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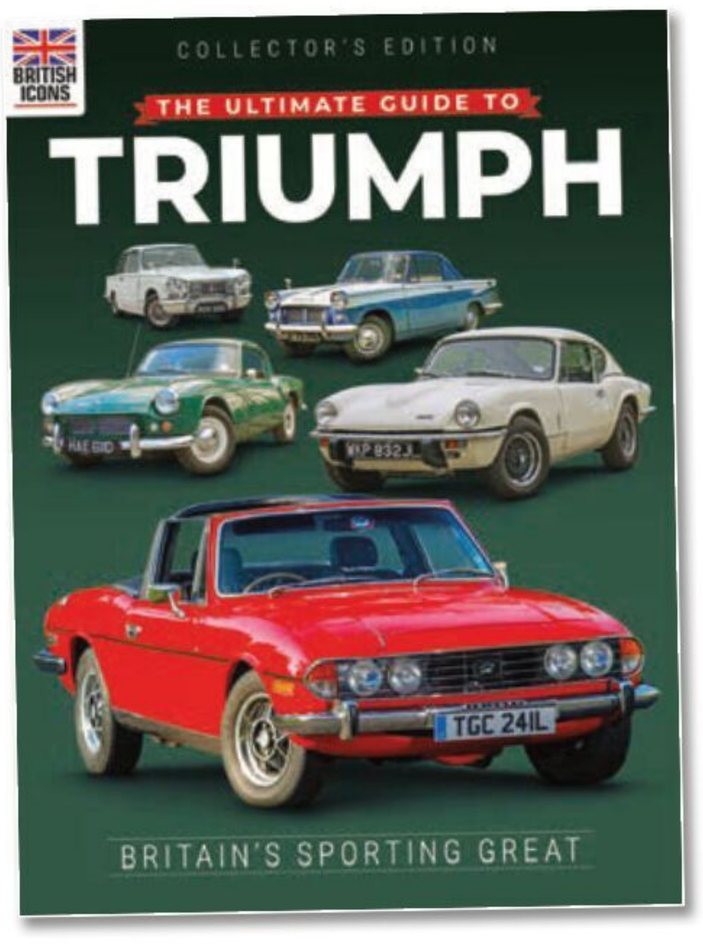

WELCOME

Welcome to the British Icons Ultimate Guide to Triumph - and a new series editor. Former editor Jack Grover has departed to enjoy a new role as the production editor of Kelsey Publishing's ever-popular classic motoring newspaper, Classic Car Buyer, and is wished the best of luck by all involved with British Icons.

For my part as the new editor, British classics have long been a love of mine, and this bookazine in particular is close to my heart as a man who has owned his Stag for over seven fun filled years. It's been a faithful friend, and despite the reputation these cars can 'enjoy', it's been one of the most reliable cars I've ever owned from any brand or era. Stag detractors need to rethink their opinions - and the same goes for anyone who might wish to do down any of the much-loved models of this best-loved marque.

The Ultimate Guide to Triumph will take a look back at the brand's most popular models, during its 1960s heyday, into the 1970s and even up to its demise in the form of the Triumph Acclaim. Cars such as the Spitfire, the TR range, the 2000 and the Herald will be put under the microscope to see whether our fond memories are backed up by real substance now these cars are of age.

While creating this publication, our team of ardent Triumph fanciers have compared several cars at both ends of their natural lifespans, from cradle to grave, to assess whether the final cars represented a significant improvement over their earlier brethren.

We've looked in depth at some of the most popular models you can buy, and we've even assessed the brand's place in history toward the end of its life as the dawn of a new beginning not only for British Leyland, but arguably for the whole of the European motor industry throughout the 1980s.

We've lived and breathed Triumph in the creation of this guide, in order to share out passion for one of Britain's best-loved classic marques and hopefully to attract some new enthusiasts into the fold.

Thank you for buying the Ultimate Guide to Triumph, whether a returning British reader, a new subscriber, or a casual Triumph fancier looking to take the plunge into ownership. We hope you'll have as much fun reading it as we did putting it together in the first place. ■

SAM SKELTON EDITOR

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SIX OF THE BEST

Welcome to our whistle stop tour of post-war Triumphs, as we select six models and offer our thoughts on buying, running, maintaining, upgrading and driving them.

Introduction words **SIMON GOLDSWORTHY** / Main feature **SAM SKELTON**

Every single classic car has its fans and devotees, but some marques are true titans of the classic car scene with huge followings around the world and entire industries built around servicing their needs. Into this category you can put marques like Jaguar, Ford, VW, MG and Triumph, Porsche, Ferrari, Citroen and more. Among such illustrious company, Triumph is arguably unique in that it has maintained this pre-eminent position despite the fact that no car bearing the name has been built since 1984.

In some ways this enduring popularity reflects the sheer number of stylish and desirable models the company produced, often a cut above the competition in price as well as in fit and finish – Triumphs were invariably aspirational cars rather than mundane. As a result we have had to be slightly selective for this feature, choosing just six models from the Triumph back catalogue to showcase. But those six do offer something for everyone, ranging as they do from small to large and encompassing sports cars, saloons, convertibles, estates and grand tourers.

Clearly we cannot cover every detail of every car in the space available, but for each one we have tried to give a flavour of the ownership experience from buying a car to fixing it and from running costs to the driving experience. If one of them tickles your fancy, then there are clubs and specialists for them all who will be happy to feed your enthusiasm and further your knowledge, not to mention innumerable books to fill in any gaps in your new-found knowledge. Hopefully though, this feature will be a springboard into the world of Triumph ownership.

RUNNING COSTS

It is interesting to note that the various models in this feature are available at very different price points, the running costs do not vary by nearly as much. Take insurance, for example. We got quotes from Lancaster Insurance which were a modest £79.08 for the Spitfire, Herald, Dolomite and 2000, rising by just £1.40 to £80.48 for the Stag and TR6! (These are based on a 45-year old with a second vehicle living in an SP2 postcode in Salisbury who has no claims or convictions, is a club member, and is employed as a marketing manager. The Triumph is garaged and covers 3000 miles a year and lives in an SP2 postcode. Do note though that policy benefits, features and discounts offered may vary between insurance schemes or cover selected and are subject to underwriting criteria.)

We also put together a sample basket of mechanical parts for each model, and again their costs did not vary by as much as the cars' purchase prices. Take out the cost of a full engine rebuild and there was even less between them. Using prices from Robsport unless otherwise indicated, this basket of parts worked out as follows:

MODEL	HERALD 13/60	SPITFIRE	TR6	2500	DOLOMITE 1850	STAG
CLUTCH KIT	£94.79	£66	£155.94	£155.94	£116.40	£167.99
FULL BRAKE OVERHAUL	£443.46	£447.06	£430.14 plus exchange calipers	£539.14	£691.08	£467.52
RECON EXCHANGE ENGINE FROM	£2340	£2340	£3300	£3300	£3900	£7200
RADIATOR	£219	£240	£222	£276 recon	£225.60 exchange	£330 exchange
FULL EXHAUST	£210	£287.99	£215.94 (TRGB)	£402	£444	£330 + £71.94 fitting kit
COMPLETE ENGINE GASKET KIT	£34.50	£31.80	£41.34	£41.34	£54	£86.94
TOTAL	**£3341.75**	**£3412.85**	**£4365.36**	**£4714.42**	**£5431.08**	**£8654.39**

There are also some running costs included over the following pages for each model. These cover servicing costs (which again do not vary by much), and estimated fuel costs for a year of motoring based on a petrol cost of 115.9 pence per litre. The message that came through to us loud and clear from this was that if you are able to clear the hurdle of the asking prices and if you buy wisely, then you should be able to run and enjoy any Triumph on a reasonable budget. So read on, start dreaming – then set about turning those dreams into reality.

SUPER SEVEN/SUPER EIGHT 1927-1934

PRE-WAR DOLOMITE 1934-1940

1800/2000/RENOWN 1946-1954

1800/2000 ROADSTER 1946-1949

MAYFLOWER 1949-1953

TR2/TR3/TR3A/TR3B 1953-1962

TR4/TR4A/TR5/TR250 1961-1968

GT6 MK1/MK2/MK3 1966-1973

TR7 AND TR8 1975-1981

ACCLAIM 1981-1984

THE REST OF THE FAMILY TREE

Triumph can trace its roots back to 1886, when Siegfried Bettmann started selling bicycles in under the Triumph name. In 1902 they branched out into motorcycles, though the first Triumph car did not appear until 1923. Initially they focused on large and complex cars, but it was the Super Seven of 1927 proved more suited to the times. The 1930s saw the company move upmarket again though, with a bewildering array of glamorous and well-engineered cars that gathered more plaudits than sales.

The motorcycle side of the business was sold off in 1936, and the car manufacturing business struggled on until going into receivership in June 1939. What was left of the company's assets were largely destroyed in the Coventry Blitz, but the name and what was left of the company was bought by the Standard Motor Company in November 1944.

Initially the post-war Triumphs were pitched upmarket of the mass-market Standards, but the arrival of the TR2 changed all that when it cemented Triumph's position as the sporting brand. As the 1950s progressed, the Standard name came to mean 'ordinary' rather than 'the standard to aim for,' and gradually like a cuckoo in the nest, the Triumph name took over. The writing was on the wall when the Herald took over from the Standard 8/10, and In September of that year the Standard Motor Company was renamed Standard-Triumph International Limited. The process was completed when the 2000 range took over from the Standard Vanguard/Ensign family.

By then, Triumph had been taken over by Leyland Motors in 1960, becoming absorbed into the giant British Leyland Motor Corporation from 1968 and surviving under the BL brand until 1984. The Triumph name is currently owned by BMW, a legacy of the German company's ownership of Rover.

SPITFIRE

Triumph's entry-level sports car went head-to-head its entire life with the MG Midget, and consistently out-sold its arch enemy from Abingdon. Long viewed as an ideal starter classic, many owners would never consider anything else as they are fun, affordable and very stylish. We've chosen the last of the Spitfire line as our recommendation today.

The Triumph Spitfire enjoys a reputation as one of Britain's best-loved small sports cars. This reputation was earned over a lengthy 18 years of production encompassing five distinct models, and almost 60 years of enthusiast owners. The Spitfire's popularity is drawn largely from its ease of maintenance, cheap running costs and entertaining handling.

Launched in 1962, production ceased in 1980 after 314,332 had been built. Each of the five generations of Spitfire has its own band of devotees. Mk1s – badged as the Spitfire 4 – have low door handles and bumpers, 1147cc engines and a dainty look about them not unlike a Daimler Dart done properly. Mk2s have a slightly different grille, and later Mk2s also have raised push button door handles. The 1965 Mk2 offered more power from its 1147cc than the Mk1, but retained the DIY hood and low bumpers.

In 1967 the Mk3 saw raised bumpers, a folding hood, a wooden dashboard and more power still – its 1296cc engine was drawn from the Triumph 1300 and rated at 75bhp, making it the most powerful Spitfire on paper and its revvy nature earned it many fans. This was the last of the round tail cars, as the 1970 MkIV featured comprehensive restyling akin to that of the new Stag. This car used a redesigned 1296cc engine using bigger bearings – enthusiasts report that it is less willing to rev, and while the 63bhp offered seems low on paper, this was the first Spitfire to have its output measured formally in DIN which accounts for much of the drop. The final Spitfire, the 1500, was effectively an upgraded MkIV – same body, same trim initially, but with 1493cc to produce 71bhp DIN. These are perhaps the best Spitfires for daily use.

To drive, round-tail and square-tail Spitfires are slightly different, but beyond that things are fairly similar. The primary difference between round-tail and square-tail cars is the rear suspension. Earlier round-tail Spitfires are prone to tuck-under at the back, causing excessive negative camber which can affect the stability if not treated with care. To be fair, you do have to be pushing it pretty hard for this to become an issue on the road, but starting with the MkIV, a revised swing spring rear suspension design led to more predictable handling.

Perhaps unusually for a car of its era, much of the bodywork of the Triumph Spitfire isn't essential to its overall condition. The bulkhead may have structural importance, but the panelwork is secondary to the separate chassis. The sills, however, are important as they are very definitely structural on the Spitfire – strength was built into these to offset the loss of many of the Herald's chassis outriggers, so check thoroughly for any corrosion here. Rear radius arm mounts are another structurally key trouble spot, so make sure these are solid too. Front trunnions are also a weak spot, though the

"THE FINAL SPITFIRE, THE 1500, WAS EFFECTIVELY AN UPGRADED MKIV. THESE ARE PERHAPS THE BEST FOR DAILY USE"

Triumph's wooden dash did not arrive in the Spitfire until the Mk3, and continued in the MkIV and 1500.

From the MkIV onwards, the Spitfire got a new corporate Kamm tail. It also lost the external bonnet seams.

potential for failure should not be over-stated. However, Canley Classics sell a trunnionless front suspension setup which obviates the need for lubrication and removes the risk of a previously badly lubricated or damaged front suspension from snapping. The kit is available from £339.98 and is easily fitted, the only difficulty being the removal of the stub axles. New castle nuts and pins would be wise upon refitting.

Along with so many classics, Spitfire values are ever strengthening. A couple of grand should still get you a usable MkIV, but the nicest Mk1s and Mk2s are now over £20,000. If we were buying a Spitfire for regular use, we'd advise spending up to £7000 on the best 1500 we could find for the money as the extra torque of the bigger engine makes it a nicer daily proposition, and to hold out for one fitted with overdrive.

Common upgrades include custom wheels and seats, though an electric fan is of greater use. Bank on around £150 to fit one yourself – cars that already have one fitted are more desirable but not more valuable. The optional hardtop increases value by around 10%-15%, but they're not as essential as on big brother Stag. Overdrive wasn't standard fitment, but is well worth having. On later cars, this will be the J-type overdrive, which acts on third and fourth effectively giving a choice of six ratios. It can be retrofitted if it wasn't specified new, but you cannot simply bolt an overdrive unit onto a non-overdrive gearbox. To do the conversion you will need an overdrive unit and a gearbox designed to take it, the shorter propshaft from an overdrive car and the associated wiring. A conversion can be effected at home for around £750-£1200, whereas a specialist such as Robsport might charge in the region of £1000 plus parts to take your car and return it with a fitted and functioning overdrive system in place.

General running costs on a Spitfire are fairly minimal. You'll need 4.75 litres of 20w50 for an oil change, which can be had for around £16 for a 5 litre can. A 1500 takes the same NGK BP5ES plugs as big brother Stag, typically available for around £3 each but of course you'll only need four of them. An oil filter will be around £5, and an air filter will cost around £8.50 (two are required). A service will thus cost around £20, while an oil change will cost around the same.

You'll average around 35mpg in regular use – all Spitfires give similar economy figures, so there's no model in particular to watch for if you want frugality. Spitfires can't run on unleaded without head work – it's nice if this has been done, but additives aren't expensive if not. Classic Valvemaster or Millers VSP-e will offset the effect of ethanol in fuel as well as providing the lead content these engines require. 250ml at £15 will treat 250 litres at an additional cost of 6p per litre, but remember that each litre will take you further in a Spitfire than in cars like the Stag or the TR6.

We spoke to David Aspinall of Spitfire specialist Anglian Triumph Services, who advised: 'The main thing to check on a Spitfire is panel fit and structural integrity. What you get depends on your budget, but bear in mind that Spitfires have gone up in value recently. Chassis don't tend to rot, but sills, floorpans and boot floors all can. Screen frames can be structural and need to be checked. In the past, we've found 1976-1978 cars to have issues – the steel wasn't as good.

'If a previous owner has had to replace the sills, the difference between Heritage and repro is in the fitment and some repro panels are worse than others. Rear quarters and under the bumper are trouble spots on a poor car. If someone is selling for much over £6000, you don't want to see a load of underseal all over the place as it could be hiding things. The higher end of the market has to be nice everywhere – lift the seats and carpets to check the floors, and look at the floors from underneath the car too. Front arches can be rust prone, as can the front of the bonnet around the lights. In my opinion upgrades rarely improve the value of a car as much as history and provenance. Leather seat covers can be desirable to some, likewise mohair hoods, but a vinyl one is adequate and original spec. Check the hood fits, too.'

For a Spitfire 1500 covering 6000 miles per year, the cost breakdown is therefore in the region of £45 for a service, approximately £900 in fuel and £60 in additives, £46 in oil changes, and £79.08 for insurance, giving a total of £1130.08.

TR6

The last of the traditional separate-chassis TRs, the TR6 has always been a muscular and rather masculine sports car with a sonorous bark from its straight-six engine and up to 150bhp claimed in fuel-injected form. The driving experience was in some ways antiquated when new, but that only ads to their classic appeal.

Think of big, brutish British sports cars and the TR6 will probably be vying with the Big Healey to push to the forefront of your mind. And while some would argue the TR6 was outdated even when new, the fact is that the simple chassis traceable back to the TR4A (and beyond that – in part – to the TR2) means that there's very little to go wrong.

Launched in 1969, the TR6 replaced the TR5 and TR250 models with what amounted to a thorough cosmetic facelift. The Michelotti body of the earlier cars was looking dated, so Triumph turned to Karmann for a fresh take for a new decade. They cleverly made the car look new, whilst in reality retaining the former centre section and grafting on a new face and a new tail. Production ceased in 1975, by which time 91,850 had been built. There are two generations – CP cars have 150bhp, while the later post 1973 CR has 125bhp. All UK spec cars have Lucas PI. You'll see a lot of people claim that the earlier cars are better, but while the 150bhp cars may be more powerful, once you factor in the different methods used to measure power and 50 years of subsequent wear, tear and repair, then the differences are often not significant on the road. And in truth the later cars are easier to live with given the way that their power band is delivered, and they're generally far better value too.

The TR6, unsurprisingly, isn't especially sophisticated to drive, but it is tremendous fun. It takes driving a car like this to realise just how a sports car is meant to feel – communicative steering, more than enough grunt and definite controls make the TR6 a car which flatters the competent driver. And being a large step up from the entry level sports cars of the era, there's room even for the tall and the broad, and plenty of luggage space for the two people it can seat.

