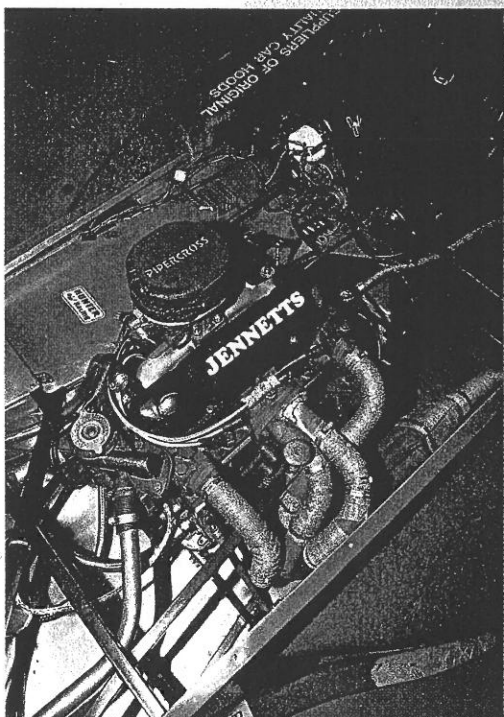
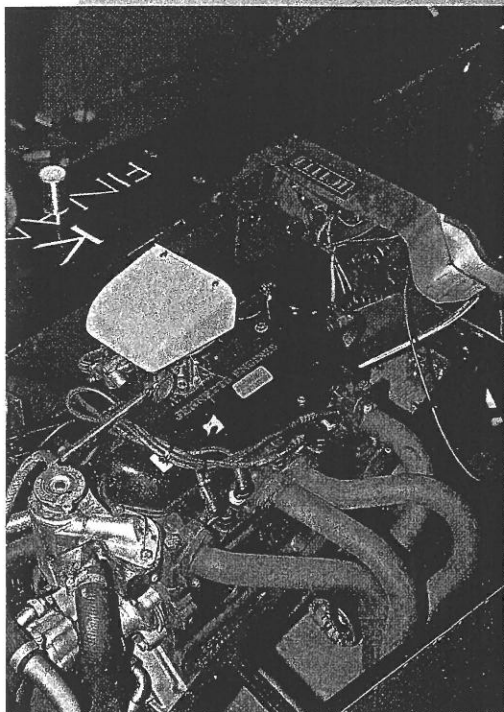
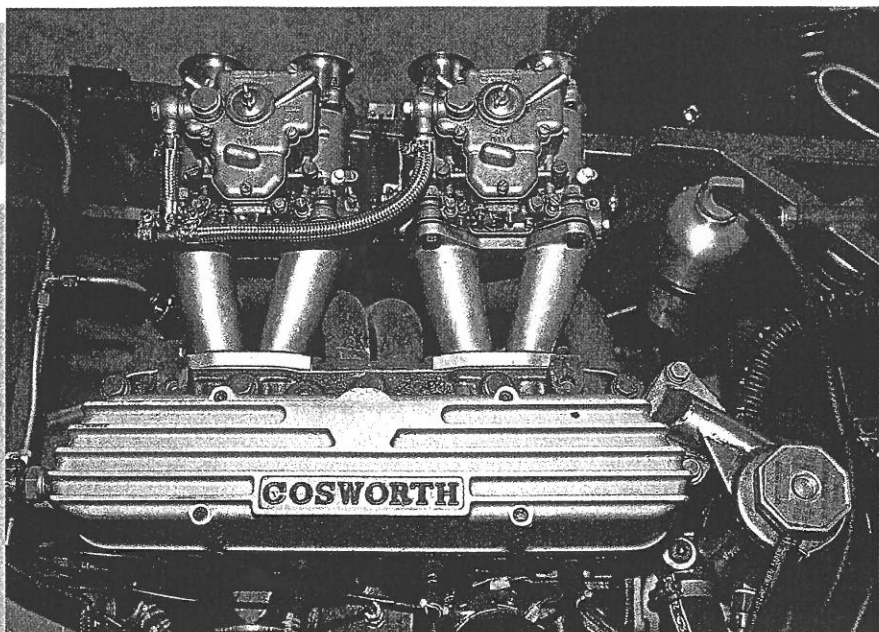


Ray (although he left the family business and formed Ray Mallock Ltd some years back) always came up with a suitable response, and yet always with the central premise of offering phenomenal performance for the money. Clubman Sports racing cars have always offered performance far in excess of their relatively humble specification and cost. And most years, the latest Mallock has been The Thing To Have.

