

1974 PORSCHE RSR



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My first “real” racing car was a 1974 Porsche RSR, which I bought in the early 1980s.

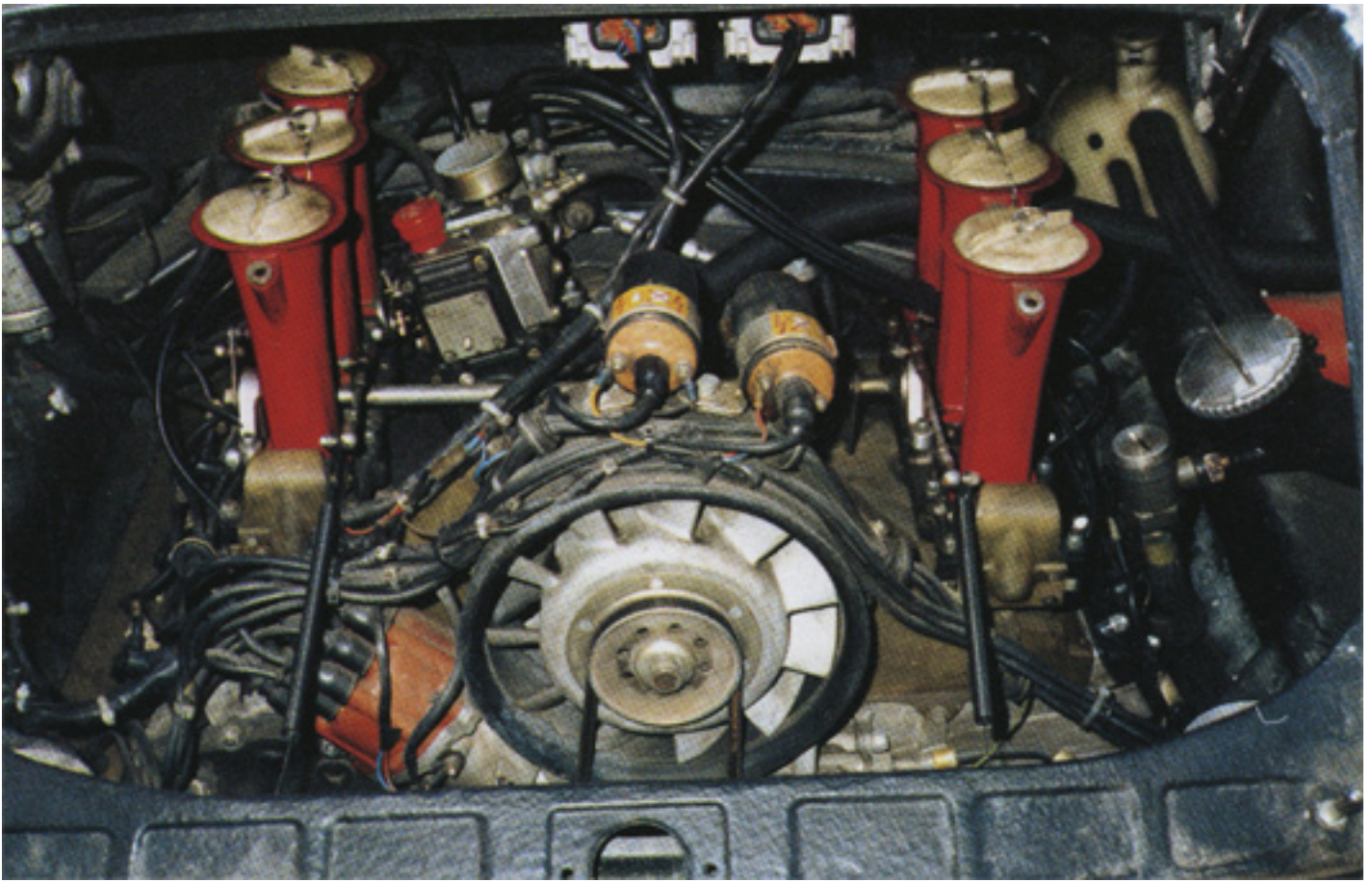
Previously, I had done quite a lot of Hillclimbs in England with, first of all, a variety of Jaguar XK120s and then a real 1974 RS 3.0, which was followed up by an Autofarm-built “clone” RS3.0 (much faster than the original, with a twin-plug RSR engine). Those cars deserve articles on their own.



