

# Building a Locost Car 2000 - 04

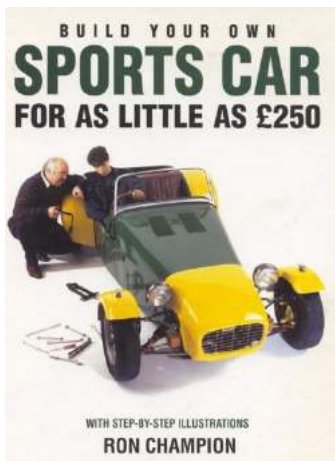
## by Paul Flint



In the 1960's my first sports car was a TR3 which I renovated and used for a couple of years.

Then, later in 1969 I built a Mini Marcos which I collected from the factory. It consisted of a complete body shell factory built from marine ply and fibreglass with doors and bonnet fitted, trimmed inside and painted. To this you added components from a Mini. It took me six weeks to complete and I did over sixty thousand miles in it before I had to sell it to raise money towards buying a house.

It wasn't until 1999, with the family growing up, that I started to think again about renovating a car or building a kit car. Driving my friend's MG Midget reminded me of a Midget I had bought with my wife before the children came along so I started to think about renovating an old sports car. However, the thought of all the rust and expensive body panels made me think about a kit car.



I had always loved the Lotus 7 but sadly was out of my price range along with most other kit cars. Then, reading a copy of a Kit Car Magazine, I spotted an article on a Haynes best selling manual entitled *Build yourself a sports car for as little as £250* by Ron Champion. He was a teacher of motor engineering to senior school pupils, with whom he had been making low-cost sports cars from scratch at Oundle School.

This looked interesting so I sent off for the manual and soon was spending my spare time reading all about the construction.

The big difference with working from scratch with such a project was that the initial outlay was far smaller than purchasing a starter kit. Typical starter kits are around two thousand pounds which still only gets you a chassis and maybe some suspension components.

With the Locost, my first purchase was a MIG welder, an angle grinder and some timber for a base. Once armed with this, I just needed some inch square section tubing to get started on building the chassis. So... a few hundred pounds and I was away.

A couple of months just spending a couple of hours in the garage each night saw the chassis completed.



The other item I needed was a Ford Escort MK11 which would be the donor car, from which I would transplant the engine, gearbox and back axle. This I found through the local for sales paper. It was located in Henley – not so far away.

The Escort had only done 48,000 miles so I felt that it would still have some life left in it and would save the cost of repairs. The purchase also came with a second car which was useful as I could run the lower mileage car for a while making sure it all worked fine while stripping the older car to see exactly where each component should be positioned on the chassis.



Work continued most evenings and, although progress was slow, it allowed the cost of the project to be spread out over time.

Kit car shows were a good source of the components that I felt I didn't want to make from scratch - like the brake, clutch and accelerator pedal box, engine mounts, exhaust manifold, silencer and body panels.

All this work was basically constructing a kit. Once everything had been fitted to the chassis it was all taken apart so I could paint the chassis and then fit newer components from the lower mileage Escort that I had been using on the road.

Once construction was completed the car needed an MOT and then an SVA test. This single vehicle approval test was carried out at Leighton Buzzard. See right, with me looking distinctly nervous.

A few items stopped the car passing first time but a I was back a couple of weeks later and it passed.

Taxed and insured, the car was on the road the next day and out for its first spin.

The only problem I had on the first run out was the brakes sticking on. This turned out to be caused by a bolt through the pedal fulcrum that I had tightened too much. It was easily fixed but there were some very hot discs on the ride home.



A few moderations and improvements were made over the years that I ran the kit car but it never let me down and was great fun to drive.

Total cost: around £4k.