The TR6 has always had strong values by Triumph standards, and they've been strengthening continually for the last few years. You'll need at least £12,000 for something usable with a Triumph engine, and they can command as much as £30,000 for the very best. For something usable, we'd spend around the £15,000-£16,000 mark. Projects can be had for less, typically dry state cars from the US which will have Stromberg carburettors in place of the Lucas PI unit.

"THE TR6 UNSURPRISINGLY ISN'T ESPECIALLY SOPHISTICATED TO DRIVE, BUT IT IS TREMENDOUS FUN"

It is common to see TR6s converted to carburettors, whether because the PI unit has failed earlier in life or, in the case of a US import, because it was originally supplied on carbs. Some will pre-empt the PI unit failing and convert to carburettors regardless. A known mod is to fit a series of three Weber DCOEs, for which a conversion kit is available from Dellorto at £1750. These change the character of the car, removing what many feel is a peaky quality from the PI-engined cars and increasing low down torque. While the PI system can be made reliable these days, this character change may be an equally compelling reason for some to

convert to carburettors.

Those using the PI still will have most likely had the Lucas fuel pump upgraded to the Bosch type, but bank on £326 from Moss if it hasn't yet been done as the Bosch type is vastly better. Hardtops, as with other drophead Triumphs, are worth having, and can add 10% to a car's value. Aftermarket fibreglass examples can be had from around £100, though you'll need around £500 for a decent used original. The same type of CV equipped driveshafts as the Stag would benefit TR6s too and obviate the need to grease splines – TRGB sells them for £873 per pair. TRGB also advises a rear suspension conversion from lever arms to telescopic dampers – Rimmer Bros conversions start at £273, while TRGB's conversion kit is just shy of £300.

If you're going to drive the TR6 hard, it may be worth considering a Stag gearbox conversion. This effectively gives you Stag internals in the original casing – a stronger solution that will suit those looking for performance modifications. TRGB suggest that in addition to the cost of a reconditioned gearbox, you'll need around £300 including VAT to upgrade the internals to Stag specification.

Owing to its mechanical similarity with the large saloons of the era, the TR6 isn't an expensive car to maintain. We'd recommend oil and filter changes every 3000 miles, and a full annual service. NGK BP6ES plugs will cost around £12-£15 per set, a fuel filter will be pennies, and an air filter around £12 from Rimmer Bros. Basic servicing costs are thus in the region of £30, plus oil changes. Spin on filter conversions are recommended and cost from £65, while a spin on filter is around a fiver. If you retain the original oil bath setup, expect to pay £4.20 for a new filter. TR6s take 5.1 litres of oil from empty, so one 5 litre can of oil should be enough for most oil changes. 20w50 can be had for around £16 if you're not bothered by brand, though many will prefer to buy from a known supplier.

The Triumph six-cylinder engine isn't unleaded safe, though the odds are that by now it will have had hardened valve seats fitted. It's still good practice to use an additive such as Millers VSP-e or Classic Valvemaster Plus, as these will contain ethanol inhibitors to offset the effects of E5 and E10 fuels. £15 buys enough to treat around five tanks. In terms of fuel, you'll get 25mpg if you're sensible, 30 if careful – less if you drive it like a sports car.

We spoke to Gary Bates of TR specialist TRGB, who told us: 'Only the metal parts of a TR6 can rust! The chassis is curved down either side of the engine, and it's vital to run your hands along these curves as it is the easiest place to check for a rippled chassis indicating accident damage. Oil pressure is a better sign of a healthy engine than miles – a high mileage car with a fresh rebuild can be better than a low mileage original in terms of overall health. Saloon engine swaps are commonplace, so check that the engine number is right for the car. It's important to remember too that the TR6 is an old car now, and it's inevitable that it will need work from time to time. Put some money aside every month – you might not need to spend it on the car for six months, but you'll need to one day and it's worth preparing.'

For a TR6 covering 6000 miles per year, the cost breakdown is therefore in the region of £30 for a service, approximately £1250 in fuel and £60 in additives, £40 in oil changes, and £80.48 for insurance – grand total of £1460.48.

The TR6 came originally with a satin finish on its plain-grained wooden dash, but many owners have changed this to a more upmarket finish as seen on this car.

The angular front and rear of the TR6 was styled in Germany by Karmann, but the centre section retains Michelotti's original curvaceous TR4 lines. It sounds like it should be a disaster, but actually works superbly.

STAG

Graceful, spacious and with a glorious V8 soundtrack, the Stag was a dream car for many when launched, and now enjoys one of the most enthusiastic followings of any classic. A consummate grand tourer, the survival rate has been phenomenally high, which proves that they can be highly durable too.

The Triumph Stag has not enjoyed the easiest history in classic car circles. Early problems in service tarnished the model's reputation and pub wisdom still maintains that they are unreliable, but the truth is that over 40 years after production ceased the survivors are good examples, most of which have had sufficient work to make them reliable as daily prospects. I've run one for six years without significant fault, in all weathers, and loved it.

Launched in 1970, production ceased in 1977 after 25,939 had been made. There are effectively three generations, though changes were slight and Triumph never referred to different models. However, most enthusiasts refer to Mk1s as having wheel trims and no stripes, Mk2s from 1973 having stripes and black sills/tail panel, and facelift Mk2s from 1975 having alloys and stainless sill covers. All are mechanically the same, and values are similar – Stags derive their value from condition more than era.

Despite what many believe, the Stag is no sports car. Light steering, a flexible shell and in many cases an automatic gearbox ensure that the Stag is always happier cruising gently than being thrown around. But then they're such capable GT cars that few owners will want to drive more aggressively. Stags can be used every day, they're comfortable and not expensive to run. They will seat four adults, and while the boot's not huge, it's big enough for a weekend away.

Parts-wise, almost everything is available – you can't buy new foam for the rear seat, but it's unlikely you'll need it. Some of the badges are only available on a sporadic basis too, depending upon when the last reproduction batch was manufactured. But like any car of this era, the Stag's propensity to rust can be an issue. Check the front valance, especially behind the lights. Look along the sills and arches, and the door bottoms. Windscreen pillars and door posts are structurally risky spots too. Floors and outriggers can be worth checking as well – the only area that really seems immune is under the bonnet. Check it's had a timing chain in the last 40,000 miles or so, and when buying, make sure the owner has changed the oil and filter every 3000 miles too.

Values have taken a big step up in recent years – the Stag was always the Cinderella of classic cars, the one whose star had yet to rise, but in the last few years values have begun to climb to the level they always deserved to be. You can still buy Stags with Rover or Ford engines for around £5000, but you'll need at least £8000 for something usable with a Triumph engine, and they can command as much as £30,000 for the very best. For something usable, we'd spend £10,000-£14,000.

While many Stags remain standard, there are some modifications which are well worth seeking out. Uprated radiators and repositioned header tanks are both desirable upgrades. Cars which come with a hardtop are more desirable, and can command an additional 10% if the hardtop is in good condition. Many automatics have been converted to four-speed using the ZF 4HP22 gearbox from a Jaguar XJ-S 3.6, which significantly reduces rpm at cruising speed and improves economy. You'll pay £3000 for the conversion, so it makes sense to buy converted if you're likely to want it. That's not to say don't convert your existing car, but given it doesn't command an equivalent premium at sale it makes sense to let somebody else pay that bill if you can. My own car is a ZF-converted example, and after six years of ownership I can confirm that it transforms the driving experience.

The Stag is a four-seater, but many people treat it as a two-seater and fit a glass windstop behind the T-bar.


Leather was never an option in the Stag, but Triumph's vinyl seats are plush and supremely comfortable. Many owners swear by the manual/ overdrive gearbox, but others think an automatic suits the car's nature.

"I'VE RUN A STAG FOR SIX YEARS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT FAULT, IN ALL WEATHERS, AND LOVED IT"

People have fitted uprated driveshafts to offset the sticking splines which can be a feature of Stag and Triumph 2000 ownership. These are coated with Rilsan, and the idea is that under acceleration these will stay smooth and not 'grab,' causing a twitch at the rear. These are easier to source than the old solution of driveshafts from the Datsun parts bin, and £576 will buy a pair from EJ Ward on an exchange basis. At this price we wouldn't fit them as a precautionary measure, rather we would wait until the originals begin to snatch. Likewise, Classic Driving Developments do a further uprated driveshaft which utilises CV joints instead of sliding splines, but from specialists such as TRGB these are double the money, so our advice above stands.

Monarch Automotive have converted several Stags to use BMW E30 differentials as a cheaper solution than a standard Stag diff rebuild or to reduce revs at speed. Available ratios can drop the revs in top by up to 40%, though with a conversion kit costing £1250 plus fitting, it's not the cheapest of upgrades. The above three conversions together will revolutionise the Stag, though with a bill in excess of £5000 they would be beyond all but the most dedicated of enthusiasts. Another mod some people will consider are four-pot front brake calipers with larger ventilated discs, available as a Wilwood kit – around £600 from Robsport.

Day to day running costs aren't exactly expensive. You'll need new oil and a filter every 3000 miles. The oil, 20w50, will cost from £16 upwards depending upon the source, while a GFE147 filter costs around £7 from most suppliers. Spark plugs – NGK BP5E – typically cost about £3 each depending upon supplier, and we'd advise you change all eight every year. Fuel filters are cheap, and Rimmer Bros will sell standard air filters for £21. An annual service should therefore cost in the region of £45, plus however many oil changes are deemed necessary.

Borg-Warner automatics are the thirstiest averaging around 22mpg, but you should see an average of high twenties from a ZF conversion or a manual. Stags ran four star fuel when new, but all are unleaded-friendly and will happily run on Super Unleaded. We'd advise a fuel additive to protect against the effects of ethanol – 250ml at £15 will treat 250 litres, which adds 6p to the cost of a litre of fuel.

We spoke to Ben Porter of Stag specialist Robsport, who said of these running costs: 'It depends how far you want to go. Typically, we'd do more than a service the first time we see the car because there's often additional work to do. We'll go as far as regreasing driveshaft splines annually, which so many people won't do but which went into the original service schedule. You might find leaky wheel cylinders. What we would call a checkover and full service is typically around a day, which would be in the region of £500 plus parts. That would include tightening front wheel bearings, greasing all the locks and more.'

For a Stag auto covering a very generous 6000 miles per year, the cost breakdown is therefore in the region of £45 for a service, approximately £1450 in fuel and £60 in additives, £46 in oil changes, and £80.48 for insurance – a total of £1681.48.

HERALD

Launched in 1959, the Triumph Herald was bodily a clean sheet design for Standard Triumph. By this time the Standard Eight was looking decidedly austere, as well as out of date and – dare we say – slightly dumpy. The company needed a swish new successor, and the sporting Triumph badge heralded a new age.

Launched in 1959, the Triumph Herald fitted perfectly into Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's world of glossy magazines, and for a country which had never had it so good the Herald was the perfect companion. By the time production ended in 1970, 510,064 had been built. There are four basic models – the 948, 1200, 12/50 and 13/60 – and five body styles: saloon, convertible, coupe, estate and van. The earlier cars all look broadly similar, but the 13/60 is identified by a more aggressive nose, akin to a Vitesse but with single headlamps.

You hear lots of horror stories about Herald handling, and while it's true that the rear suspension design can induce positive camber in extreme situations (and even lift a wheel), the fact is that in normal use you won't experience this. Even so, modifications do exist, which we will cover later. The turning circle more than compensates – capable of shaming a London cab, the Herald remains one of the easiest classics to manoeuvre in a small space. The 948 is perhaps a little underpowered, but 1200, more powerful 12/50 and most powerful later 13/60 Heralds have more than enough go for regular use today.

The Herald's separate chassis means that minor rust in the bodywork needn't worry the prospective buyer beyond the cosmetic woes, given that it will all unbolt and replace with little more than a socket set. Do not, though, fall into the trap of underestimating the work involved in removing an entire bodyshell, not the time and patience it will take to line everything back up afterwards. The floorpans, boot floor and spare wheel well are worrying places to find rust, but as with everywhere else panels are available to repair these areas. The bulkhead is structural, likewise the windscreen pillars, so these should be checked thoroughly. Chassis outriggers and perimiter rails do rust, but replacement is not especially difficult. The main rails where they dip around the diff are also vulnerable, but effecting a neat and strong repair here is more difficult.

Like the Spitfire, Heralds have long been considered perfect entry level classics and although prices are rising along with everything else, two grand is enough to get you into a shabby Herald 13/60 – saloons are least valuable, convertibles priciest with the estate in the middle. Earlier Heralds tend to be more valuable because the frontal styling is more 'classic,' while an early 948 is more of an acquired taste that is less practical on a daily basis but more prized by aficionados – a convertible one of those can be anywhere up to £14,000, but generally £7000 should get you a very respectable choice of models and conditions.

Pre-June 1962 cars are harder to modify without structural work to the chassis, so we'd leave these cars totally standard and, if you want to uprate your Herald, buy a later car. It's common to see later Dolomite and Spitfire 1300 or 1500cc engines fitted to Heralds, which

improves their driveability but won't add to their value. Overdrives are a common fitment too, typically the D type used in the Spitfire which can be found used for around £300 or refurbished for £500. Fitment will make your Herald far nicer and more relaxed at speed, and can be allied to a taller diff from the Spitfire range for even more relaxed cruising, though the speedo will need recalibrating. If going down the OD route, we'd recommend a steering column mounted overdrive switch rather than the gearstick-mounted unit from 1970s cars. Simply put, the wiring on gearstick switches can fracture and cause issues, while the column mounted setup is longer lasting with less risk of fire. It also looks more period, having been used on the Vitesse.

The swing spring from MkIV Spitfires is also often fitted to reduce the effect of positive camber at the back – all bar the lower leaf of the leaf spring can pivot, improving grip at the back. Lowering blocks fitted between the spring and diff can also have the same effect, as can an uprated rear spring from a Herald estate if you want to retain the original precise feeling of the car. Be wary though – reproduction estate springs aren't as good as originals.

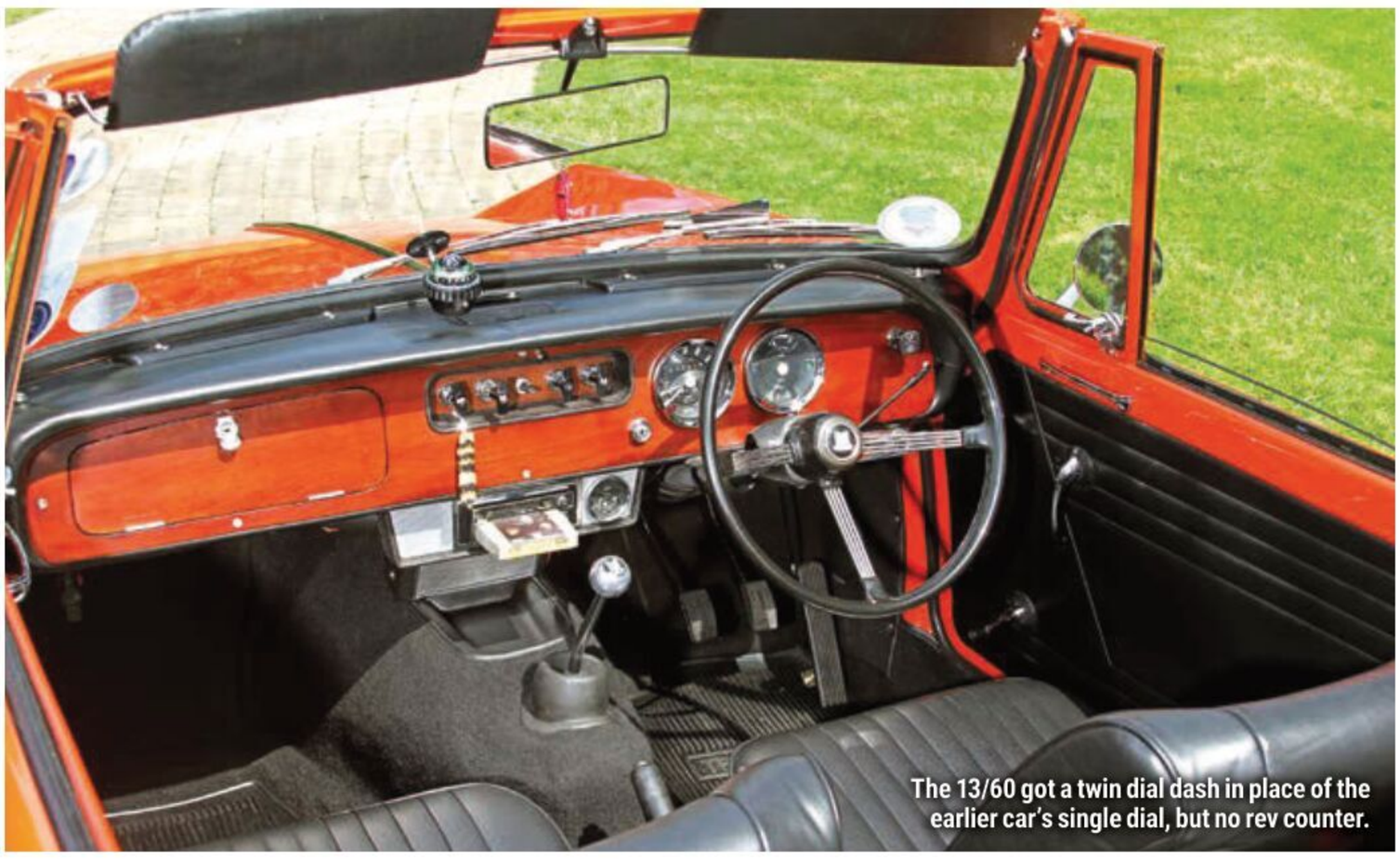
It's also possible to buy front suspension upgrades which eliminate the need for greasing the trunnions every 3000 miles or so. These are available from Canley Classics for £339.98. These are well worth the money given that you can never be certain how well previous owners have lubricated the front suspension, and represent a clean slate. That said, there is nothing wrong with the original set-up in good condition, with thousands of cars covering millions of miles without issue.

