 Turbo on max boost and having blown 2 head gaskets, two complete rebuilds, off road waiting for left bank head gaskets to be made as Renault no longer had them.

Next restoration project as have spare engine and gearbox. Just not enough time.

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Best & Worst Cars #10

Lada 1200 ES



I tried to find a picture of our Lada 1200ES (Sport!) but can't seem to find one (I ask myself why would you want to take one in the first place!)

The car was the sport version a white car that came with a beige vinyl roof and beige go faster stripes (says it all really!) and alloy wheels with wider tyres.

Unfortunately didn't come with any performance (if you put it in 3rd gear to overtake it revved more but didn't actually go any faster which was scary. The alloys were lethal in the snow absolutely no grip however it did come with a fancy tyre pressure gauge (written in Russian) and a dial on the engine that allowed you to basically run it on anything from buckfast to jet fuel.

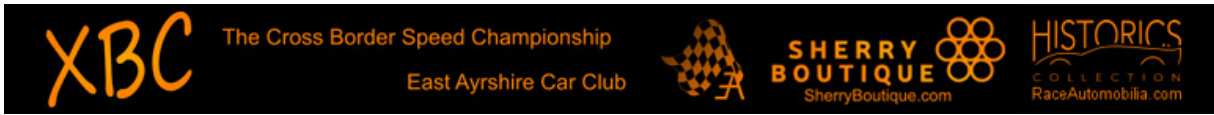
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Best & Worst Cars #11

Citroën Dyane



█ car harder to decide....My ZT260..(Gets the wee boy racers every time in the Novas who think its an old fart in a flat cap in a Rover 75, when in fact it's an old fart in a flat cap with a 4.6 Mustang engine under the bonnet!) or my MG Midget which we drove to Naples and back ..3500 miles in 3 weeks....but we've decided on my wife's Citroën Dyane.... Loads of adventures in it and it could go from Larbert to Aviemore and back on 2 gallons of petrol.



Best & Worst Cars - #11 Contd.

Every time I hear the bubble car song (Beep ! Beep!) it reminds me of the time we went to Cornwall (late 1970's I think) ...managed to pass 4 business guys in a Volvo on the motorway (must have been going downhill) ...not very happy they passed us again...but all we did was wait for something faster to go past us in the fast lane and pull out behind itcar was so light you could take your foot off the throttle and get towed behind cars at 70 mph....must have passed them 20 times on the journey.....and saved a helluva lot of fuel.

And yes the skinny dude in the picture is actually me !

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Best & Worst Cars #12

Audi RS6



Having long subscribed to the “Buy a decent car and run it into the ground” school of thought, most of my friends think I have spent a fortune on cars over the years, where in fact a quick calculation shows that their “New car on the drive every few years” philosophy has actually cost them much more in the long run.

A summer project of putting a squad together and renovating a pub generated enough funds to buy a TR7 while still a university student. Solid rubber bushes transformed the handling of this car which needed its twin SU carbs balanced and the distributor turned back to where it should be every two weeks to keep it in tune.

Best & Worst Cars - #12 Contd.



Opel Manta GTE, first brand new car. Ran it for a few years, enjoyed it, but it didn't really inspire. Even then it was "Old tech". (Sorry Jock !!)

Toyota Supra and then the Turbo version a few years later. What superb cars. Utterly reliable, first car to have no distributor, air con, electric windows, and LSD. Bought in preference to a Porsche 944 which was very poorly equipped in comparison. Without a doubt the best two wheel drive cars. Wish I'd kept them.

Then came a Mitsubishi 3000GT. Astonishing performance from a big heavy four wheel drive four wheel steer twin turbo V6 with active aero. But an incredibly heavy clutch and an incredibly poor cable gear change. So much so that I just couldn't drive it in an era of back problems. But I loved it. Wish I'd kept it.

Best & Worst Cars - #12 Contd.

So it was time for a boring old middle aged man's car. Something suitable for wife and new family. Something practical with boot space for baggage, four doors, room in the back for people with legs.

It was time for an automatic for the guy with the crooked back that couldn't change gear any more, something that you could drive with two pinkies, one on your hand and one on your foot.