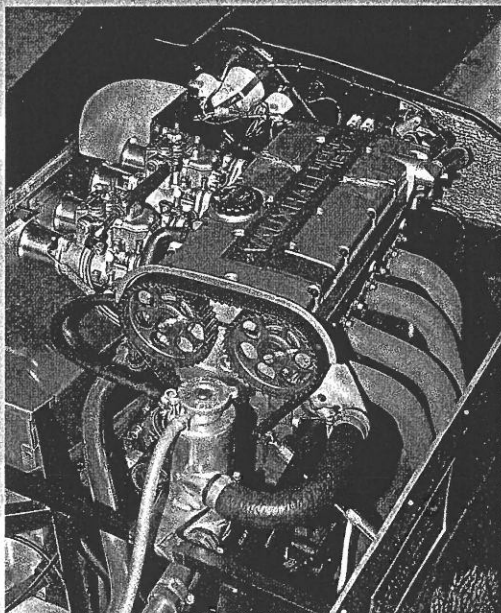


● Formula Ford engines in Sports 1600 class produce about 110bhp: Mk18 top left; Mk24 bottom left

Having said that, you didn't necessarily have to have the latest car. One of the great attractions of the Mallock philosophy is that each design is a logical development of the last, and in most cases update kits have allowed customers to keep up with the latest



● Ford engine in Mk 2 (above) produces 130bhp over a very narrow power band. Vauxhall 16v in latest car (below) punches out a mighty 185bhp; car weighs just 485kg.



developments. And the line is easy to follow. Okay, you couldn't update the Mk2 to Mk30PR spec (I don't think...) but you know what I mean.

It was in order to trace that process of careful evolution that we came to assemble a selection of four Mallocks: Mk2; Mk18; Mk27; and Mk30PR. Put the Mk2 alongside the Mk30PR, and the connection is pretty difficult to see. Put the Mk18 and the Mk27 in their rightful places in between though, and the lineage is immediately obvious.

For our test, the logical thing was to start with the Mk2, and then run through the range in chronological order, right? Not so. Richard Mallock suggested... no, insisted, I start with the Mk18. It was, he assured me, the most benign and user-friendly of the bunch.

Currently there are two categories in Clubman Sports racing: Sports 1600, powered by, effectively, Formula Ford 1600-spec Ford Crossflow engines producing (it depends who you listen to

and what you're prepared to believe!) 105-110bhp or so; and the mighty Vauxhall 16v-powered Vauxhall Supersports with around 185bhp. Paul Dawson's Mk18 is a Sports 1600.

These cars, as you might expect, have more grip than power, which doesn't always make for exciting motoring. That is not to say that they can't produce exciting racing, of course; trying to beat a load of other guys all with similar cars is intrinsically exciting. However, when writing this several weeks later, I couldn't think of much to say about either of the Sports 1600 racers. With their wings and slick racing tyres, they feel very stable, very firmly planted on the road.

One thing I did notice was that the Mk18 had a very firm brake pedal, which of course is great for driver confidence, but means the brakes aren't easy for a first-time driver to modulate accurately. Obviously, practice makes perfect, and this would be no problem to the regular driver. My only other observation was that because of the rearward bias of the

engine/gearbox combination - which is to the obvious benefit of handling and roadholding - the gear lever comes out quite a long way back in the cockpit. To obviate this somewhat the lever was cranked forwards so that the knob was in more-or-less the right position, but it was still a little awkward in use. Otherwise - though it felt like a good, honest, vice-free racing car, which would probably be a very nice entrée to Clubman Sports racing for a beginner.

I then slid behind the wheel of Rod Hunter's Hoods Galore Mk27. It is also a Sports 1600, so again it's not mad with power, although it is reckoned to have one of the strongest engines in the formula at a claimed 112bhp.

Rod warned me that the suspension on his car was pretty stiff, but on the relatively smooth contours of Mallory Park (well, apart from the pit lane and paddock, that is) I didn't really notice it too much. To me, it felt very similar to Paul Dawson's Mk18, only more so. The performance was