The Herald is one of the cheapest classics you can run. A 4.7 litre sump means a 5l can of oil will have plenty left for topping up, and filters are around a fiver. Oil changes can thus be carried out for around £21 every 3000 miles. NGK BP6ES plugs are shared with the 2000, and less than a tenner should get you a set of four. Air filter elements – one needed, but the 948 has a unique filter – will cost no more than £11.04 from Rimmer Bros, while fuel filters are cheap and easily available. £25 should thus be enough to deal with most regular services, though it's essential to grease the trunnions on a regular basis too.

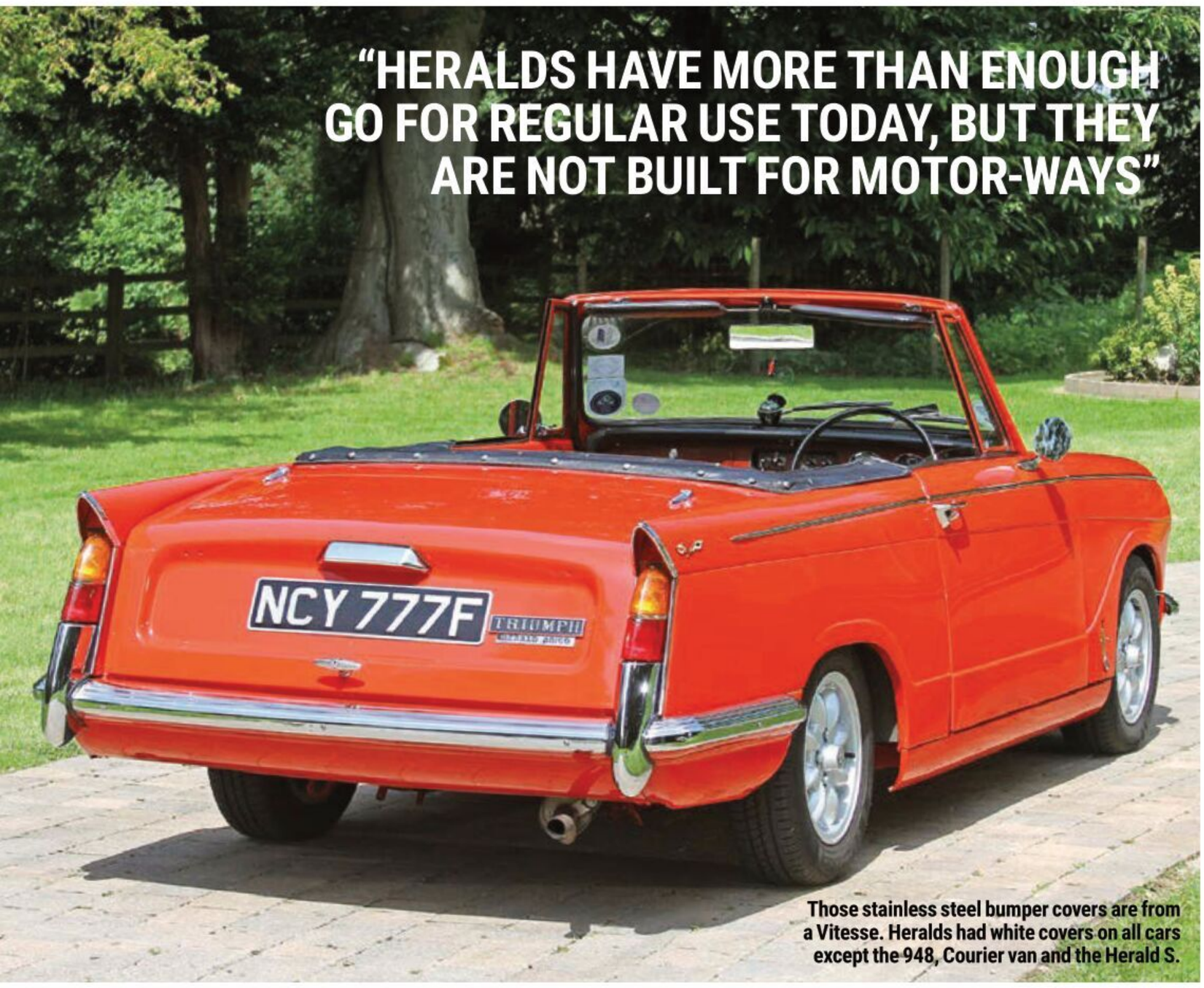
You'll easily get 35mpg from most Heralds, and while they shouldn't be unleaded friendly, most have been fitted with hardened valve seats over the last 20 years. We'd still recommend an additive like Millers VSP-e for its ethanol inhibitors, but it shouldn't be necessary for lead replacement. (Incidentally, although we are focusing on the Herald range here, the similar but more powerful six-cylinder Vitesse uses broadly the same drivetrain as the larger 2000 saloon, so if you're looking for servicing information and costs on that, we suggest you read our guide to the 2000 range.)

Herald owner and enthusiast William Davies said: 'For those looking to upgrade, the 1296cc engine from the 13/60 comes in two flavours. Earlier cars have the GE prefixed engine, meaning it has the same small crankshaft journals as the 1147. Later GK engines have the same larger crank journals as the 1500 unit. This means the former revs rather better, though there's not a huge difference in normal use. Unless you're fitting a 1500 engine, keep the standard 4.11:1 differential. Any longer ratios will disappoint in terms of pickup. There's disagreement over many aspects of Herald improvement, but my experience is based on owning over 100 Heralds of all types over the past 31 years.'

For a Herald 13/60 covering 6000 miles per year, the cost breakdown is therefore in the region of £25 for a service, approximately £900 in fuel and £45 in additives, £42 in oil changes, and £79.08 for insurance – a grand total of £1091.08.



The 13/60 got a twin dial dash in place of the earlier car's single dial, but no rev counter.



Those stainless steel bumper covers are from a Vitesse. Heralds had white covers on all cars except the 948, Courier van and the Herald S.

DOLOMITE 1850/SPRINT

If you want the luxury of the 2000 saloon but in a smaller package, then the more upmarket versions of the Dolomite are the ideal solution. With punchy OHC engines that are a generation ahead of those used in the Spitfire and Herald, they have so much to offer that it is a small wonder that any are ever offered for sale!

In a competition to choose the most confusing model range of all time, the small Triumph saloons that comprise the Dolomite family have to be near the top of the list. Front wheel drive, rear wheel drive, two engine families, two body lengths, two sets of doors, two noses, two tails, two different headlamp arrangements – and, seemingly, a model for each. There's no side-wheel-drive hatchback, but that's about all that's missing! Well, that and a convertible or an estate...

However, for all the complexity of the range, there's little complex about owning or running one. We're going to focus on the slant-four-engined cars here, the 1850 and the Sprint launched in 1972 and 1973 respectively. All of those were four-door saloons with RWD, though some will have been fitted with full-length folding sunroofs. The 1850 had a vinyl D post and steel wheels, while the Sprint was marked from outside by a full vinyl roof and alloys. Under the bonnet, a 127bhp 2-litre 16v variant of the 1850's slant four provided ample power for the Sprint. Barring the capacity, valve and power differences the drivetrains are similar, but not identical – and Sprint parts are invariably more robustly engineered and so more expensive!

The Dolomite was a junior executive, pitched alongside the Vauxhall VX4/90 and the higher echelons of the Ford Cortina range. It's therefore unsurprising to find that it is reasonably comfortable for four plus luggage – if (as with BMW today) slightly more compact than similarly priced mainstream brands. But again as with BMW, the trade-off was a more polished driving experience. The steering is well weighted, the gearbox certain in action, there's plenty of performance even from the 1850 – and if you've found a Sprint, expect riotous acceleration.

All Dolomites are lovely to drive, with well-weighted controls, comfortable cabins and very stylish fittings. Seats are incredibly comfortable too, though leaning towards armchair squashy rather than sporting grip. One thing that does surprise many newcomers is how spacious the cabin feels compared to the modest exterior dimensions, thanks largely to a large glass area, visible corners and sides that don't slope inwards at the top – the roof on a Dolomite is much wider than the roof on an Austin Princess/Ambassador, though you'd never guess it from a casual glance.

When checking out a potential purchase, the bottom of the bulkhead is a worrying rust spot, but one which can be assessed on test – if there feels to be any flex in the pedals, chances are there's some rust there. Likewise, feel up behind the dash panel under the screen, as this is another delicate area. Elsewhere, sills and arches are obvious rust spots, the nose panels can rot from the inside out, and they rust in the roof, around the vents behind the rear screen. Door bottoms can rust out, too.

Good Sprints these days can fetch over £10,000, though the 1850 typically fetches around half the value of a perfect Sprint and is far more than half the car in our opinion. You can still get a roadworthy and usable 1850 for around £2000, while an equivalent Sprint will be around the £3500 mark today.

The Dolomites can trace their lineage back to the FWD 1300 of 1965, but the Dolomite of 1972 featured the longer body of the 1500 FWD and the layout of the RWD Toledo together with a new slant-four OHC engine.

“ALL DOLOMITES ARE LOVELY TO DRIVE, WITH LIGHT BUT POSITIVE CONTROLS AND COMFORTABLE CABINS”

One conversion which has proved surprisingly popular is the fitment of a Mazda MX-5 engine and gearbox, offering Sprint performance with lighter weight and a more modern five-speed gearbox. Those in the community advise that it’s a relatively simple swap, with the remote gear selector being the only stumbling block – this needs to be shortened significantly in order to retain the original lever position within the car. It’s best to buy a complete Mazda as a donor to ensure you get the ancillaries and electronics needed. This might cost you £1000, but it’s cheaper than an engine rebuild at a specialist, and those who’ve done it love their cars. The only other consideration is whether you are happy to fit an engine from outside the Triumph family, as this will be a step too far for some fans.

People have in the past considered it a wise move to buy an automatic on the strength of its condition and subsequently to convert it to manual transmission. While this practice is more common with the 1850, it can also affect the Sprint as some Sprints left the factory with autoboxes. You’ll need the pedal box, clutch and gearbox from a donor car, and the propshaft is different too – you could be lucky and get a donor for a few hundred, or spend £1000 on parts. Given the value difference and high number of manuals, we’d not undertake this conversion today unless a car had personal significance. More sensible would be the fitment of overdrive to cars which don’t have it already. A specialist such as Robsport would charge around two days labour to undertake the conversion. You’ll need an overdrive box mount, the loom, and a different gearstick to accommodate the switch in addition to a good overdrive unit.

Once you’ve bought a good one, a Dolomite won’t be expensive to own or run. Oil changes are advised every 3000 miles or every year, whichever comes first. They use 20W50 oil, which will cost from £16 upwards for a 5 litre can depending upon your source, and a Dolomite will use 4.5l of that – leaving some for topping up. They use the same GFE147 filter as the Stag, which will be £7 from most suppliers. The slant four takes NGK BP6ES spark plugs (BP6EFS for Sprint), and we’d change them every year given the standard of plugs available these days and that they’re a couple of quid each. Inline fuel filters cost pennies, while an air filter should be around £21. Servicing your Dolomite during the first year should therefore cost in the region of £60, plus £23 for each subsequent oil change dependent upon mileage. Dolomites run best on four-star petrol, though many report that they’re perfectly fine on unleaded, and you should get around 30mpg from an 1850. We’d advise a fuel additive such as Classic Valvemaster or Millers VSP-e - £15 will treat four or five tanks. Expect somewhere in the high twenties to low thirties region in terms of fuel economy.

We spoke to Dolomite enthusiasts and long-term owners Rob Copson and Anthony Eastwood. ‘I’ve never struggled to find anything, be that from Robsport, Rimmers, eBay or the groups on Facebook,’ says Rob. ‘Panels are hard to come by, though if you’re a club member you have access to certain reproductions. Fibreglass panels also turn up from time to time, but it’s panel work that makes fixing them awkward and expensive. If you can find a limited slip Sprint diff, you’re lucky. They were rare new and are like gold dust today. Nylon seats are also hard to get in good condition, sun damage and wear and tear meaning that many owners have trial fitted different interiors with varied success. I like Alfa Romeo 156 seats, which offer good support and look at home in the car.’

‘New old stock wings can be over £300, while a front valance panel could easily be £500,’ says Anthony. ‘I also had difficulty sourcing rear half shafts, and windscreens were no longer available when I last tried to find one.’

For a Dolomite covering 6000 miles per year, the cost breakdown is therefore in the region of £85 for servicing and oil changes, approximately £1050 in fuel and £50 in additives, and £79.08 for insurance. or £1264.08 in total.

The Dolomites were never sold on price, and even the entry level 1300 had a stylish cabin. The 1850 and Sprint, though, were positively luxurious in their fittings.

2000-2500

If you want a sensible family saloon of the 1960s and 1970s, the Triumph 2000 range would almost appear tailor made. Comfortable, roomy, with powerful engines and not expensive to run, the Triumph 2000 range is well-suited to daily use.

Launched in 1963 and in fierce competition with the Rover P6 from day one, the 1970 facelift tied in the styling with the newly launched and 2000-based Stag model. A total of 324,652 Triumph saloons and estates were built – not only the 2000, but the larger-engined 2500, 2500S and 2.5PI models too. While the engine sizes and model years do affect value, differences between the majority of models are not that great.

Despite being large and spacious, these executive Triumphs are also suitably sporting to drive. Smooth power delivery from the sixes makes them relaxed at speed, and while the unassisted steering can be a bit heavy to chuck around, cars equipped with PAS feel almost modern. Under less strained conditions all 2000s flow nicely, there's good visibility and the costs won't break the bank either. The base 2000 might not be as rapid, but it' will keep pace with modern traffic. And while a 2500TC is nicely brisk, the 2.5PI is a real sports saloon with 150bhp from its TR6 spec engine. Of all the cars in this special feature, the 2000 range is perhaps the most compelling everyday prospect, with plenty of space, plenty of poke, and ease of maintenance guaranteed.

Like any car of this age, they do need checking out carefully though, particularly as restoring one will cost a higher percentage of its final value than something like the Stag or TR6. There's a design flaw with the windscreen rubbers which can result in water in the footwells, so check for damp carpets, and also for rotten floorpans. Pay attention to the jacking points and drain holes on the sills, because if these are iffy there's potential for up to £2500 per side of sill repairs. Wheelarches, door bottoms, outriggers and suspension mounts are all issues too, but panels and repair panels are available, and unusually the range and supply is currently improving further, thanks largely to the unstinting efforts of former banger racer turned 2000 convert, Lloyd Reed.

Values have always been low for a car of its class, but they're approaching sensible levels these days. You'll pay around £2500-£3000 for a reasonable 2000, rising to around £10,000 for the very best 2.5PI or 2500S. Mk1s attract a premium of around 10%, while estates can command a similar premium if in good condition. Automatics are common, but while the manual is more desirable generally, there's no value difference between the two. We'd want to spend around £5000 on something like a nice 2500TC.

Stag brakes are a common modification – they're a little beefier than the saloon items and a bolt-on conversion, but not perhaps necessary unless you've done a lot to the drivetrain. Other Stag-sharing includes the Monarch diff conversion we outlined in the Stag section, using BMW differentials either for limited slip or a wider variety of ratios. It should be noted that while this conversion is easily carried out on Mk1 and estate Triumphs, the Mk2 saloon has a narrower differential mount which makes life far more difficult for those who want to try. If you think £1250 plus fitting is worth it for reduced revs, we wouldn't stop you.

The Mk1 had a different nose, as well as a more sculpted dash layout.

CV-equipped driveshafts from Classic Driving Development are over £1000 per pair, and Rilsan coated shafts from EJ Ward are £576 – both claim to reduce driveline snatch, but we'd wait for your old shafts to become snatchy rather than spending this as a precautionary measure. If you're going to upgrade, the CV-equipped shafts are more up to date and a better long-term fix.

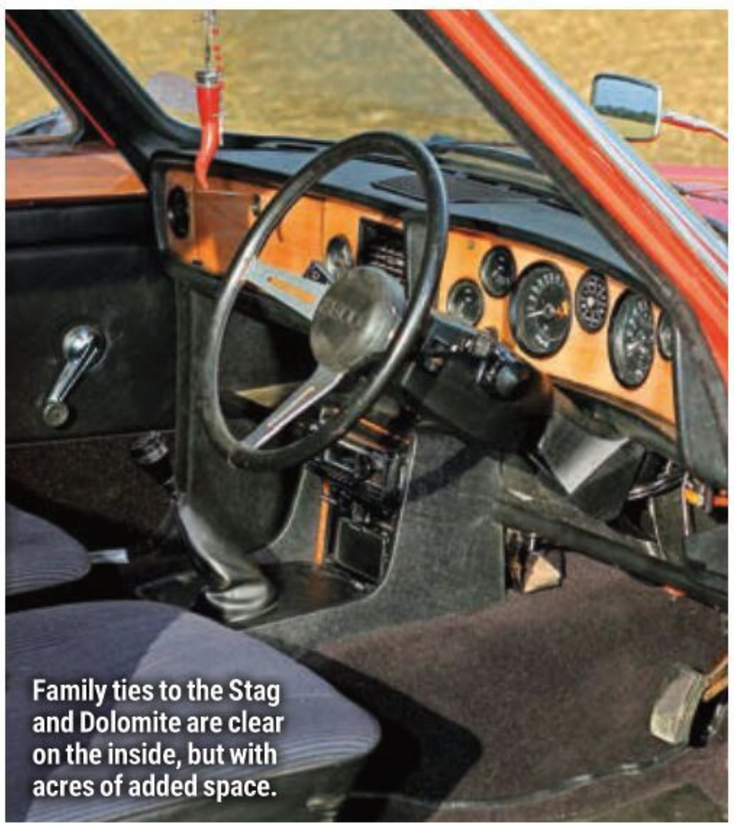
Many 2000s have had different seats fitted, either to add support for long distances or because the nylon material of the later originals has worn through. Our own 2500TC estate project car had MGF front seats fitted for just this reason, while those from the Alfa Romeo 156 are often chosen on the basis that their pleating appears period correct and they offer significantly more support than the originals. You'll be looking at around £50 for a pair of 156 front seats, plus the cost of whatever dye you use to make them match. With that in mind though, the standard seats are perfectly comfortable for most people.

