

Owners Stories – Peter Edwards

My 'Royale' story started in 2012 when I was looking for a new project after selling my Marlin Sportster which I built myself between 2004 and 2010. I had been looking into building a Chesil Speedster (lovely looking car!) but a conversation with journalist Ian Stent at the Stoneleigh show put me off the idea and he suggested a better option would be a Royale Sabre which had just been re-launched by ACL run by Malcolm Badger. I visited their show stand and took some pictures but I couldn't afford a new kit. Then in August 2012 an unfinished Sabre turned up on ebay and I decided I had to buy it. My Sabre kit was manufactured in 1994 so it is one of the early kits and was never finished by the original builder. Apparently, he forgot to put anti-freeze in the cooling system and one winter it froze and the ice cracked the engine block. At that point he became disheartened and never finished it. It then passed through a number of owners and when I went to see it, in what looked like a scrap yard, it was in a terrible state, wet throughout, rotten hood, rusting suspension and mould growing in the damp carpets. I could see it would need a complete rebuild but it was affordable and I could see the potential of this sleeping beauty.



Fig.1 My Royale Sabre, as bought – the Sleeping Beauty

The deal was done and I had become the proud owner of a Royale Sabre. Over the next 5 months I completely dismantled my car, taking hundreds of digital photo's for future reference and all parts were labelled and bagged ready for refurbishment and rebuild. Throughout the build I have either refurbished and repainted the original parts or replaced them with new components. As my Sabre had not been finished, and so not registered, I was aware from the outset that it would need IVA testing and this has been kept in mind throughout the rebuild.

During the dismantling, my mind turned to what type of engine to fit and I felt the Sabre deserved a straight six and I had a 'gash' BMW engine block in my garage. I conducted what I called a 'Proof of Concept' and I convinced myself that the BMW engine would fit. The transmission tunnel would

need modifying, the pedal box converted to a hydraulic clutch and I would have to use a remote brake servo as there wasn't space for the original Ford servo plus a host of smaller issues.



Fig.2 The rolling chassis rebuilt.

By January 2013 I had a completely stripped and repainted the chassis and rebuilt the rolling chassis by February. At this point my wife and I decided to downsize, so much time was spent house viewing and packing 20 years of goods and chattels. We moved in October 2013 and had to leave the Sabre behind in a lock-up garage. The new house (a 17th century cottage) took up most of my time until May 2015 when I returned to the lock-up and temporarily re-assembled the body work onto the rolling chassis and had it transported to my garage at the new house.

In the interim, I had purchased a BMW 328 car to donate its 2.8 litre straight six engine for the Sabre. I bought a complete running car with 2 weeks MOT left as the body was very rusty. I drove the car for two weeks to check the engine and gearbox were okay. This also allowed me a chance to get the ECU modified to remove the BMW immobiliser function and check the engine still worked. Then the BMW donor car was dismantled and all the spare parts sold on ebay. The sale of all the parts came to more than the cost of the car which meant the engine and gearbox cost me nothing.



Fig.3 The donor car for the BMW straight six engine.

Work overhauling the engine and rebuilding the Sabre continued through 2016 and 2017 until in February 2018 I sent the bodywork off for a full respray at a local bodyshop. With a largish garden and a 400 year old cottage, work on the Sabre often has to take a back seat when my other projects take priority. I don't mind this as it gives me time to think up solutions to problems and I can return to the garage with fresh enthusiasm. To get the body to the painter I bought a small trailer off ebay that was the frame and wheels from a trailer tent. I greased up the wheel bearings and pumped up the tyres. I then built a custom wooden frame to support the Sabre's body tub and my son-in-law trailered it to and from the paint shop behind his van. My painter said it was at the ideal height to work on in the paintshop and he could wheel it around his yard and in and out of his paint booth by hand. The painter did a superb job and the painted body parts were back by April. Then the final assembly could begin.



