



## STORY BY RON MAYDON

I was in Germany a while ago, and whilst talking to the owner of a workshop he showed me a pile of bits he said was a 1974 Amon F1 car – the only one ever built. He said that Chris Amon drove the car in F1 races in 1974. I had never heard of an Amon racing car before but it was semi complete and the rough outline could be seen. Over the next couple of days I came to the conclusion (wrongly) that this could be a cheap entry into Historic F1 racing in Europe. Having done a deal with the owner to buy the car, he duly delivered it to the docks in Dover in exchange for money. He seemed very happy and eager to drive to Dover and hand it over!

Once I got the Amon back to my garage in UK, I duly sent an email to Chris Amon in New Zealand, informing him of the wonderful news that the Amon AF101 had been saved for history and would shortly be returning to the tracks, so could he give me any helpful hints. I quickly received a reply from Chris that I remember to this day. It basically said I should have left the car where it was as it had tried to kill him three times and would probably try to kill me, and if I had any sense I would abandon the project. For 48 hours I suffered a mixture of heartbreak, annoyance and determination and then, to his eternal credit, Chris sent me another email apologizing for his first email and listed the things that they had got wrong with the car, and what he thought could be done to correct them. His overriding comment was that the car was ahead of its time, but they had not had money to develop it.

Being hopeless at both driving and engineering, I decided to give the engineering part to someone who was up for the challenge. The work was undertaken by Terry Carthy. Terry, being a fine engineer, decided that there was very little wrong with the design of the car apart from the fact it had been made too light and so the car was re-assembled and all new components, suspension, etc, were being made of a much better quality and heavier weight than previously. We decided to show the car on the Masters stand at the Race Retro exhibition. I was very proud of it and I remember asking one of the UK's well-respected race car preparers in Rick Hall to look at it. I remember his answer being that it looked good from a distance, but he didn't want to come any closer without steel-toed boots on, because he remembered in its day how much used to fall off it!

The 2006 season started and I'd done a couple of tests and everything seemed to be going well at my speed. My first race in the Amon was the Historic Grand Prix of Monaco in 2006 where the car ran faultlessly and I came 10th. I was amazed and overjoyed, and that evening, whilst attending the Gala Ball, I received a phone call from Chris Amon on my mobile to say he'd been phoned about the Amon finishing and said it was great to know the first time the car had ever finished a race was at Monaco. I was overjoyed.

I decided to put a better driver in the car for some testing, and he reported that the back end was moving around excessively

*continues over*

under power. I hadn't noticed because I'd never pushed the car that hard. We were all sitting in the pitlane scratching our heads, looking at the back end of the car and wondering what to do, when Adrian Newey (Red Bull F1 designer) walked passed and said it was good to see such a unique car on track and that Chris Amon had been one of his heroes. I told him we were having problems with the back end, so he took a look at it and within about 30 seconds he pointed at the front suspension and told me to weld a brace between two suspension arms. We went away and did this, and it transformed the car. Two years later, I was back at Monaco, once again running 10th place, for which I was very pleased, until unbelievably in the last half of the race, six drivers in front of me took it upon themselves to crash one after another, and so the Amon came home in a magnificent 4th. It's continued to run perfectly since then, apart from when I crashed in the tunnel at Monaco in 2010 – I'm ashamed to say 100% driver error.

Chris has been helpful throughout, always taking an interest in how the car is going, etc, etc. I've been waiting for six years to bring the Amon F101 to New Zealand to reunite Chris with the



car and to let him see just how close in 1974 he was to having a brilliant car. But then that's Chris's famous bad luck, I guess, and my good luck! I can't think any better way to run my car than to be in New Zealand in your summer for the *New Zealand Festival of Motor Racing celebrating Chris Amon*. ●



Peter Burson's 1974 BRM P210-02 – F1, Pukekohe, January 2009

Chris Amon had had a wretched season in 1974 with his advanced but untested new 1974 Amon AF101 F1 car, and the car was finally shelved after only four races. Thereafter Chris accepted a drive as a British Racing Motors (BRM) works driver for the final two races of the F1 calendar. His first race was at Canadian Grand Prix held at Mosport Park on 22 September 1974, driving the 1974 BRM P201 V12 3 litre F1 car for the works team where he qualified in last place in 25th position with an evil-handling car. In the race he was not classified as a finisher, as he was 10 laps down after many visits to the Pits with peristent engine misfire problems. The second race for BRM was on 6 October 1974 at the USA Grand Prix held at Watkins Glen in up-state New York. Here Chris qualified 12th and finished ninth place, two laps down on the leader.

The BRM P201 chassis 02 V12 3.0-litre F1 car was acquired recently by Peter Burson, who will drive his BRM in on-track demonstrations at the *New Zealand Festival of Motor Racing celebrating Chris Amon*. Peter is hopeful that Chris will drive a few demonstration laps at the Festival and thus be united with a car of the very same type he drove competitively back in 1974. ●