Regular running costs won't be too bad and mechanical parts are available, due in no small part to the similarity of the engine with the TR6 and running gear with the Stag. In calculating our figures, we're basing them on a 2500TC. It's wise to change the oil and filter every 3000 miles, and give it a full service every year. NGK BP5ES plugs will cost from around £2-£3 each, and the 2500 takes six of them – BP6ES for a 2.5PI. There can be access issues with the standard oil bath filter, so a spin on conversion at £65 makes sense from Rimmer Bros, with a further £5 for a filter. Standard oil filters are £4.20, and one can of oil should be sufficient unless you're refilling a dry engine. £12 buys a late spec air filter, though earlier cars need two at around £29 each from Rimmer Bros. These cars all need converting to unleaded fuel, though chances are most survivors will have been done within the last two decades. We'd still use an additive to offset the effects of ethanol in fuel.

Dave Harvey, Technical Secretary of the Triumph 2000/2500/2.5 Register, has over 40 years of experience of the saloons. He told us: 'If you are thinking of buying one of these cars, join the Register – most really genuine cars sell before they're advertised, or sell within the club. Bodily, the three-piece sills are important, and the overall condition of the body structure rather than panels. Most panel work can be replaced with repair sections, and while new old stock panels are available, they're rare and expensive.

'Mechanical points to be aware of are that any play in the rear wheel bearings needs to be dealt with, as the stub axle can break and you can lose a wheel. Bearing replacement isn't a DIY proposition, tie bars can break where they join the track control arm (but uprated versions are available), and the quill shaft housings on the diffs can break – this will lock your rear wheels into the arches and leave you skidding. I'd personally stick to the Lucas pump on any PI car, as modern Bosch parts aren't as good as they used to be and the Lucas item is repairable at the side of the road if needed. The metering unit needs 106psi of fuel pressure if the system is to run properly. Pre-1967 main and big end bearings can be hard to find, so keep watch on eBay if you have one. Finally, remember that PI cars have a different fuel tank, and that estate boot floors can be repaired using Stag repair panels.'

For a 2500TC covering 6000 miles per year, the cost breakdown is therefore in the region of £30 for a service, approximately £1250 in fuel and £60 in additives, £40 in oil changes, and £79.08 for insurance – a total of £1459.08. ■



Family ties to the Stag and Dolomite are clear on the inside, but with acres of added space.

"DESPITE BEING LARGE AND SPACIOUS, THESE EXECUTIVE SALOONS ARE ALSO SUITABLY SPORTING TO DRIVE"

The only downside of running a big Triumph saloon is fuel economy that can hang stubbornly in the low 20s.

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It could almost be a scene from a long-forgotten sitcom – two sales reps hold a meeting in a transport café over a breakfast of Nescafe and Rothmans, as their company Triumph Acclaim and Nissan Cherry Europe wait in the car park. But in addition to possessing more 1980s charm than a cassette of That's What I Call Music 5, these very exclusive classics represent the dawn of Euro-Japanese car manufacture.

By 1975, sales of Datsun, Mazda, Toyota and Honda had such an impact on the British car market that the Society of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers and Traders negotiated a 'voluntary restraint' of imports. Some firms attempted to circumvent this agreement by selling models that were assembled in Australia – does anyone recall the Lonsdale, an Australian-built Mitsubishi Sigma? Other companies realised the wisdom of a partnership, and on the 9th October of 1980, Nissan signed a deal with Alfa Romeo.

Turin needed a successor for the Alfasud – the 33 was seen as too large – and the new model was to be based on the forthcoming N12-series Cherry/Pulsar, with 50% of production for the home market and 50% for export to European countries. Alfa's Vice President Corrado Innocenti stated that their Pratola Serra plant in

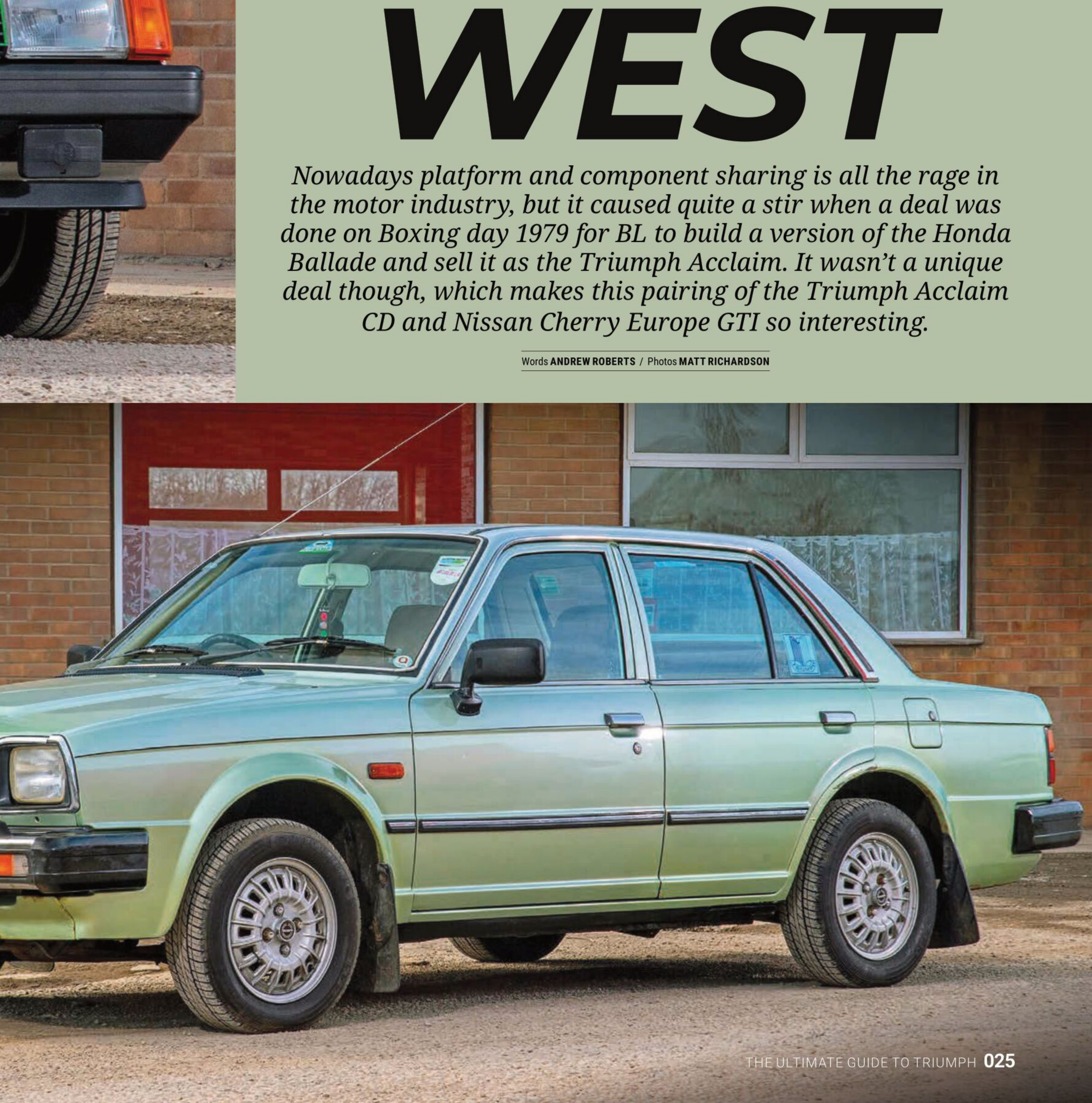
the south of Italy would 'produce 60,000 cars in Italy with Alfa Romeo power trains and Nissan bodies. The agreement lasts for 10 years. Now there are only plans for one model, but other jointly designed cars will follow. Ten years is a long time.' The body panels and the rear suspension were Nissan Cherry, but power was from an array of Alfasud flat-four engines.

The Alfa Romeo Arna – Alfa Romeo Nissan Autoveicoli – made its bow at the 1983 Frankfurt Motor Show, but the first UK imports were in the form of the Nissan Cherry Europe. (Alfa's British commissaries believed that it would be too downmarket for their traditional customer base.) The car that was 'a blend of good things in motoring' was launched in a decidedly low-key fashion, with barely any fanfare. →

EAST MEETS WEST

Nowadays platform and component sharing is all the rage in the motor industry, but it caused quite a stir when a deal was done on Boxing day 1979 for BL to build a version of the Honda Ballade and sell it as the Triumph Acclaim. It wasn't a unique deal though, which makes this pairing of the Triumph Acclaim CD and Nissan Cherry Europe GTI so interesting.

Words **ANDREW ROBERTS** / Photos **MATT RICHARDSON**



The Japanese-Italian hybrid might have had better success if it had worn Alfa badges from the start.

Luris interior standard for the Cherry Europe GTi.

Identical to the Arna in all but badging - this car has worn both sets.

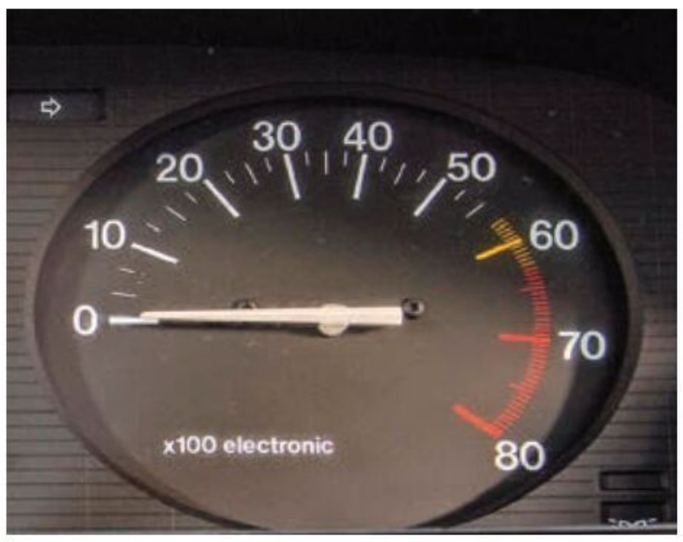
The Cherry was available in just two guises – the entry-level 1.2-litre and the 1.5-litre GTI. In the first three full months of sales (September-November 1983) the figures were actually rather good. I suspect Nissan buyers saw it as something a little bit exciting among a range that was rather plain, turbo models aside. Sales dwindled very quickly in 1984 though, dropping from 819 for February to only 59 in May. There were only so many Nissan buyers willing to chance an Italian made car, I guess! Meanwhile, the company seemed worried that the Italian-built model lacked the quality of its Japanese counterparts. This was a wholly justifiable concern, given that the Cherry Europe was fitted with Alfasud electrics, a set-up that was never renowned for its reliability.

A further problem facing Nissan was the GTi's ill-defined image. Despite its faintly dramatic spoilers and eye-catching black and green upholstery, the Nissan was never going to attract the archetypal Ford Escort XR3i or Vauxhall Astra GTE owner. Nor was a Cherry Europe likely to tempt the sort of Alfasud driver who said 'Ciao!' (in a Southampton accent) when leaving the Berni Inn, despite 'the romantic legend of the Alfa Romeo name under the bonnet.' Yet, the top-of-the-range model did not lack for appeal, as the list of standard fittings was generous – front fog lamps, alloy wheels and a sports steering wheel – and a top speed of 112mph was quite respectable by the standards of the early 1980s.

"THE CHERRY WOULDN'T TEMPT THE SORT OF ALFASUD DRIVER WHO SAID "CIAO!" (IN A SOUTHAMPTON ACCENT) WHILE LEAVING A BERNI INN"

By 1985 the Cherry Europe was succeeded by the British-market Alfa Romeo Arna, a car that was to commercial success what Howard's Way was to TV drama. Production ceased in 1987, and the survival rate of both the Italian and Japanese versions is now very limited. Eddie Rattley, owner of our feature car today, believes there are eight know RHD cars – three Arnas and five Europes. He came by the silver Nissan in February 2014 and says: 'The GTI matches up to other 1980s hot hatches rather well aesthetically, both inside and out. It's a car that feels faster than it is, and driven enthusiastically, it's great fun. It's a bit numb at low speed in an urban setting, especially when it's cold (the car, not the weather). Under those circumstances, you have slightly heavy steering that doesn't self-centre properly and a clumsy gear change, but once it's warmed up and out on the open road, it comes alive. The Europe GTI starts to excel at speeds where a Japanese N12 Cherry's handling is beginning to get a little alarming.'

Compared with B660 LCH, Harry Seager's Acclaim is not quite such an unusual sight, but it is certainly becoming rare as only 16 of the CD are believed to be on the road. It is also a vehicle of considerable nostalgia for those →



The Nissan Cherry Europe's interior showed sporting intent from its association with Alfa Romeo, in direct contrast to Triumph's Acclaim.

The Alfa Romeo presence was certainly apparent under the bonnet, and performance was good.

Italian wheels give the game away.

of us of a certain age, as the Triumph made its bow on the 7th October 1981, a time of three-channel television and Madness discs. Its origins date from Boxing Day of 1979 when Michael Edwards signed an agreement with Kyoshi Kawashima, the president of Honda, resulting in Project Bounty. At that time the Dolomite was much overdue for replacement and a Cowley-built interpretation of the Ballade, which was essentially a Civic saloon, was deemed to fit the bill.

The challenges in marketing the Acclaim to the great British public should not be underestimated. The very early 1980s was an era when the appearance of 'one of those Japanese cars' on a neighbour's driveway was the cue for a certain degree of muttering. BL promised 'sheer driving pleasure,' but certain cynics grumbled about its similarity to the current Honda line-up. The differences were that that 1335cc engine was fitted with twin Keihin carburettors, and the suspension was slightly modified. The interior reflected BL's input, to ensure that the décor would have greater appeal to a British motorist – in other words it would not automatically remind them of a Honda.

The Ballade was not marketed in the UK, affording greater opportunity for the Acclaim to make an impression, and the debut of the car that was 'totally equipped to Triumph' proved well-timed. When British Leyland embarked on their major recovery programme, they aimed to introduce one major new car per year, but after the launch of the Metro in 1980 there was a considerable gap in the schedule. The Maestro would not be ready until 1983, but with the Acclaim BL had an attractive, lightweight saloon for fleet and private buyers alike that would augment the now very dated Austin Allegro and Morris Ital.

In the words of a November 1981 Motor Sport feature: 'If BL salesmen can persuade customers to try the car and BL can combine the undoubted charm of this small car with the quality of the Japanese built products which are flowing into the country, they are on to a winner.' And it appears they were, because by the time of its first full sales month, the Acclaim was already occupying fifth position in the national sales figures. When Autocar tested an HL in October of that year, they concluded: 'The Triumph Acclaim is a good replacement for the ageing Dolomite. It is fast, economical, and should prove very reliable.' Car magazine evaluated an HLS early in the following year and thought that a potential buyer would 'love the light controls and the slick gearchange.' The Triumph also featured on Top Gear, when the programme was still associated with sensible sports jackets, neatly pressed slacks and a certain amount of bumper Woollarding.

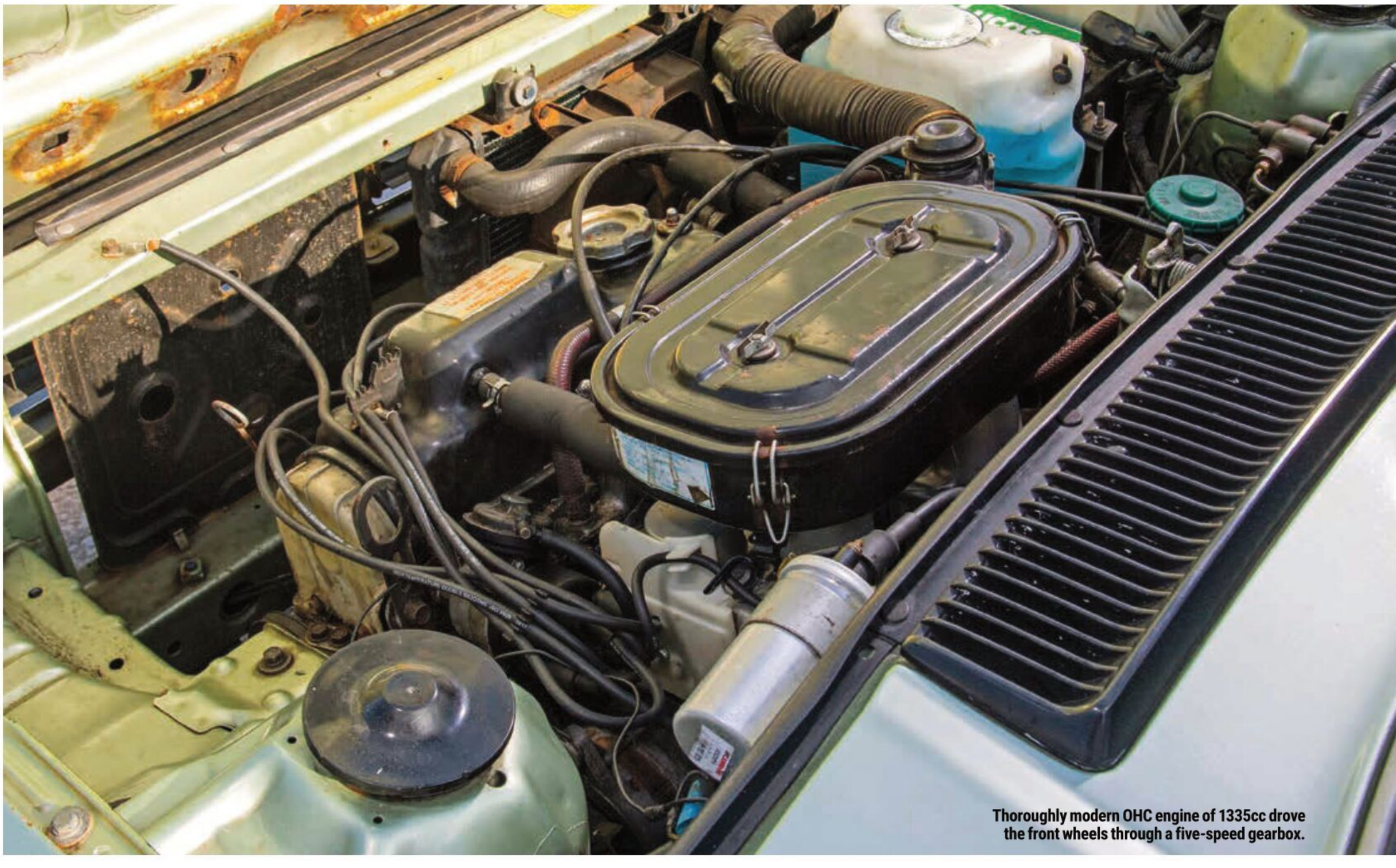
The Triumph probably appealed less to

former Dolomite 1850HL and Sprint owners (who were probably now considering their first BMW 320) and more to former 1300, 1500 and 1500HL drivers. There was a choice of HL, HLS and CD trim levels, though BL proclaimed that every model came with a push-button radio, rev counter, digital clock, servo-assisted brakes and a five-speed gearbox. 1983 marked the facelifted Phase 2 and Harry says of his Acclaim: 'It features the non-analogue digital clock, flat door handles and the restyled heater control. The Phase 1 had a lovely clock with rotating numbers, like a 1980s Tricity Bendix Cooker!'