Fig.4 Body tub on the way back from the painter on its custom built trailer

In August 2018 the overhauled and repainted engine and gearbox were installed in the chassis. I found a strange coincidence that the BMW engine mounts are exactly the same distance apart as the Ford engine mounting points meaning I didn't have to fabricate any new engine mounts. Was this really coincidence or were BMW and Ford collaborating on engine development back in the nineties? I just needed to move the engine forward by about 20mm to get sufficient clearance between the sump and the chassis cross member. This was achieved by using rubber engine mounts from a Volvo which have offset studs.

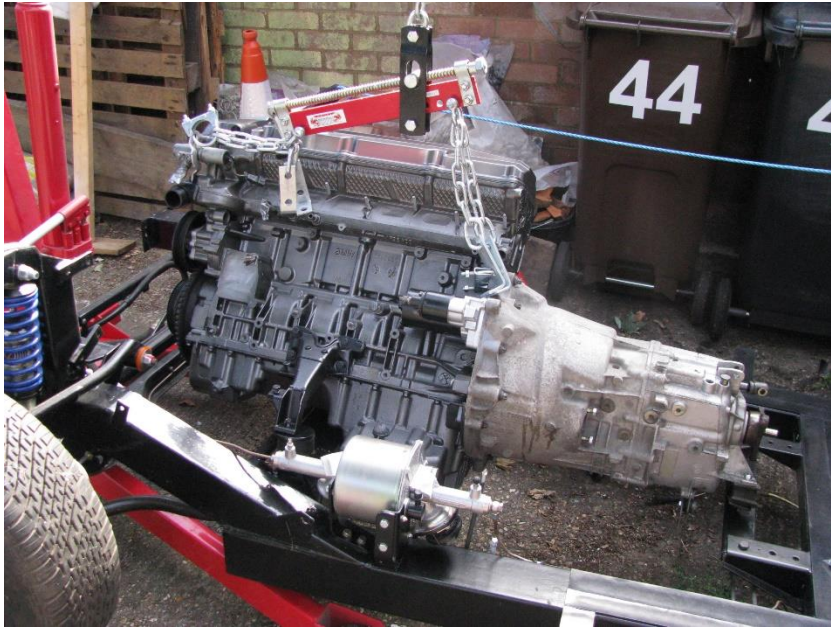


Fig.5 Refurbished engine and gearbox being installed.

By November the painted body tub was back on the chassis. I co-opted six strong men after the annual village firework party to lift the freshly painted body tub from its trailer and on to the Sabre's chassis.

2019 was spent installing all the engine ancillaries, brakes and fuel system and fitting the wiring loom. Fitting the loom and connecting up all the instruments and lights etc. seemed to go on forever and takes many hours to complete. November 2019 was another significant milestone when I ran the BMW engine in the Sabre for the first time. And I drove the car out of the garage under its own power in January 2020. Since then I have been completing the car with installing all the wings, exterior lights, re-trimming the dashboard and fitting rear wheel arches.



Fig.6 Slowly getting there.....

During 2021 I had 'much fun' installing the locks and electric window mechanisms in the doors. The skin on my knuckles has just about recovered. These jobs take up a lot of time and I have much admiration for the original builders of these cars. The first half of 2022 started with some DIY jobs that were not related to my Sabre, such as installing new gates on my yard and building a new art studio for my wife. I finally got back to car building in August and started by redesigning my brake master cylinder as I wasn't happy with my original design. With that completed successfully I made a start on carpeting the interior and installing the gearstick and handbrake gaiters.



During Spring 2023 I completed the interior trimming and finished fitting the doors and boot lid. I then fitted the seat belts and worked my way through the final preparations before the IVA test. When I felt I was ready, I applied for the IVA test at Leighton Buzzard which is my nearest test station. The first test had to be aborted as the Brake Test rollers were broken but the inspector agreed to check over the car. Most tests were passed successfully but he identified a short list of items he wanted addressed before the final 'official' test. I was invited back for the final test on the 13th July when my Sabre passed and was awarded its Individual Approval Certificate.



Registration documents have been dispatched to the DVLA who will issue the registration documents.

This is a very brief overview but if you want more information you can read the diary of my re-build which can be found here..... <http://www.madabout-kitcars.com/forum/showthread.php?t=3824>

(.....but be warned it's now very long!!)