Time for an Audi RS6 !!

With around 550 bhp from its 4.2 V8 twin turbo, variable valve timing, four wheel drive, tiptronic flappy paddle transmission, eight pot Brembo barks and sports suspension, this monster is faster than a Ferrari and incredibly nimble for a big heavy car with the fundamental design flaw of hanging all the engine weight forward of the front axle line.

This car is probably the ultimate wolf in sheep's clothing.

Fourteen years of ownership from new, I still can't come up with a suitable replacement. It seems that I have kept it !!

Which is why it has been chosen above the rest to be listed here.

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Best & Worst Cars #13

Morris Marina Estate



What excuse is acceptable for having owned one of these ?

As a penniless student it was a more waterproof and supposedly safer option than my wee motorbike. I couldn't afford anything better, but foolishly thought I could make it better.

Dreadful torsion bar front suspension with disintegrating trunnions, but hang on a minute, move the whole assembly round one spline, and you had lowered the front of the car and gained an inordinate amount of negative camber in a single stroke !! Pity about the tyre wear !!

Then came the addition of an MGB engine and gearbox. The twin SU fuelled engine, blueprinted and rebuilt by myself with a Kent cam and uprated valve springs if I remember correctly, was a drop in switch. The MGB gearbox with overdrive was definitely not, and involved a cut out of forward transmission tunnel and a little bit of bulkhead, with a fabricated and welded in replacement. Not to mention the "cut and shut" and not quite perfectly balanced propshaft.



Best & Worst Cars - #13 Contd.

The beauty of running this all through the original 1300 Diff was that the car had incredibly good acceleration, and with the MGB overdrive pretty good top speed as well.

The “I’ve arrived” company rep’s car of the era was the two litre Cortina, and contrary to popular belief the most fun that I had with this car did not involve the sleeping bag that lived in the boot, but the look on other driver’s faces as they tried to come to terms with the fact that they were being overtaken by

A Marina !!! !!! !!!



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Best & Worst Cars Answers

Best & Worst #01 – Sunbeam Lotus – Angus Buchan (Best)

Best & Worst #02 – Austin Maxi – Dave Exton (Worst)

Best & Worst #03 – Audi S6 Avant – Dave Exton (Best)

Best & Worst #04 – Bond Mini Car – Melvyn Hartley (Best)

Best & Worst #05 – Morris Marina – Melvyn Hartley (Worst)

Best & Worst #06 – Ford Popular – Mike Murchie (Worst)

Best & Worst #07 – Chevette HSR – Mike Murchie (Best)

Best & Worst #08 – Matra Bagheera – Peter Locke (Worst)

Best & Worst #09 – Alpine A610 – Peter Locke (Best)

Best & Worst #10 – Lada 1200ES – Robert Cockling (Worst)

Best & Worst #11 – Citroen Dyane – Robert Cockling (Best)

Best & Worst #12 – Audi RS6 – Ronnie MacGregor (Best)

Best & Worst #13 – Morris Marina – Ronnie MacGregor (Worst)



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Best & Worst Cars Quiz Winners

We have had a few comments as to how difficult this quiz was, which seems to fit with tradition, but everyone seemed to enjoy the stories, and at the end of the day, it is just a bit of fun.

Our overall **Quiz Winner** was **Iain Scouler** with a score of 8/13 and it was interesting to hear that his approach was to look at the style of writing and phraseology for clues as to the author. A successful strategy !!

For those with an interest in maths, the spread of Quiz scores formed a very nice Gaussian or Normal Distribution, with the peak of the graph at 3/13. Thankfully nobody had a score of zero, We may have been forced to make that public !!!

The **Favourite Story** winner was **Melvyn Hartley**, with his Bond Mini Car, and we have to apologise for excessive leg pulling, and trying to induce a divorce on the night !!

The winner of the **Proud Boast** was **Peter Locke** with his Alpine A610 story, and Peter stood up remarkably well to accusations of exaggeration and embroidery, and we have to gracefully conclude that perhaps all the elements of his story just might be true !!