When Acclaim production ended in 1984 after 133,625 units, it marked the end of the Triumph marque. The new Rover 200 was the car for would-be yuppie and Hyacinth Buckets alike, and numbers of surviving Triumphs had rapidly diminished by the following decade. Harry came by his CD in March 2016, and aside from his appreciation of 1980s design he enjoys its looks (on the front end at least), the fact that it is a usable classic, plus the fact that a friend had one many years ago which he liked.

Harry rates his car very highly for its reliability, ease of driving, looks and feel, saying that it handles absolutely brilliantly and has a brilliant gearchange. 'They're very nippy cars,' he continues. 'Often you'll be driving along and a modern jelly mould will see an old car, →

The Acclaim's styling was distinctly Japanese, but that did not hinder sales and it has aged well.


Thoroughly modern OHC engine of 1335cc drove the front wheels through a five-speed gearbox.

attempt to overtake (travelling at the speed limit) and be forced to abort. People travelling at 50mph on a motorway in a brand new BMW often look appalled when the Acclaim passes them! The Acclaim's vices mainly relate to rust – sadly the welding man gets a fair wedge every year – parts availability and the complex Japanese carbs. But what are such issues compared with the coin holder that comes in handy at toll booths and headlamp washers that provide a spray much like a shower and cover everything in their path, leaving a sickly sweet, glycol smell?' It really is a matter of great regret that Harry is too young to have penned BL's sales copy.

Naturally, the Triumph turned heads throughout the day of our photoshoot, as befitting a CD – the Acclaim which gave you 'the very best of everything.' The specification included headlamp washers, tinted glass, electric windows and even a ski-hatch in the rear seat backrest. One drawback relates to the British-modified interior for, as Harry observes, because of the seats designed for a larger frame; the interior is far smaller than a Civic. In fact he describes it as 'annoyingly compact.' In short, the Acclaim was never going to be a convincing alternative to the Ford Cortina MkV or the Vauxhall Cavalier MkII as it was emphatically a conveyance for a quartet of close friends. However, it did prove an excellent alternative to the likes of the VW Jetta or the Peugeot 305.

Both of these fine vehicles are now more seldom encountered than a watchable edition of Holby City, and perhaps the main issue with the Cherry was its lack of appeal to both Nissan and Alfa Romeo customers. The UK-market brochure proclaimed: 'So now there is a choice – a Nissan Cherry made in Japan, or a Nissan Cherry made in Europe,' but rather too many customers preferred the former. Eddie reflects:

"THE ACCLAIM WAS A PIONEER OF ANGLO-JAPANESE MOTOR MANUFACTURE, AND ITS SUCCESS PAVED THE WAY FOR CARS LIKE THE NISSAN BLUEBIRD"

'The biggest failure of the model in the UK as an Arna was launching it badged as a Nissan first. Had it only arrived as an Alfa, perhaps it might have been seen to have a less confused identity. The existence of the Nissan-badged variant just reinforced the design's Japanese origins, which damaged its image with Alfa buyers before it even arrived at Alfa dealers.'

By contrast, the Acclaim not only provided a swan-song for the Triumph marque (on a car at least), it also demonstrated that thousands of consumers were less concerned with the origins of a car than its performance and durability. Many Britons with bitter experiences of their Allegro ceasing to proceed were delighted to take the wheel of a BL product that would not have them seeking refuge in their local Unipart. The Triumph Acclaim was a pioneer of Anglo-Japanese motor manufacture, and its success paved the way for not just the Rover 800 but also the Sunderland-built Nissan Bluebird. Today, it is a reminder of a time when owning a video recorder was the pinnacle of semi-detached status, just as a GTI might have fitted the bill for anyone who required a chic-looking suburban runabout to nip down to the video library.

THANKS *Eddie Rattley, Harry Seager, Everyone at Kate's Cabin Café and Truckstop of Peterborough.*

In the early 1980s a revcounter was a decidedly sporting touch.

TECH SPECS

MODEL	NISSAN CHERRY EUROPE GTI	TRIUMPH ACCLAIM CD
ENGINE	1490cc S4 OHC	1335cc S4 OHC
POWER	93bhp @ 5800rpm	70bhp @ 5750rpm
TORQUE	96.1 lb.ft. @ 4000rpm	74lb.ft. @ 3500rpm
TRANSMISSION	5-speed manual	5-speed manual
SUSPENSION	Front: Independent MacPherson struts with coil springs and telescopic dampers, Rear: Beam axle with coil springs, trailing arms and telescopic dampers	Front: Independent MacPherson struts with coil springs, telescopic dampers and anti-roll bar, Rear: Independent MacPherson struts with coil springs and telescopic damper
BRAKES	Disc/Drums	Disc/Drums
TOP SPEED	112mph	92mph
0-60MPH	10.2 secs	12.9 secs
FUEL CONSUMPTION	24.3mpg	31.8mpg
WEIGHT	850kg	821kg
LENGTH	4040mm	4095mm

Electric windows denote rare high-spec CD model.

Acclaim's saloon shape may have been a poor fit in the range, but proved one of BL's most popular models.

Inside was an abundance of plastic rather than traditional Triumph wood, but that was the way of the automotive world in the 1980s.

TR2 undeniably a product of the early 1950s. The same basic design endured to the end of TR3B production.

TR2 VS TR6

For two sports cars with very different personalities, the TR2 and TR6 have a surprising amount in common under the skin. Wayne Scott compares first and last of the separate chassis TRs.

Words **WAYNE SCOTT**

There was a specific reason why you bought a TR6 when they were launched in 1969. It was to prove you were a proper bloke, a throwback to a simpler time before the hedonism and flowery shirt wearing of 1960s had changed what it would mean to be a man forever. The TR6 captured this market because it had so much DNA in common with the TR2 that had been launched 16 years earlier in 1953.

The world had changed vastly since then, but the TR clung on to its antique separate chassis construction and raw unadulterated British grit. Autocar dubbed it 'the last of the real sportscars' and when you consider that the Ford Capri was launched at the same motor show, you quickly realise that it was in a class of its own, with nothing to compare it to except for its own ancestors.

Sitting in a TR2, you quickly get a sense of its reputation for sporting ruggedness. The car, although tiny by today's standards, feels solid and deceptively butch. The view through the tiny windscreen of the long bonnet stretching out instantly gives you that period sports car feeling. The driving position is decidedly vintage and you sit low, legs outstretched, on an incredibly deeply sprung bucket seat. Your feet find the offset pedals in the long deep footwells where the clutch pedal is almost directly in front of you.

The vintage feel is propagated further by a huge, thin rimmed steering wheel that feels like it is very close to your chest and constantly grazes your thighs. The knee room afforded to the taller driver is impressive for such a small car though, and is achieved by the void between the dash and transmission tunnel, which in the TR6 is restricted by the H frame that houses the radio console and some of the switches. This means, rather counter-intuitively, that as far as leg room goes, a TR2 is a roomier experience than the TR6 for those over six foot tall.

Taking a TR2 out on the road is a raw experience, and with the cut down doors, the road surface is ever present in your mind just a few inches from your elbow. You can run with the roof off and side-screens on to reduce the

battering you receive from the wind, but unless they fit perfectly, (and very few do,) they tend to flap at high speed and annoy you more than the wind ever did! Driving with the roof up is a particular skill in the rain as visibility is very poor in all directions and the side screens tend to obscure your side mirrors, but it is all part of the experience and you soon get the hang of where to look.

The TR2's fly-off handbrake is situated rather awkwardly under your left thigh in UK cars so hill starts are little like a game of Twister if you have long legs like me. In contrast, in the TR6 the handbrake is situated in a much more user-friendly position on the transmission tunnel, perhaps evidence that Triumph had belatedly recognised how their earlier customers had struggled.

The TR2 has a really nice, tough, notchy gearbox and if it has overdrive on top gear as many now do, then the ratios are just perfect for both a B-road blat or a longer motorway hack. There is no synchro on first gear though, so that may take some getting used to for some, but the truly impressive torque of the TR2's four-cylinder wet liner engine means that very rarely will you need first gear from anything but dead stop.

The TR2 is not a fast car by today's standards, but it doesn't need to be. The driving position and handling mean that you can have all the fun you need with the speed it delivers. Skinny, high-walled tyres act as part of the suspension by absorbing the bumps, but they also absorb the steering inputs quite nicely too and it's easy to get the tail into a gentle slide on a wet roundabout, but it will all happen so slowly that you can sit back and correct it when you're ready – it's a wonderful feeling.

That said, even in standard fettle, a TR2 will happily blast down the outside lane of the motorway with the modern cars – an indication to how quick it must have felt back in 1953. You will, however, want to leave plenty of room between you and the cars in front, as the TR2 has drum brakes all-round and these leave a lot to be desired in modern traffic. The good news is that if you intend to use your TR2 over long distances, later TR3 disc brakes can be fitted as a relatively simple conversion that is well worth considering. Also, later type Girling rear axles with more robust halfshafts are another common upgrade for good reason, as early TR2s running Lockheed axles are renowned weak point for breaking halfshafts.

Controversially, many TR2s now appear on the market having been restored with a rack and pinion steering upgrade. I have to honestly say that I don't see the point. A well maintained or reconditioned steering box gives perfectly good steering, albeit quite heavy. To me, the sad loss of the genuine feel of period steering coupled with the loss of the lovely, quirky steering wheel mounted indicator switch which is removed when converted far outweighs any benefits.

A lot is made of the rarity and desirability of 'long-door' early TR2s, but they were discontinued after the first 4000 cars for good reason. Buy one of these and you'll be →

"THE WORLD HAD CHANGED VASTLY SINCE 1953, BUT THE TR CLUNG TO ITS ANTIQUE SEPARATE CHASSIS CONSTRUCTION AND RAW BRITISH GRIT"

TR6 a clever facelift of the outgoing TR5, itself a re-engineered TR4.


TR2 lacked such niceties as winding windows and even door handles.


Lots of vinyl and leather inside an early TR, but little else.


Four cylinder engine derived from that of the Standard Vanguard saloon.

“FOR THE 1960S THE TR RANGE WAS GIVEN A MAJOR FACELIFT INSIDE AND OUT WHEN ITALIAN DESIGNER GIOVANNI MICHELOTTI WAS BROUGHT IN TO DESIGN THE MORE REFINED TR4”

forever looking for places to park away from kerbs to save you the embarrassment of either scuffing your door or worse still not being able to exit the car at all, so bear that in mind when looking at one.

Of course, for the 1960s the TR range was given a major facelift both inside and out when Italian designer Giovanni Michelotti was brought in to design the more refined TR4. Those styling cues found their way right through to the TR6 by the clever design work from Karmann in Osnabrück, Germany who had a TR4A to work from when designing the new model for 1969. Clever, because although it looks drastically different at first glance, only really the front and rear elevations were changed when turning the TR5 into the TR6.

It is safe to say that the TR6 feels instantly more refined than the TR2. The wood veneered dash has an ergonomic look that suggests it was designed rather than assembled. Face level ventilation, a heater and demister plus wind up windows that meet a hood which is easy to erect and collapse make you realise that we are two decades further into the TR story.

The gearbox feels just like the TR2 though, although synchromesh has appeared on first and now we have overdrive on 3rd and 4th (and on earlier cars 2nd gear as well). It is worth noting though that this was an optional extra until 1974 and so not all TR6 will be so equipped. Gone is the push button starter of the TR2 to be replaced with an integral key ignition switch, in the dash on earlier cars or between your legs on later ones.

However, the real difference other than the obvious aesthetics grabs your senses when you turn that key. We are in six-cylinder territory now and quite different from the rasping four-cylinder in the TR2. The TR6 engine revs easily and smoothly and has a bark and howl that only a six-cylinder Triumph engine owner can experience – it’s glorious. Out on the road, the standard rack and pinion steering is direct and precise with plenty of feel. The bonnet tapers away from you leaving your eyes trained on the road, but those familiar offset pedals and deep footwells remain.

Whereas the TR2 hopped and skipped over every bump with its solid live axle on leaf →

springs, the independent rear suspension of the TR6 gives it totally different characteristics on the road, and when you accelerate it squats down with a purposeful stance. The TR6 couples Lucas fuel injection to that glorious 2.5-litre straight six, and when working on song delivers punchy performance and instant throttle response. Triumph fans will know of the PI's reputation, but to be fair most of the legacy issues are now easily sorted, and with upgrade kits to replace the Lucas pump (which was known for overheating in the boot) with a Bosch replacement, it should prove reliable in modern times. Occasionally TR6s suffer from sticky or blocked injectors. Metering units can struggle with modern fuel formulations too, but there is plenty of advice and replacements from the car clubs and specialist dealers alike to deal with that if it presents an issue.

"EARLY TR6S WERE MORE POWERFUL AT 150BHP, LATER DETUNED TO 125BHP. IN REALITY THOUGH, THE DIFFERENCE IS BARELY NOTICEABLE"

Earlier TR6s were more powerful at 150bhp, later detuned to 125bhp. In reality though and bearing in mind that the methods used to calculate power output changed during that period, the difference on a day to day basis is barely noticeable.

All the TR range have the same rules when buying, and that is to check for regular maintenance and be wary of bad resprays or cheap restorations that might be hiding underlying conditions. On all TRs, inspect the chassis for corrosion or accident damage, especially the suspension mounting points and in particular the area behind the front wishbones. On the TR6, check the rear trailing arm mounting points for the independent rear suspension and also the area that mounts the differential as they are prone to corrosion and breakage and can be a costly repair. Check the sills, wings (the front ones conceal a drainage channel), floors, spare wheel well, A-posts, bulkhead, area underneath master cylinders for brake and clutch and the battery tray for corrosion and pay attention to where body panels meet the chassis.

In conclusion, the TR2 is a TR that you would buy to live and breathe the 1950s and do so with a massive smile on your face, to experience sports car motoring in its raw form. Although challenging to drive at first, once mastered it gives the driver a satisfying heroic feeling of being at one with a quite basic and uncomplicated machine. The TR6 by comparison, still has that underlying raucousness in spades, but with some of the refinements that make it the perfect choice if you are looking for a TR to use in all weathers, over long distances or for touring and holidays. It is more comfortable, disc brakes up front as standard mean it stops brilliantly and all-synchromesh overdrive gearboxes give it great flexibility. The six-cylinder engine, even in standard guise, is beefy enough to deliver sports car performance on modern roads effortlessly, and you will never grow tired of that six-cylinder howl.

As for prices, these are always up for debate but a half decent TR2 project that is complete and running will set you back £9000, while a really nice one will top £30,000. The equivalent TR6s can be found for £6000 and £25,000, but my advice would be to re-mortgage and buy both!

Fuel-injected six offered up to 150bhp.

Karmann squared off Michelotti's work to create the final separate chassis TR.

Thoroughly 1970s - and a successful facelift.

Wood, a folding hood and winding windows made the TR6 a far more civilised environment.

Stainless steel hub caps were fitted to early Stags. Note the lack of pinstriping.

EARLY STAG VS LATE STAG

The Stag did not change drastically during its seven-year production run, but there are options to consider when comparing early and late cars. Peter Robinson is your guide with an unavoidably cavalier attitude to the concept of first vs last.

Words **PETER ROBINSON**

The facts about the changes that Triumph made to Stag are very simple: the Stag commenced being built for public consumption on 13th March 1970 and finished on 29th June 1977. During that time it basically remained the same: the first car had that sleek Michelotti body styling with the 2+2 seat arrangement and T-bar and was powered by the unique Triumph-designed 3.0-litre V8 engine, while the last car had that same sleek Michelotti body styling, with 2 + 2 seat arrangement and T-bar and was powered by the unique 3.0-litre V8 engine.

You could perhaps argue that it therefore does not fit easily within a series of articles on 'first and last.' Of course, one could say that the last car had a double pin-stripe down each side, aluminium sill covers and five spoke alloy wheels whereas the first car was plain sided, plain silled and had steel wheels with cheaper stainless steel wheel covers, but are these really important changes when it comes to deciding whether an early car or a later car would suit you best ? Today it has become difficult to tell early cars from later cars anyway as many early cars have already been updated with pin-stripes, sill covers and alloy wheels because they were

simple and cheap to add to a car during the late 1970s and 1980s when it mattered that you were seen to have the latest version available.

