

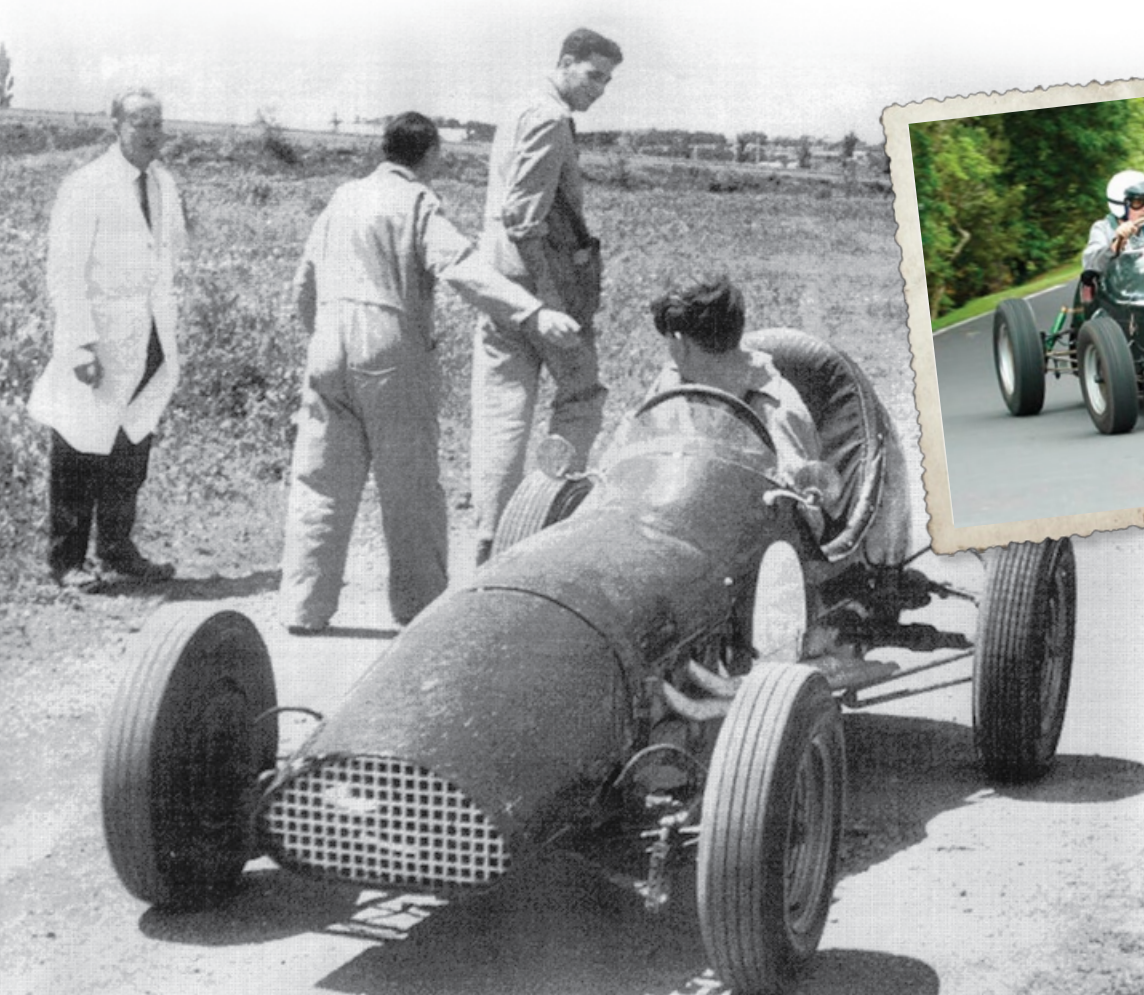
Chris Amon's first race car was the Herrick A40 Special. Chris purchased it, as a 16-year-old, from Keith Smith in 1960 after it had been totally rebuilt following a bad accident when Herb Gilroy lost control at the Houghton Bay hillclimb. Around 1956 Herb sold it in a wrecked condition to Dave Lichtenstein, who had three young friends (Bruce McLaren, Phil Kerr and Colin Beanland) rebuild it. It then went to John Riley, to Keith Smith, to Chris Amon, and back to Keith Smith – around 1962. It is not widely known that Bruce McLaren had a hand in (re)building Chris's first race car.

When sold to Chris, the car was black and had a Bugatti gearbox. Chris painted the car red (did he know something?) and replaced the gearbox with an A40 one. At that stage the car had a very modified A40 engine of 1400cc. The engine had high compression (14:1), revved to 7300rpm and ran on nitro. Chris ran it in local hillclimbs and circuit races. His first race was at Levin on 15 April 1960, and he lasted only one lap as the magneto failed. Chris also raced the A40 Special at the Admirals Road hillclimb in November 1960 and other local climbs, but had a series of mechanical problems (sound familiar – with what was to follow?).

The car was built in 1947, by current owner Roger Herrick's

great uncle, Des Herrick, as a speedway midget. It ran a Hudson Terraplane engine and Des was very successful in it at both speedway, and hillclimbs (it won the Mt Eden hillclimb in 1948 against stiff opposition). Des sold it to Ron Roycroft in 1950 and then Ron sold it to Herb Gilroy in 1952. Herb had Ralph Watson (of Lycoming Special fame) convert it into a circuit car by lengthening the chassis, putting in a special Ralph Watson Ford Model T independent rear end and eventually a Bugatti gearbox. It ran in a number of circuit races throughout the country, including fifth place in the 50-mile Ardmore Handicap race at the New Zealand International Grand Prix (NZIGP) meeting in January 1955. Herb also raced the 1200cc A40 (Austin) Special, entered by Ecurie Drambuie/H Gilroy in the 10-lap/21-mile 'Ultimate' Race Car feature at the NZIGP Ardmore meeting in January 1956.

After Chris's ownership it passed through many well-known and not so well-known hands. It seems that everyone had a go at changing it, and the car has evolved over time – however some of the bones from the original 1947 midget that Des built are still there. Roger Herrick found the A40 Special in 2006 and returned it to Herrick family ownership after 56 years in the hands of others. ●



Above: Roger Herrick
 1947 Herrick A40 Special
 Left: 1947 Herrick A40
 Special – Hillclimb, circa
 1960