



KAMM TAIL SPIDER '76

The life and times of John Elford's Kamm tail Spider

I thought I would put a few words together as I have never sent anything in to the mag after all this time, so here goes!

I am in the fortunate position of having owned and run a plethora of cars, vans and bikes (Laverdas and Ducatis both ancient and modern) over the years. From a Citroen C15 D van to a 159 Q-tronic , my long suffering wife reckons I have had them all - cars that is!

My Alfa ownership ranges from a few hundred thousand miles in an Alfetta GTV 2ltr (UAM 3Y where are you now?) plus a couple of other ones, a few GTV6s

although I have to say I prefer the 2 litre model. Then there was a long love affair with a 164 which lasted for many years and hundreds of thousands of miles when the kids were growing up, We then ran a 147 for a while followed by a 156 Sportwagon 2 litre petrol, a couple of 156 diesels were then good cars for a number of years, at the same time running a 166 V6 with LPG , this can only be described as an interesting experience! 166s are lovely vehicles but they somehow seem to generate a constant love/hate relationship. Any 166 owner will know what I am

talking about! There are also a number of Alfas I have owned which have now gone from my memory. One LHD drive saloon, it might have been a 6 cylinder, was really nice, bought for £300, used for a number of years around London (I was working for Thames Water at the time) then sold to a shuttering joiner for £300 as the train was fully booked and he had to get home - happy days!

So, on to the reason for my penning this piece, my Spider. Over the years I have owned a number of Spiders; two S3s now sold on, one 916 still on the road used daily and my Kamm tail.

Purchased some 12 years ago on eBay without viewing from a chap in Norwich, I jumped on the train one Saturday morning to collect it. The weather was really bad to say the least; it was like a monsoon! Anyway the guy picked me up at the station, we returned to his house to do the paperwork whilst his wife made a cuppa. He was not too happy about selling the car but it had to go to make way for a kitchen extension, as the garage he kept it in was to be demolished.

I said my farewells and headed out onto the road thinking here we go, I am going to get soaked in this weather with leaks all over the place. How wrong



was I? the car ran like a dream without a single leak anywhere. All the way back to Lancashire from Norfolk! I was impressed. After a couple of weeks I decided to look through the vast pile of receipts etc I had inherited with the car. I then fully understood why the vendor was not too happy; he had spent many thousands of pounds on the vehicle over the past few years. My apologies I have misplaced your name and V5 has now disappeared. If you are reading this article Sir, I feel for you!

The car was originally registered in California; happily there is zero rust and the car has had a new soft top. The only fault is the seats are tired and the paintwork was faded from the sun. The mechanical fuel injection had been replaced with carbs and European cam shafts had been installed

After running the car for a few weeks I changed the oils and filter and headed off to South West France in the car where I intended to register it and keep at our place there. This I duly did only having a bit of a hassle because all those years ago in California they had removed the original Vin plate. In the end I registered it as a 'Vehicle Ancien' and I was duly issued with the number on the car. It has served us really well; to date I have only changed the speedo which fell to bits on the bumpy French roads; a rear section of exhaust; the clutch and a couple of callipers.

After many happy trips and years of use fast forward to 2014, I decided to treat the car to a new paint job and have some pressing mechanical issues attended to. So the car



was driven back to the UK and dumped at Ferdi's in Lytham where he removed the diff. I took it up to a specialist in Egmont who fitted new seals and bearings etc. When I collected it some weeks later it appeared to be better than new!

Ferdi did a few jobs, new rear callipers, a bit of an engine/carb tune, new oil pressure sensor, and the car was then ready to be taken to the spray shop where all the lights and chrome were removed, the body prepped and the car re-painted in the original silver colour but this time

with a gloss finish as previously it had turned to matt.

Christmas 2014 arrived and my son and I set off back to France in the most horrendous weather, all the way to Portsmouth there was torrential rain. Once off the ferry at Le Havre the sun shone and even though it was pretty cold we dropped the top, donned our Russian fur hats and drove all the way to Bordeaux like that much to the amusement of plenty of people.

I had only had the car back in France for a short time when one morning on





the way to get some petrol a huge deer leapt out of a hedge and impaled itself in the front of the car. What a mess! The bonnet and front valance as well as the bumper/indicator assembly and grille were damaged. After much hassle and a huge bill at Classic Alfa for parts the car is now back to the way it was after the re spray!

Memorable trips that spring to mind are forays over to the Atlantic coast; Biarritz, Arcachon etc. Also a hugely enjoyable visit to Millau to see the bridge, which I highly recommend. If you do go make sure you come off the autoroute and into the village of Millau to view the bridge; you will then get some perspective of the size and engineering difficulties encountered while building it.

We have also enjoyed many visits to the Mediterranean coast; Nice, Antibes and Fayence. Arles is a bit further inland, it was so hot one year that all the wax-oil was melting, blowing up the windscreen and over my wife who was sheltering from the sun under a white sheet! I stopped because I thought we had an oil leak!

Retirement is looming rapidly for me now so there are quite a few more trips I would like to do; Southern Italy springs to mind and possibly over to Sicily, as well as seeing more of France and Spain etc. I am sure the car is up for it so I just have to start saving some beer tokens up now!

Happy Alfa-ring and I might see some of you if you are ever in the Dordogne!!

John Elford