Still, while Triumph did little to change the original design idea that Michelotti came up with in 1965 and which was tweaked and laid down in Engineering at Canley during 1966/67, it can still be interesting to see what small changes were made, if only to lay certain misconceptions to rest. It is also true that there are some crucial differences between outwardly similar Stags even if these are not necessarily age-related, so please do bear with me if I stretch the bounds of the feature brief slightly.

Perhaps the first point to make is that a

"TRIUMPH DID LITTLE TO CHANGE THE ORIGINAL DESIGN IDEA THAT MICHELOTTI CAME UP WITH, WHICH WAS LAID DOWN IN IN CANLEY DURING 1966/1967"

Stag was always a Stag and all the literature on the car proclaimed that. It wasn't until the enthusiasts came along after production had ceased and needed something to distinguish between those cars with pin-stripes and those cars without pin-stripes that the term Mk2 came about. Technically, a Mk2 car is one with a commission number after LD20000, which is when the pin-stripes were applied and which corresponds to a production date in October 1972 and a first registration date in January 1973. And to be fair, a number of other small changes were made at the same time – the seat backs were changed so that an optional headrest could be incorporated, the interior light was moved from the B-posts to the underside of the T-bar, the instruments were slightly altered so that the indicating needles pointed upwards instead of down and the sills and tail panels were painted black instead of being body colour.

But are these changes really important? Perhaps the remodelled combustion chambers in the cylinder heads and the associated dome topped pistons, a combination which increased the compression ratio after commission number LD20000, could be said to be a more important change at that time, but with a reported maximum power improvement from 145bhp to 146bhp, was that really something worthy of claim for a model change? Anyway, Triumph continually altered little things like this – the air filter box was altered during late 1971, the soft top material was changed and the corner window was deleted at the end of 1972, the aforementioned sill covers were added in 1976, at different times the carpet material was changed, the 11 ACR alternator was replaced by the 18 ACR, the radiator and cooling system was altered, Sundym glass replaced laminated glass and so on. I don't propose to list every detail here because it would become boring, and it can be fully investigated anyway through a copy of the parts catalogue which is still available from your local Triumph specialist, and through James Taylor's wonderful book Original Triumph Stag which is sadly no longer in print, but available on E-bay at rather impressive prices. However, unless you are going for concours it is almost superfluous today as so many cars have been restored, the interiors have been changed and the restoring owners have incorporated their own best-liked fitments under the bonnet.

So, is there anything which matters →

Most people expect a Stag to look like this.

Early hood has quarter windows, deleted for 1973.

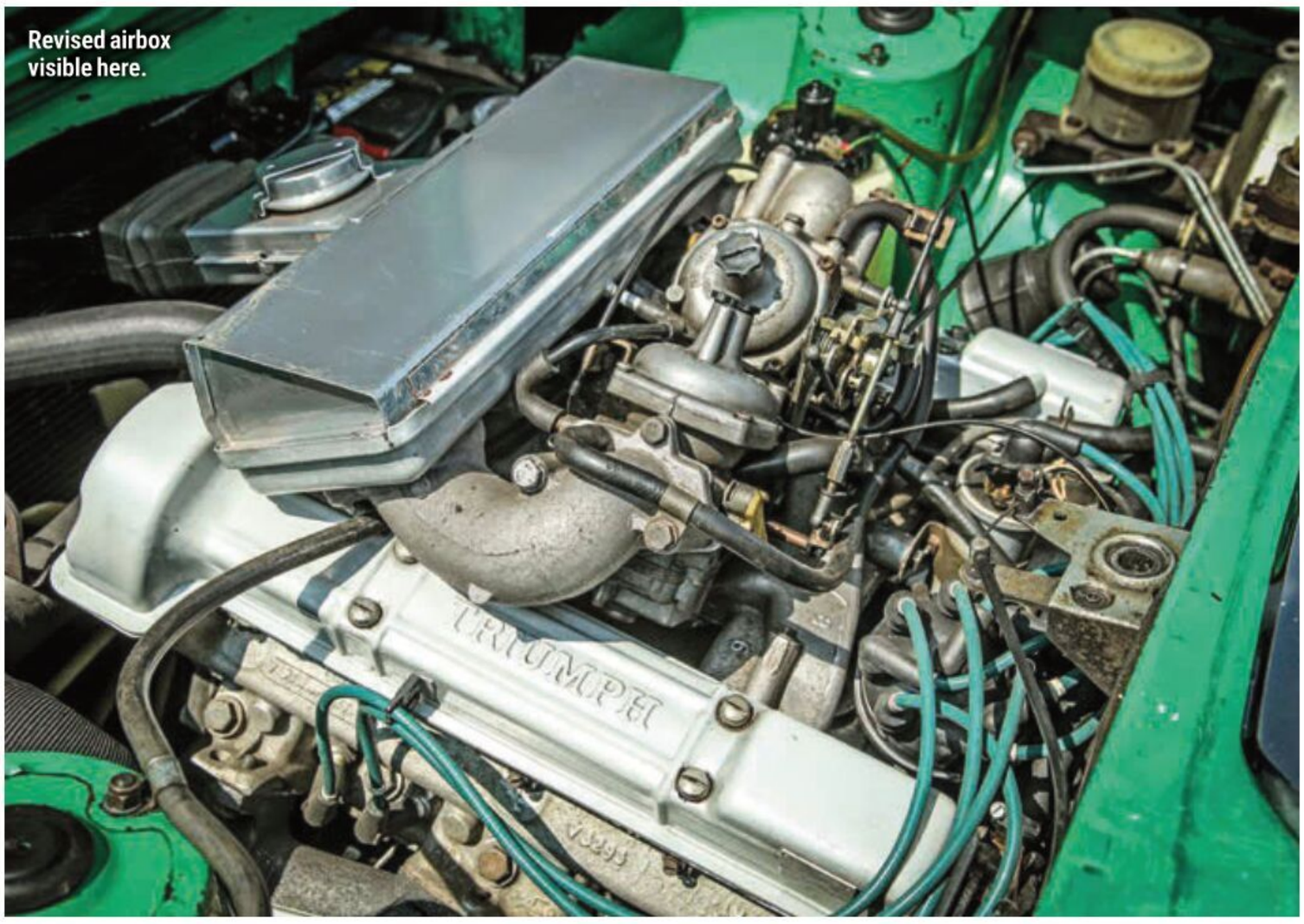
Early twin-trumpet airbox differs from that fitted to late examples.

when thinking about which Stag is the most desirable? In terms of what Triumph did, the short answer is no, not really. Overdrive is a definite improvement over the standard four-speed gearbox (fitted as an option from the beginning and as standard from 1973), with the J-type overdrive introduced in 1973 being mostly preferred to the original A-type. Rumour has always had it that most Stags were automatic, but this is not true. The auto/manual split is approximately 50:50, and many owners out there rate the later BW65 fitted from mid 1976 over the originally fitted BW35, but the difference is marginal when considering the foibles of a car with 70,000 or so miles on the clock.

Of course, there is a difference between driving an automatic car and a manual car but that is mainly personal choice. The automatic is apparently more sedate, taking a reported 1.4 seconds more to reach 60mph than a well-driven manual car, but the kick in the back that results from using kickdown on the automatic always made our children shout for 'More Daddy, do it again!' It rather depends on your requirements in life.

If Triumph were rather sluggish in evolving Stag, what could they have done in the seven year production run that would have made a real difference? When looking at what the opposition were providing, the lack of four-wheel disc brakes rather stands out. Stag wasn't backward in this department as it stops quite well and plenty of other cars still used the rear drum arrangement, but discs all round would have been a good selling point for Triumph's most powerful car. A four-speed automatic gearbox instead of the standard three-speed would have given the car longer legs for

Early Stag features a larger steering wheel, and map light in the glovebox lid.



“THE AUTOMATIC IS APPARENTLY MORE SEDATE, TAKING A REPORTED 1.4 SECONDS MORE TO REACH 60MPH, BUT USING KICKDOWN IN THE AUTO OFFERS A KICK IN THE BACK.”

the touring trips which its own advertising promoted so heavily.

For the manual gearbox fans, perhaps an LT77 five-speed unit as seen in the later TR7s and the TR8s would have been a natural progression, bearing in mind that it was designed by Triumph engineers. Leather upholstered seats would have been an improvement on the Ambla perforated vinyl – can anyone resist the smell of real leather in a car? – and perhaps a more classy dashboard featuring birds eye maple or polished burr walnut would have given the cabin a lift. Perhaps CV joints instead of UJs in the rear halfshafts would have made for a better driving experience. However, these ideas have all been adopted by owners since production ended in 1977 and anyone who isn’t biased towards the need for originality would be hard pressed to say that they are not improvements and that Triumph, given charge of its own agenda, wouldn’t have incorporated these into the next generation Stag.

And then there is the rather more controversial debate around changes the factory could have made under the bonnet. The PE166 2.6 engine which was developed by Triumph was not powerful enough for the Stag, but Canley could have fitted the GM/ →

Late examples featured stripes and aluminium sill covers.

Smaller late steering wheel shared with the Dolomite. Note the missing map light.

Rover 3.5-litre V8 engine which had a definite potential for greater power. But was that ever a serious option when there was such rivalry between Rover and Triumph at the time, and when the supply of engines was an unknown due to the requirements of the impending Rover SD1? Certainly one car was altered in this way straight off the production line by Engineering at Canley, but not until 1977 and whatever the purpose of this late intervention, nothing came of it. Today, perhaps there is some merit in the idea of dropping a 3.9 Efi engine into the Stag, but then the car wouldn't really be a true Stag. Admirably valid as a desirable car, but not a true Stag in my opinion. [Your thoughts are welome on that one! – Ed]

Perhaps Triumph could have investigated (for the third time) fuel injection for their V8. They had failed to make the Lucas system work satisfactorily in 1968/69 and they had failed to get the desired effects out of a Bosch system when trying to deal with the impending tightening of the USA emission regulations in 1970. However, Triumph had started the fuel injection game in the UK when they brought out the 2.5PI in 1969, and by the mid1970 there was a lot more experience to call upon, so why not have another go and add 40 or so bhp to the top line? Enthusiasts have shown that it is possible, so Canley should have been able to make a good fist of it if the decision had been taken to bring out the next generation Stag.

What about the other under bonnet bits? Bearing in mind the reputation of Stag for spending too much of its time in the red part of the temperature gauge, what might Triumph have done to change things? This may be contentious but was there a real problem with the engineering? The engineers didn't seem to think so and there are many cars which do not have any overheating issues – including an Australian car which is still going strong after 300,000 miles with just one rebuild.

We now know of the problems which poor quality control led to in the 1970s and core sand left in castings is guaranteed to scour out the engine internals and cause both low oil pressure and overheating. However, and especially over the last ten years, many owners have resorted to belt and braces prevention with both a high level header tank to keep the water level above that of the pump located in the vee, and an externally mounted electric water pump with a higher capacity than that of the standard jackshaft-driven unit. It is doubtful whether the Triumph engineers would have made these changes, but driving conditions in the 21st Century are rather different to those of 1970 and the engines are all 40 years and a few thousand miles older, so perhaps these supports to the cooling system are justifiable.

Whatever the factory could or would have contemplated if the order had come through to update Stag, you can be sure that enthusiasts have now been there and done it. The Stag is not a rare classic and there are between 8000 and 10,000 examples left in the UK. Because of this there has been plenty of room for both originality to be observed and for radical alterations to have been made – many of these radical alterations having been the subject of previous Triumph World articles over the years. Few cars have remained absolutely original and the market does not seem to recognise originality as a driver to value. Perhaps originality is a factor when looking at the £30,000-£40,000 level Stag,s but with cars in need of some TLC changing hands at between £2000 and £4000 and condition 1 cars being offered at anything between £15,000 and £25,000, there is plenty of scope for all well-engineered modifications to be appreciated and valued accordingly by both buyer and seller. ■

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Early Spitfire had near-Italianite beauty.

SPITFIRE 4 VS SPITFIRE 1500

The first Spitfire was somewhat confusingly called the Spitfire 4, though most people refer to it today as the MkI. The 1500 was the last of the line and would logically have been called the MkV, but Triumph were keen to draw attention to its bigger 1493cc engine. That and the other changes wrought along the way from I to 1500 make the two cars very different in character

Words **IAIN AYRE**

The Triumphisti leaning on the bar in the pub will usually tell you that the MkIII Spitfire 1300 is the best of the bunch, and they're right. While at college, I owned a MkIII for a while, and it did very well. In those halcyon days of the last century, there was free university tuition and even a small grant for students, and I worked Saturdays and holidays at a tyre shop. That generated enough spending money to run a car, particularly one that offered 30+mpg and cheap spares. Naturally it would be a Triumph, and while I didn't have the luxury of choosing a particular period of Spit, the example that showed up for the right price was a MkIII. The college was out in the Buckinghamshire countryside, and frosty winter morning drives with the heater on and the roof down are a pleasant memory.

There's still plenty to be said for other varieties of the Spitfire, though. All the Spitfire models are pretty, pleasant and easy to drive, cheap to buy and run, convertible, and earlier ones will soon be appreciating if looked

after. What's not to like, as Americans would ungrammatically but enthusiastically opine?

The Spitfire evolved into two main flavours which are quite different, and you should check out both of them before choosing. There are the earlier cars, and the 1500s. The earlier cars are sportier, with revvy engines that enjoy the occasional Italian tune-up, and the later 1500s are cruisers, with better torque, but their engines can break if revved too hard. The later Spitfire versions are also heavier and comfier, but less lithe. Sample both types and choose your flavour.

The story starts in 1962, with Giovanni Michelotti's very pretty sports body on a shortened Triumph Herald chassis and mechanicals with an extra carb. It's conceptually slightly different from the Herald/Vitesse family, as the Spitfire sills are structural and need to be solid, while on the saloons the sills are merely decorative.

The MkI Spitfire weighs 1568lbs, so with its 1147cc Herald-sourced engine, even with twin SU carbs and 63bhp/67lb.ft, it is no muscle car. That's probably just as well, because the rear suspension under the pressure of hard cornering is actively dangerous, and is as bad a design as the front double-wishbone suspension is good. The back suspension uses a single transverse rear spring, with swing axles. If you push your luck, the axle you're loading will tuck under, and the car will flip up on to one tyre sidewall. This, take it from me, will get your full attention. It's only an issue during a swerve or when driving quite hard, though. If you don't push your luck and can avoid swerving, it will behave itself no problem. There are fixes available, and from 1970 onwards the MkIV has much improved – and in fact thoroughly sorted – rear suspension geometry.

The early Spitfires seem basic now, but were posher (as well as larger and more comfortable) than contemporary MG Midgets, being equipped with fancy wind-up windows, more instruments and lockable doors. Locks are irrelevant while the soft top is fitted, but the car is lockable if it has a hardtop bolted on. It's also warmer and quieter.

The Spitfire 4 designation allowed for the possible option of a later Spitfire Six variant, but the factory never offered that – to achieve one of those (which is incidentally a fine idea) you really need to decapitate a GT6 and fit a Spit tub.

The MkII of 1965 was tweaked rather than

"THE EARLIER CARS ARE SPORTIER, WITH REVVY ENGINES THAT ENJOY ITALIAN TUNE-UPS, AND THE LATER 1500S ARE CRUISERS, WITH BETTER TORQUE"

revamped. Another 4bhp from a cheekier camshaft and exhaust, an improved clutch and better seats. Claimed mpg was 38 at 70mph, but it would take a while to get there. Overdrive and hardtops were MkII options, as were wire wheels.

The MKIII of 1967 was visibly different, with the front bumper moved upwards to the 'bone-in-the-teeth' position to comply with American regulations. This does no visual harm at all. The central instrument binnacle was treated to a dash of wood veneer, as it were, and the steering wheel was smaller with chromed wire spokes. The binnacle remained centrally positioned to cut the cost of making left →

By the following decade the Spitfire was longer, more powerful, and more refined.

“THE EARLY SPITFIRES SEEM BASIC NOW, BUT WERE POSHER, LARGER AND MORE COMFORTABLE THAN MG MIDGETS”

hand drive export cars: three-quarters of all Spitfires made were exported. Another useful new idea was the flip-back folding soft top, which avoided you getting soaked while you extracted, manipulated, assembled and secured the original kit-form soft top frame and cover.

The main MkIII bonus, however, was the new engine format, bored out to 1296cc, and providing 75bhp/75lbs.ft. This power level was compromised in US models, which got emissions gear, integrated safety head restraints and a black dashboard with the instruments moved in front of the driver.

1970 saw cosmetic and badge changes, the relocation of the ignition key and barrel to the steering column, extra interior lamps, and in some markets the twin SU carbs were replaced by a single Zenith carb. 1970 also saw the arrival of the MkIV, with a new corporate rear end resembling that of the Triumph 2000 and Stag. This cleared up the accumulated clutter of added tail lights: in 1962 it was legal to use just two red lights, making the tail quite understated and elegant, but yellow indicators and reversing lights were added over the years, and resolving the clutter helped the new simplified tail to be a much more stylistically successful update than most.

The rather clumsy earlier visible welded joints with trims along the tops of the front wings were also tidied up and smoothed out, and the front bumper was more neatly blended into the bodywork. Door handles were recessed, and the window glasses were squared off, so MkIV hardtops don’t fit earlier cars. The new hardtop was sharper and flatter than the earlier one anyway, and matched the new styling.

The MKIV’s rear suspension was de-cambered and fitted with mostly pivoting rear spring leaves, with only the bottom leaf still bolted rigidly to the differential casing. This significantly helped out the handling, and

Round tail survived until 1970, and the end of MkIII production.

Central dials and a lack of wood denote the earliest Spitfires.

Door handles were raised and changed to push-button type during MkII production.

tamed the unruly axles to a great extent. The downside to the MkIV was that while the engine block retained the capacity of 1296cc, bigger and heavier big end bearing assemblies reduced the rpm redline, with the rear end final drive ratio raised from 4.11:1 to 3.89:1 to drop cruising rpm. Emissions gear reduced the power to 63bhp, and even less for US versions. Weight was also creeping up to 1717lbs, and performance and economy suffered as a result.