Back to the RSR: As I was attending and racing in hillclimbs in those days, I couldn't help but be aware of an explosively fast Porsche device, driven by John Hunt and his wife at the same hillclimbs (Prescott, Shelsley Walsh, etc.). I say "explosively" advisedly as this thing really did catapult away from the start and, with its open exhausts exiting through a pair of megaphones, was quite something to see and hear. It had basically RS 3.0 bodywork, with a 935-type nose and was silver, with blue stripes.

I asked John Hunt whether the car could be bought and, eventually, he said "yes" for (I remember) GBP15,000.00, which everyone seemed to think was a lot of money then!

Once I'd actually taken possession of it, I started asking questions into its history, and discovered that it had been a lightweight RS 2.7 that had been modified to RS 3.0 bodywork and received RSR 3.0 brakes and engine in around 1977, in order to take part in a couple of World Championship races, which it duly did, placing quite well.



Yours truly took it straight to Silverstone and entered a modified Porsche race, where I was lucky enough to finish fourth. I then entered for the “come all ye” race, to be held at the end of the afternoon but, when we started the engine again, there was an ominous clattering and friend John Bell gave a good impression of cutting his throat with his hand, shouting: “Flywheel’s come loose!”

So it was that I took her, under recommendation, to Lester Owen in Telford, a great engineer and the guy who had initially modified the car from an RS lightweight to RSR. Lester swiftly repaired the engine, making special titanium bolts and lock-tightening them in place. “Flywheel won’t come off now!” he announced proudly when I went to pick it up.

He was right, I had no more trouble from the engine at all and enjoyed several more races at venues such as Mallory Park, Oulton Park, Castle Combe, Silverstone, Donington before that season was at an end, competing in the Modified Porsche and Intermarque series, which I enjoyed very much. The Intermarque was something like the Group 5 series of HSR today, with Cobras (AC), Porsche RSRs (Porsche), Ferrari 308GTB/GT4s, modified Jaguars (mainly monster XKEs) and modified Aston Martins (the fastest being driven by the late Gerry Marshall).

There was also a Porsche versus Ferrari series that I could enter too but we used to trounce the Ferraris, the Porsches being that much lighter.

At the end of the season, I decided that the RSR would be a lot better with 1974 RSR bodywork (truth to tell, I just loved the look of that car), so my old friend and ace body man Allen Goodall's Goodbrook Motors in Redditch, England, took on the job.

As you can see from the photographs, he did it very well indeed and the RSR, now resplendent in Guards red paintwork, made her debut at Castle Combe in March. I seem to remember that we placed fifth but the biggest shock was that the car was now a second a lap slower than we had been the previous year! It turned out that by increasing the wheel widths from 9 to 10.5 at the front, and 11 to 14 inches at the rear, I had induced a built-in amount of drag that made us slower down the straight. Damn! Ah, well, she did look good.

I kept and raced her for three years in total, until I bought my first Lola T70 coupe (again from John Hunt!) and then I sold the RSR to a Frenchman who came over to view and we did a deal which actually gave me quite a lot more money than I had paid for her! Hey, this is good, I thought. Three years racing and all paid for in the deal. Timing is everything.

For me, a sad postscript to this story (but a happy one for "original Porsche" addicts) is that I recently heard that the car had been restored back to a lightweight RS 2.7 Carrera. Ah well, I bet the current owner doesn't have as much fun as I had with her!

Postscript: My dear friend (and most excellent noter of Porsche histories), Ulrich Trispel read this piece and sent me the following corrections and additions:

"0357 was not born as a lightweight M471, but as a M472 in white and blue.

- From an entry form of 1978, I learned that this car was raced (with a 3-liter engine) in Germany by Armin Jahn.

- John Beasley and John Harper raced the car at the 6 hours of Silverstone and the 6 hours of Brands Hatch in 1979 (not in 1977)."

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