

Historic kart restoration by a complete novice – part 1

Who am I and why Historic Karts

I had an interested in motor sport from an early age, I had no choice as my Dad is from the Isle of Man so it was motor bikes morning noon and night. So every year our annual holiday was “on the Island” getting there by motorcycle sidecar from the Black Country, where my Dad had followed work to in the early 50’s. Me and later me and my brother in the sidecar, pretending we were in a spitfire or Lancaster bomber, my Dad in his great coat, mark nines and helmet that made him look like he should be shot from a circus cannon, our Mom on pillion with fashion coat and super protective silk head scarf. So I was exposed to the TT and Manx GP from a very early age and I was always going to like things than ran on fossil fuel. Just to wind my dad up I initially preferred racing cars, Jackie Stewart was my first boyhood hero, when my mates were reading the Beezer and Beano, I had Motor Sport.

It was inevitable that I got interested in karting and by age 13 I was cycling the ten miles to Chasewater just to watch. Saved pocket money and combined birthday and Christmas presents got me a s/h kart in 1971, a rear engine, American type “frame above the axle” type chassis, fan cooled Komet K22 and Go-Power wheels. It needed a rebuild but wasn’t that part of the fun, I thought, my Dad was a well regarded mechanic and while he would not let me touch his tools, because being left handed I always look awkward, it should be a walk in the park firme for him. However with the engine stripped down and the chassis bare, my Dad changed job with long hours so had no time for and lost interest in karting. I figured out how to put it back together and sold it to a mate having never raced.

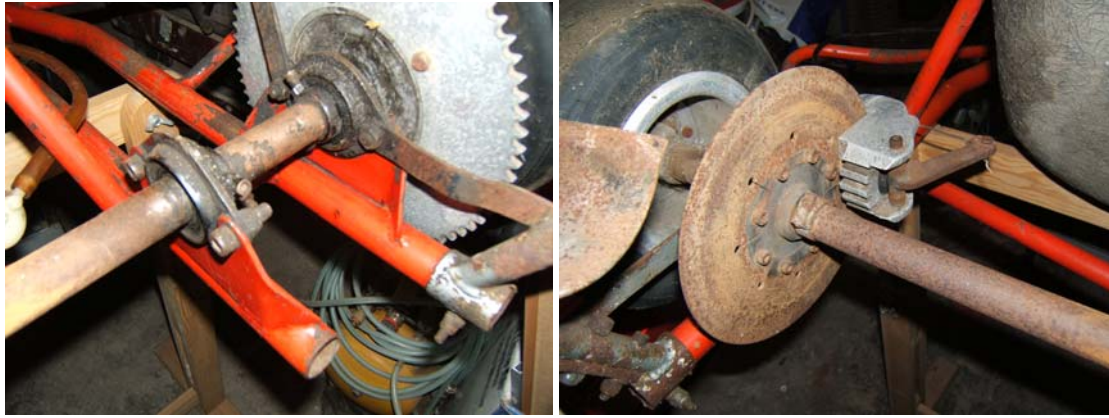
At 18 I had learned to drive and passed my bike test and at 22 started off road motorcycling then racing Moto X with my younger brother. We raced AMCA for several years, as a member of the Crusaders and then the Wolverhampton club, then tried ACU and the Midland Centre Championships as qualifiers, and even qualified a few times! I decided to stop riding when I was made redundant in the early 80’s but continued to support my brother Paul. He retired from MotoX in the late 80’s and we did trials for a few years, I got in to Mountain Biking, racing all over the country at British Championship events and local races. I did this for 12 years until injury forced a retirement from racing, although I still ride socially and recently restored my early 90’s Diamond Back retro mountain bike.

When my brother-in-law David Gibson (a Historic Kart Club member) got into Historic Karting it had instant appeal for me, the chance to finally rebuild and drive the kart of my boyhood dreams. I bought a rolling chassis from David and although we are not sure what it is, best bet so far is an unusual early 70’s Barlotti or special, either way I like it and for now I call it the Heinz 57 as it seems to be a bit of a mongrel.

What have I taken on!



The “Heinz 57” in all its glory, one bent nerf bar and front tube, but it sits flat (on flat tyres at least) and its complete and un-molested.



Two bolt bearing hangers with 45 degree flange stiffeners on the supports, horrible mechanical disc with messy home welded bracket for it indicating that originally it probably had a drum brake.



However the whole kart looks like it has not done much, apart from crash a few times, note left hand nerf. The rest of the frame was straight, there was very little rust and even the wheel bearings ran freely. The rear rims were also straight with no dents or scratches, the front Nylite's were like new after a quick wipe over, and even the bearings are in very good condition.

So how old is it?

Good question, the general consensus is early 70's, here is why:

- 1" steel axle with two bolt bearing hangers
- Looks like it had a drum brake originally, and who on earth would upgrade to mechanical disc if a hydraulic one was available, so this upgrade must be early 70's too.
- 4" Nylite wheels, on $\frac{3}{4}$ " stub axles, not seen on new karts much after 73?
- Very small black petrol tank, looks like a Barlotti item, very nicely made but old.
- Crash bars and steering column are painted not chromed, no amount of sanding can find even a flake of old chrome underneath the grime.

And what is it, Barlotti? Whatnotti?

I hope someone can tell me, it certainly had Peter Brinkworth foxed when he saw it, although Barlotti was what came to his mind. The friend of the chap who sold it to David said he thought it was a Barlotti so it was never questioned.

So here are the distinguishing marks in no particular order, the photographs above illustrate most the facts.

- Unusual two bolt bearing hangers.
- Welded on nerf bars that do not look original.
- “A” frame greyhound shape, that is very similar to the “last Barlotti”, while this is much later kart it does have an uncanny resemblance, the main chassis tubes and note the how the engine rails join to the frame, the inner one is curved, very similar.



The last Barlotti?

- The steering wheel and tank both look like early Barlotti items, even my seat looks like the one above.



- There are no frame numbers or marks I can find, although sand blasting may reveal something.

In the next part – taking things apart!