Which brings us to the other end of Spitfire production, the Spitfire 1500, which represented such a significant change of character. Its 1493cc engine (which was now shared with the MG Midget incidentally) had 71bhp to power 1750lbs which was not the most awesome power-to-weight ratio, but more noticeable on the road was a torque figure that had risen to 82lb.ft at 3000rpm. Plus 100mph was again possible. Mind you, US versions got a sadly emaciated 53bhp, which is worth bearing in mind if you are considering a California import.

There were further and notably successful tweaks to the rear springs on the 1500, with a wider track and negative camber yielding impressive cornering G-numbers. Many other details were added before the end of production in 1980, mostly to the interior, meaning that the final weight was 1875lbs.

Altogether, 218,503 of the earlier Spitfires and 95,829 of the 1500s were made. The internet says there are 1800 left on the road, of which 1500 are apparently the 1500 model. That seems unlikely, as 1500s will be 40-ish years old and the rest 50-ish, and just ten years of extra rusting won't have killed 80% of the earlier cars. If the ratio were true, you would have to hunt for a good earlier car, but rarity would then make restoration more worthwhile. Restoration at home is also very amateur-accessible with Spitfires, as the separate chassis structure is a helpful bonus and parts availability and →

MkIV and 1500 Spitfire rear end drew heavily upon that of the Stag GT.

prices are very good compared to other classics.

Now seems to be a good time to buy, with many cars for sale at around the £5000 level which show no visible rust and would be worth a look. Notwithstanding what the internet says, they seem to be quite evenly split between older and newer Spitfires, so picking the period you prefer is still a practical option.

If you want to get hands-on and take on a restoration project, there are a good few offered at the £1500-£2000 level, although as fewer people tackle physical tasks these days, low bids on eBay projects and a little patience will get you a bargain. An abandoned restoration is always a good bet, as they're usually abandoned after the bulk of the money has been spent. Currently guides put the Spitfire 4 at £8500 in excellent condition, £4500 on the road but requiring some TLC and £1500 as a major project, with 1500s slightly cheaper at £7500/£3000/£1000.

Interesting options on the day we looked included a a 1964 MkI at £8000, although that had lost its original wheels and interior and had been painted brown. There were not many other MkI options though, apart from some European dealers asking eye-watering sums. The 1500s were more plentiful and consequently a little cheaper, with a near A1 example in sales red advertised at £4995 and a running project at £1995, though some exceptional dealer cars were being touted for up to £16,000. There was also one attractive-looking Spit 6 with the Vitesse engine and GT6 bonnet, on wires with overdrive, for a very reasonable £5200: at that price we don't care what year it is.

Non standard steering wheel, but the wooden dash with instruments ahead of the driver marks a late model.

Early Coupes lacked the ribbed side panels to the roof.

HERALD 948 VS 13/60

Easy to tell apart at a glance but still very obviously from the same mould, these two models from each end of the Herald production run have surprisingly distinct characters and appeal

Words **SIMON GOLDSWORTHY**

As a model progresses through its production life, it will usually develop in three ways: it will become larger, more powerful and better equipped. The Herald did not follow all of those rules because from first to last it was 153in long and 60in wide. It certainly grew more powerful though, up from an initial 34.5bhp giving a top speed of 71.5mph (saloon) and a 0-60mph sprint of 30.4 seconds to final figures of 61bhp, 85mph and 17.7 seconds. As for becoming better-equipped, I can't think of too much in the way of gadgets and gizmos that were added over the years. There were certainly some upgrades – disc brakes are one that spring to mind – but largely reflecting changing standards in the industry as a whole rather than any move upmarket.

Despite the basic similarities though, an early 948 Herald and a late 13/60 are different cars to buy and run. Let's start off with a few body basics. The 948 was launched in April 1959 as a single-carb saloon and a twin-carb coupe. By the end of that year the saloon was also offered with a twin-carb option, followed by a convertible in March 1960 (though not available on the home market until September). The only other 948 model was the Herald S, a pared-down saloon aimed at the fleet market on which luxuries such as a heater were optional.

The 948 was replaced in April 1961 by the 1200, (actually a number that was rather generously rounded up from a cubic capacity of

1147cc), which kept the same basic body styles but quickly added an estate, followed by the Courier van version in 1962. Strictly speaking the 1200 range is outside the scope of this feature, but for the sake of completeness we should say that March 1963 saw the arrival of a more powerful 12/50 saloon, while 1964 saw the end of Herald S production in January, the Courier and the coupe following suit in October.

In August 1967 the 13/60 arrived with a yet more powerful 1296cc version of the engine. This was available in saloon, convertible and estate forms only, though oddly enough the 1200 saloon continued in production alongside the new model until May 1970. The 13/60 survived for a further year before finally giving way to the new Toledo in 1971.

"THE HERALD MAY BE FAMOUS FOR HAVING A WOODEN DASH, BUT NOT ON 948 MODELS - THEY HAD A COMRESSED FIBREBOARD DASH PAINTED BLACK WITH GREY FLECKS"

As you would expect, Triumph made numerous changes to trim details over the years, but we will have to concentrate here on the bigger differences. Bodywise that means headlights in chrome surrounds at the end of horizontal wing tops and a central grille on the 948, compared with a more angular nose on the 13/60 with single headlights under a sloping bonnet line with horizontal bars between them. The early cars also had painted bumpers on the UK market, whereas later cars had white rubber covers on theirs. (These were available as an accessory on the earlier cars, though.)

Inside the two models, the differences become more obvious. The Herald may be famous for having a wooden dash, but not on 948s – they had a compressed fibreboard dash painted black with grey flecks. They also had white faced dials, wisteria trim and grey for the switchgear, steering wheel and column. However, a Veneer Capping Kit was available as an accessory, so if you find that on a car, do not immediately dismiss it as wrong. By the time the 13/60 had arrived, Triumph had long since fitted their trademark veneered wooden dash as standard, and changed to black for the fixtures, fittings and dials. On the 13/60 they also adopted T-shaped heads to the switches rather than the previous round ones, grouping these together in a recess in the centre of the dash and housing the dials in two equally-sized circular instruments ahead of the driver.

If all of this makes it appear that the only changes were cosmetic, then think again. 948 cars had the earlier Mk1 chassis, but cars built after May 1962 had a more substantial Mk2 chassis that had been developed to cope with the extra power of the Vitesse. Changes made in this redesign meant that on later Heralds there was room for an overdrive gearbox, and although this was never offered by the factory as an option, it can be of interest to owners today looking to upgrade their car for faster and/or more economical touring.

This brings us in to an interesting, if slightly subjective area of comment. Exact numbers are hard to pin down precisely, but there are only around 250 of the 948 Heralds currently registered with the DVLA as either on the road or on SORN, compared to approximately 2300 of the 13/60s (plus, incidentally, nearly 2000 of the 1200 and 12/50). This does have an impact on behaviour patterns, because the onus for →

13/60 models had a Vitesse-aping slanted nose. This is a 13/60 estate.

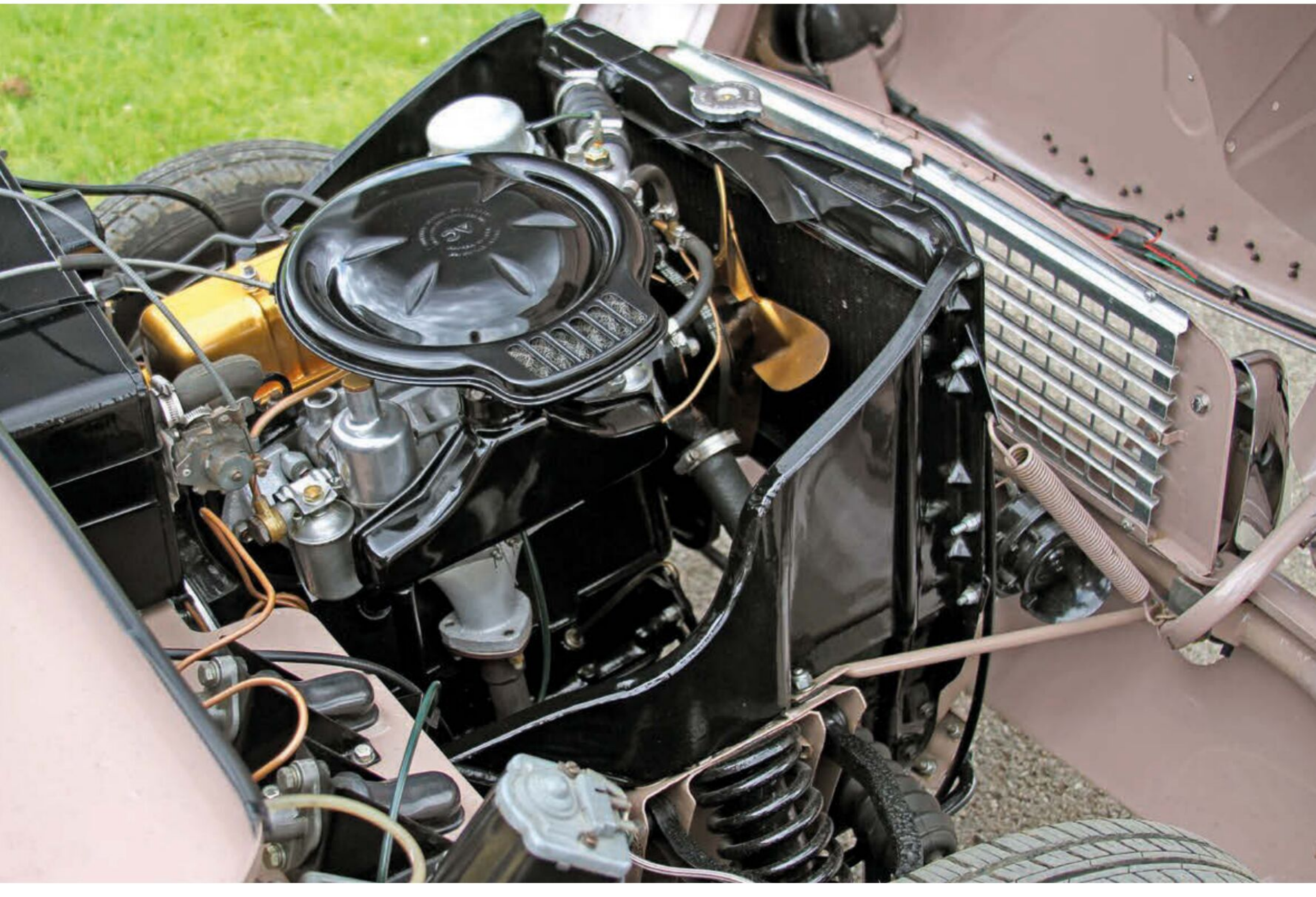
948 owners is almost invariably on preservation and originality, whereas 13/60 owners are generally much more comfortable with the idea of modifying.

This in turn can affect the way owners use their cars. We have already seen that the 948 cars are not the quickest things off the blocks, the 30.4 seconds they take to reach 60mph from rest contrasting markedly with the 17.7 seconds needed by the 13/60. However, that does not tell the whole story because around town the differences are not nearly so marked. For example, the 948 required 24.8 seconds to cover 1/4 mile from rest, while the 13/60 only whittled that down to 20.9 seconds. In part that was down to the low-geared 4.875:1 diff ratio on the early cars (or 4.55:1 on those with twin carburettors) compared to a taller 4.11:1 on the 1200 and 13/60.

The net result is that the later cars are much more relaxed and capable on longer journeys, although this is all relative and no Herald in standard trim can be considered a natural motorway cruiser. There is a similar difference in the braking department, the 948s making do with 8in drums on the front while the 13/60 got 9in discs. To be fair neither system feels brilliant by today's over-servo'd standards, but each is adequate for the power available in standard trim.

This is, however, just one more reason →

"THE SERVO ASSISTED DISC BRAKES ARE JUST ONE MORE REASON WHY A LATER CAR WOULD BE THE MORE SENSIBLE CHOICE IF YOU PLANNED TO DRIVE IT OFTEN"



Black dash is correct for 948 Heralds.

The estate also formed the basis of the Courier van.

“PROSPECTIVE BUYERS SHOULD NOTE THAT WHITE ANY HERALD IN GOOD CONDITION IS A VERY EASY CAR TO JUMP IN AND DRIVE IT WILL STILL BE A CULTURE SHOCK TO DRIVERS MORE USED TO MODERN MACHINERY”

why a later car would be the more sensible choice if you planned to drive it a lot. The thinly padded and unsupportive seats on the 948 are another, but rarity comes into it as well as the driving dynamics. Parts for the later cars are simply much easier to get hold of, whether new or secondhand. The parts supply for the earlier cars is arguably better now than it was in the past thanks to the efforts of people like Bill Davies from RareBits4ClassicCars, but they do take more searching out. And you have to be willing to do your homework first, as a lot of data out there classifies all Heralds as the same, when the early cars are different in so many minor details.

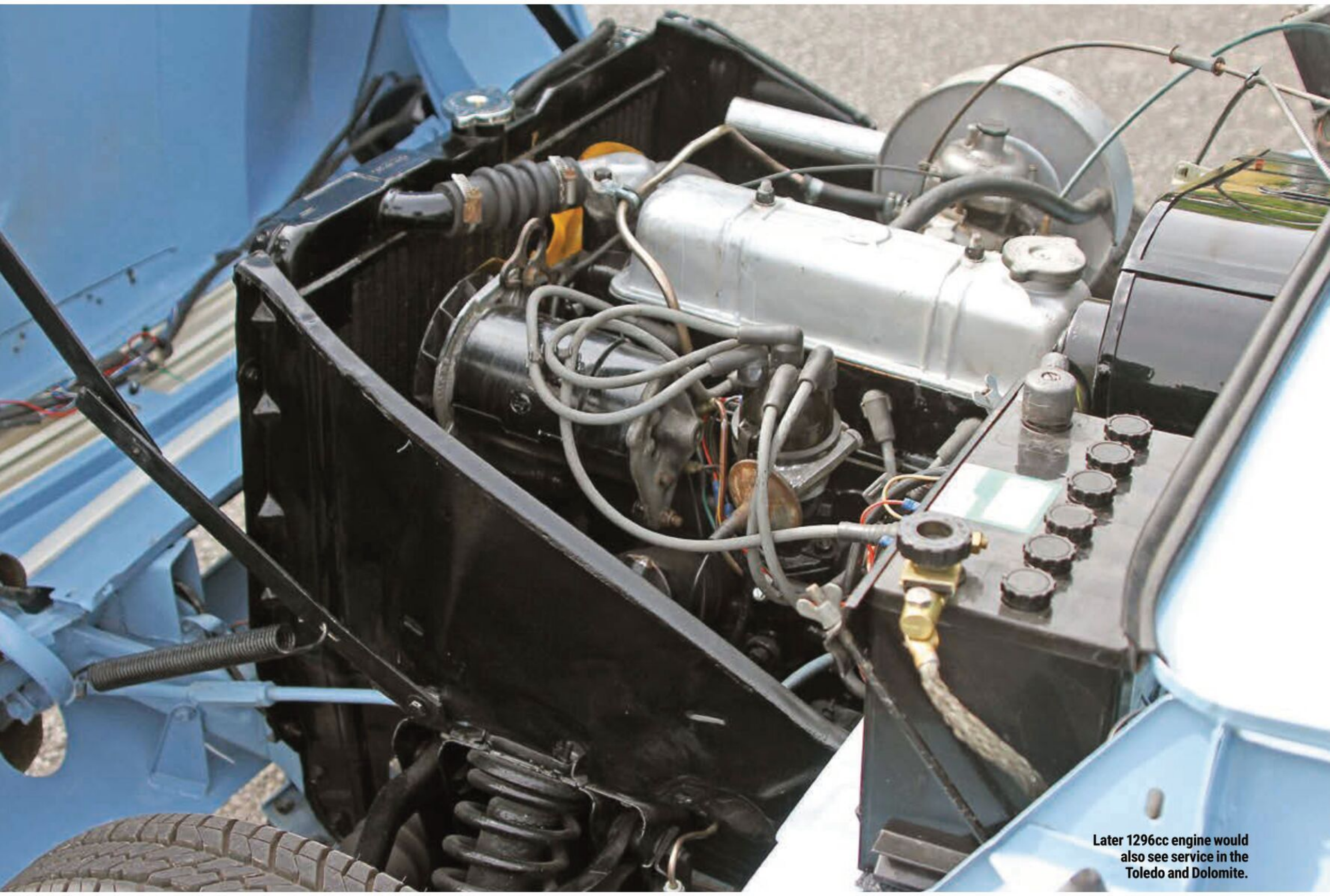
There are also practical issues that make the 13/60 a more obvious candidate for regular use. It has a full-flow oil filtration system for example, plus a more modern paper element air filter. Most of them also have a bigger fuel tank, up from the original 6.5 gallons to 8.75 gallons. On the other hand, a 948 will create more of a stir at classic car shows once people get past the initial similarity of all Herald models and start to notice the differences – the interior trim in particular places it very firmly in the 1950s whereas the 13/60 has a 1960s feel through and through.

Prospective buyers should note, however, that while any Herald in good condition is a very easy car to jump in and drive, it can still be something of a culture shock if your recent driving experience has all been based around modern machinery. That should come as no surprise given that the Herald was designed over 60 years ago, but it really is sound advice to try before you buy. Everybody will love the great visibility that makes it so easy to place the car’s extremities on the road and the incredible turning circle that makes parking such a doddle, but not everyone can come to terms with the way the pedals are offset to the right or the lack of synchromesh on first gear. People can also take some time to adjust to the slightly dead feel of the unservo’d brakes and rush out to fit an aftermarket remote servo. However, if money is limited you may be better advised to adjust your expectations and splash the money on something like an electronic ignition instead where the ultimate gains may be more worthwhile. Not everybody will feel the same way and make the same choices about this kind of thing though, so talk to plenty of other owners and canvass opinion before doing anything drastic.

One final observation when comparing the two models concerns price. Supply and demand will always combine to find their own equilibrium, and values of the two cars are broadly similar. Our sister title, Classic Car Buyer, lists prices in three categories: Condition One being first class condition but not concours, Condition Two being good condition and on the road but requiring some TLC, and Condition Three being ‘in need of work, usually major!’ Under those categories it rates a 948 saloon at £5500/£2700/£900 and a 13/60 at ££5500/£2500/£900, with convertibles naturally attracting a premium.

As always, those are only a very rough guide and placing an exact value on the early cars in particular is hampered by how few of them come onto the market. However, what I do take from those figures is that the greater usability of the later cars balances out the rarity and period novelty of the early cars. Your big problem if you have your heart set on an early car will be finding one for sale. 948s are rare on the market today, so you may be looking for some time ■

Two main dials and a wooden finish denote the later model's dash.



Later 1296cc engine would also see service in the Toledo and Dolomite.

The first 1300s were very different from the Dolomite which followed.

1300FWD VS DOLOMITE 1500

To those of us of a certain age, Ajax is a cleaning product. For Triumph, Project Ajax was a clean sheet of paper and it delivered a revolutionary new car for the firm which underwent many changes over its 15 years in production. Bruce Jones is your guide to perhaps the most complicated evolution of any Triumph offering

Words **IAIN AYRE**

The first vehicle to come out of Project Ajax was the Triumph 1300, introduced in October 1965 with the first cars being sold early in 1966. Originally touted as a replacement for the Herald – which was slightly retro with its separate chassis but had started to sell well after its update to the 1200 and so continued in production – this new small luxury saloon was intended to move the company into the next era.

For small cars, that era was moving firmly towards front-wheel drive, and so that was what Triumph designed. The 1300 was up against the likes of the Wolseley and Riley versions of the 1100/1300 range from BMC, which of course featured a Mini-style transverse engine, with the gearbox in its sump and sharing the engine's oil. The new Triumph was every bit as plush as its upmarket competitors with a new all-systems-go warning light cluster, deeply padded seats and luxury items such as an adjustable

steering column, height adjustable seats and more, but it differed markedly in terms of mechanical layout.

The majority of FWD cars featured a transverse engine, but the 1300 bucked the trend by having the engine in a north/south layout. The gearbox was mounted below and behind the engine, with the differential sitting effectively in the engine's sump. However, Triumph gave the gearbox and final drive their own lubrication system that was separate from the engine's oil. That engine was derived from the Herald's well-established OHV unit, but bored out to increase capacity to 1296cc and treated to an eight-port cylinder head developed from the ones that had been used so successfully on the Works Spitfires. This boosted power to 61bhp, later increased further in 1967 to 75bhp for the 1300TC – those letters referring to twin carburettors rather than twin cams.

The engine layout did impose some constraints on Michelotti, who was called upon to resolve the styling issues. The problem was that the powertrain was unavoidably tall, and in a small car like the 1300FWD it took real skill to provide sufficient clearance while still creating a car that looked coherent, well-balanced and stylish, not to mention bearing a recognisable family resemblance to the bigger Triumph 2000 saloons. As usual, Michelotti rose to the challenge. The monocoque bodies were built in-house at Standard-Triumph Liverpool, alongside the TR4As.

The 1300 driving position is comfortable, with good visibility and plenty of available parcel shelf space. The controls are well laid out, clear and accessible. The gear change can be slightly woolly, but with a little bit of familiarity gives a good driving experience. Suspension was all independent, giving a good comfortable ride and surprisingly high grip levels, allowing the cars to be driven quickly through corners. But while the 1300 is lively to drive, it does suffer from short gearing – overdrive was never an option, and with 60mph arriving at around 4000rpm, things can start to sound a little thrashy at speed. However, I know from personal experience that cruising at 5000rpm is feasible, and a well set up 1300 can maintain these sorts of speeds for a long time.

Unfortunately, early 1300s gained a variable reputation. In later years rust was a concern (as, in all fairness, it was for all cars of the era), but the more immediate issues concerned that bespoke transmission, with failures of CV joints and input shafts being alleged. Many owners found that certain gears became difficult to find and engage, but just for the record, my own 1966 1300 has had many years of enthusiastic driving with none of these failures.

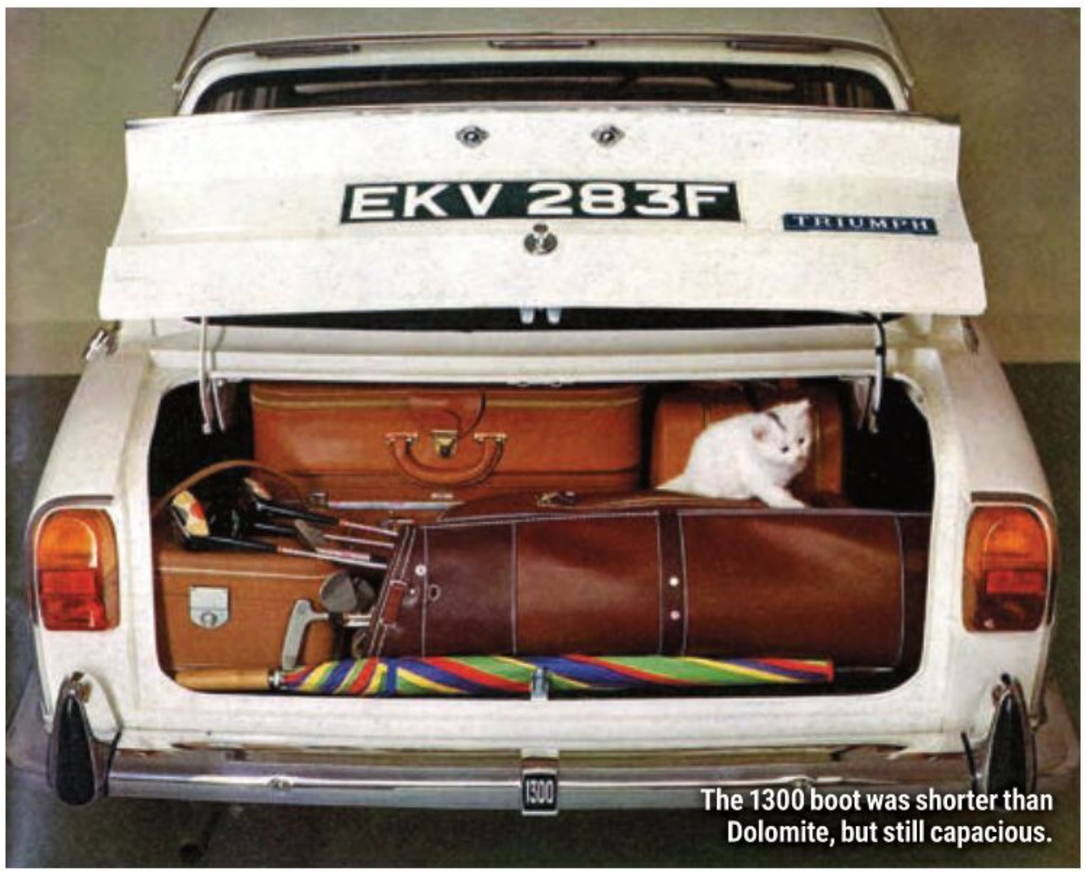
Going on sale in January 1966, the Ajax range carried on until 1980, but wow – did it go through some changes! Towards the end of the 1960s the 1300FWD was selling strongly, but Triumph were struggling with certain dilemmas. One was that they could not offer an automatic version, and another was that the car was simply too expensive to build for them to offer an entry-level model at a price that made it viable to replace the Herald and bring production of that to a close.

The FWD layout was at the heart of this →

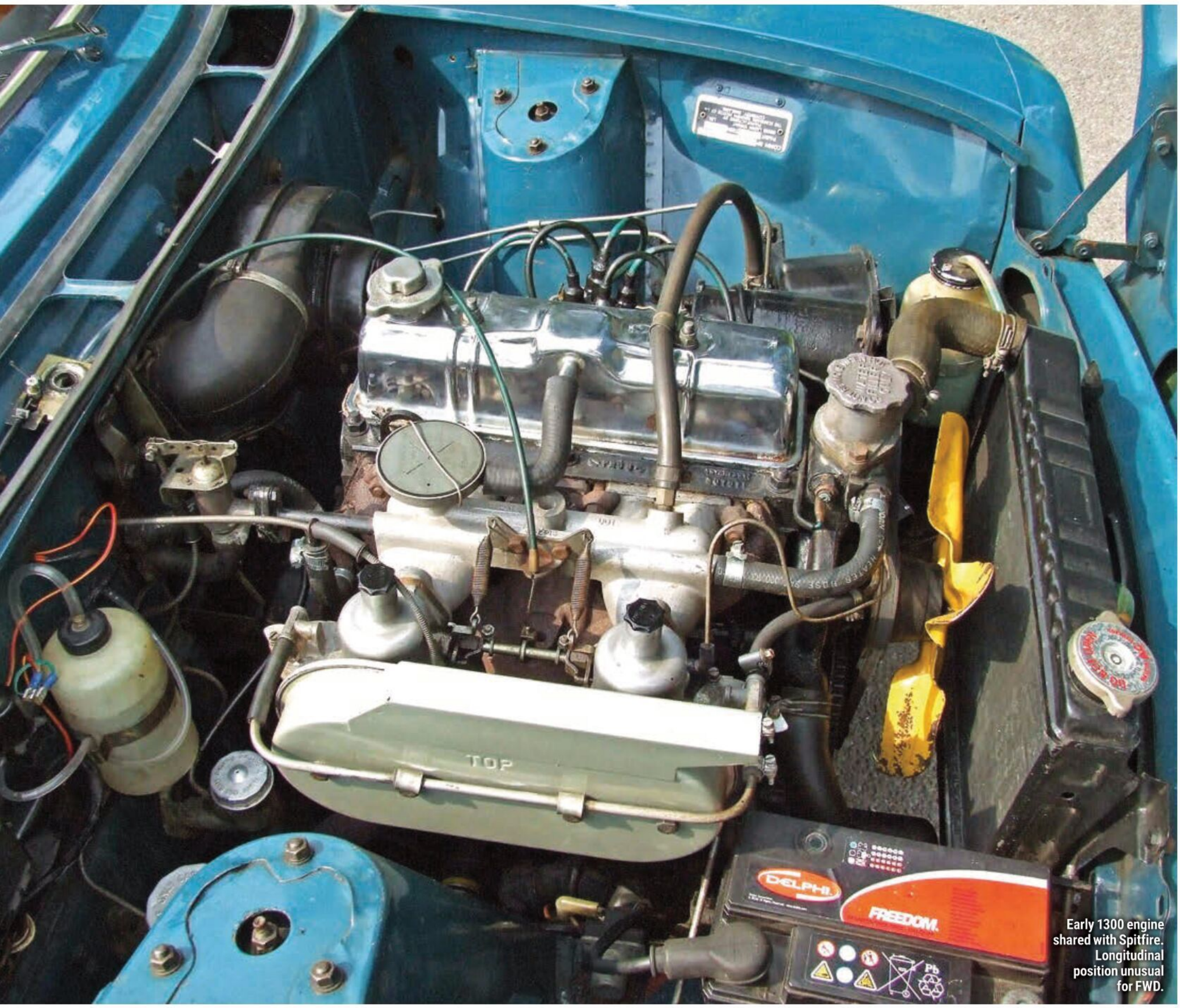
"FOR SMALL CARS, THE NEW ERA OF THE 1960S WAS MOVING TOWARD FRONT WHEEL DRIVE, AND SO THAT WAS WHAT TRIUMPH DESIGNED. THE 1300 WAS UP AGAINST THE WOLSELEY AND RILEY VERSIONS OF THE 1100/1300 RANGE FROM BMC"

Nose, tail, interior - even drive driven wheels had changed by the time of this late Dolomite.

Beautiful early 1300 interior with separate instrument panel and folding window winders.



The 1300 boot was shorter than Dolomite, but still capacious.



Early 1300 engine shared with Spitfire. Longitudinal position unusual for FWD.

Front wheel drive 1300 bears a strong resemblance to early Triumph 2000.

issue, being expensive to produce and suffering high warranty costs, so Triumph hatched a cunning plan. In 1970 the 1300FWD was moved upmarket by virtue of a bigger 1493cc engine and a substantial sheet metal redesign at the front and back that most people today would recognise as the Dolomite, but retaining the FWD configuration. Logically enough, this was called the 1500. Simultaneously a cheaper Toledo was developed using the 1500 front (but with rectangular headlights) allied to the 1300's short-tail rear and now with only a two-door option until 1971. Structural changes underneath that allowed the fitment of a more conventional RWD layout and a live rear axle instead of the 1300's IRS.

The redesign of the metalwork to create the 1500 also made room for the eventual fitment of Triumph's new slant four engine, which was to give us the RWD 1850 Dolomite in 1972 and the legendary Dolomite Sprint in 1973, but those two are outside the scope of this feature. However, with the two Dolomites and the Toledo all being RWD, the 1500FWD was starting to look decidedly out of place in the model line-up. So in 1973 it was given the RWD platform under the existing long-nose body to create the 1500TC, making both overdrive and automatic options a possibility.

The final step in this complicated evolution was in 1976, when the Toledo was dropped. (That used the original 1300FWD short body, remember? Do try to keep up!) From then on, all models used the longer body in RWD guise, badged as Dolomite 1300, 1500, 1850 and Sprint depending on the engine fitted. Dolomite production lasted without any further drastic change until the Canley factory was closed, the last one rolling off the lines in November 1980.

"IN 1970 THE 1300FWD WAS MOVED UPMARKET BY VIRTUE OF A BIGGER ENGINE AND A SUBSTANTIAL SHEET METAL REDESIGN AT THE FRONT AND BACK"

It is the Dolomite 1500 that is book-marking our Dolomite story today. This car's longer nose housed single rectangular headlamps in base form, or the arguably more attractive twin round lights in HL guise. Compared to the 1300FWD, a manual gearbox with optional →

overdrive answered the quest for more relaxed cruising, reducing the thrashiness at higher speeds.

The front suspension was effectively the same twin wishbone set-up of the 1300, but with a live rear axle supported on a four-link trailing arm configuration. The engine was the venerable Triumph cast engine that started out in the Standard 8 at 803cc in 1953 (see p56 for that story), stroked to achieve 1493cc. This was about the limit of the three-bearing bottom end and a 1500 usually feels a bit rougher than the sweet revving 1300, but with more torque available you don't have to rev it so hard in the first place and with the optional overdrive set, instead of 4000rpm at 60mph you are looking at a much more relaxed 2600-ish rpm.

The interior is again a comfortable place to be, with cloth seats, fingertip controls for the lights and wipers, and that wonderfully clear dashboard. The gearshift is a little more precise than the 1300FWD ever was and the steering a little lighter, while the brakes are the same disc/drum setup, but with a standard servo and so lighter to use. When pushed to the limit you could argue that handling is a little compromised due to that live rear axle and that the rear can be more easily upset, but for the great majority of drivers this will never be an issue.

So choosing between the two can actually be quite a difficult decision to make, the spritely style of the 1300 comparing with the long-legged nature of a manual-overdrive 1500 Dolomite. Perhaps sitting in one will make the choice easier though, as they do have distinctly different auras. The 1300 was the top of its own particular small car tree and feels supremely luxurious, with delightful 1960s touches everywhere you look – the styled toggle switches, the fold-out window winders, the dash layout and more. The 1500 Dolomite has a lighter

Dolomite inherited the styling of the later 1500FWD model.

This late Dolomite also shares its engine with a Spitfire - the Spitfire 1500.

New family dashboard bears a strong resemblance to the Stag.

Twin headlamp nose also inherited from the 1500FWD.

and more airy feel to the cabin, but it is very definitely a creation of the 1970s and despite having a wooden dash, it doesn't feel quite as luxurious as the older car. It is a close-run thing though, and individual tastes and preferences will vary!

So which is the easier car to run and maintain? Panels like sills are common to both cars, but front and rear wings are unique to each variant. However, surprisingly the 1300FWD wings seem to be more readily available in steel than ones for the newer Dolomite. Engine service components are shared to a large degree with the Spitfires and Heralds, although both the Dolomite 1500 and 1300FWD have unique (and different to each other) starter motors. Both cars are supported well by owners clubs, with the Triumph Dolomite Club for example commissioning panels in both GRP and steel, plus some of the unique seals and other components that are shared by both cars.

One disadvantage of the FWD is that unique gearbox, with spares becoming more difficult to find. Some suppliers do carry parts for them, but you will need the men in brown warehouse coats behind the counter to know on which dusty shelf they are hidden. As a result, don't dismiss a faulty gearbox on a prospective 1300 purchase lightly, whereas there is little on the 1500 Dolomite that should cause concern apart from terminal rust.

"BOTH CARS ARE SUPPORTED WELL BY OWNEDS CLUBS, WITH THE TRIUMPH DOLOMITE CLIB COMMISSIONING PANELS IN BOTH GRP AND STEEL. THE 1300FWD WINGS SEEM TO BE EASIER TO FIND IN STEEL THAN THOSE FOR THE NEWER DOLOMITE"

In terms of price, the days of the £500 ready-to-roll and tidy small Triumph seem to be well and truly gone. Price rises have yet to approach the stratosphere though, and both models can be found for realistic money. In fact there is not much difference between them, ranging from £900 or so for a condition 3 car to £4000 for a 1300FWD in condition 1, and £4500 for a 1300TC or Dolomite 1500HL. One thing that did surprise us was that according to the website How Many Left, there are more 1300s on the road than Dolomite 1500s, despite the fact that the Dolomites can be up to 13 years younger. Perhaps this can be explained in part by the fact that so many Dolomite 1500s have had their engines and overdrive gearboxes ripped out by jealous Herald and Spitfire owners.

So to sum up, the choice here is between a slightly bigger, better equipped and more relaxed cruiser, or a ground-breaking design with more period charm. I know I am biased, but given a straight choice it is the 1300FWD that would get my vote. ■

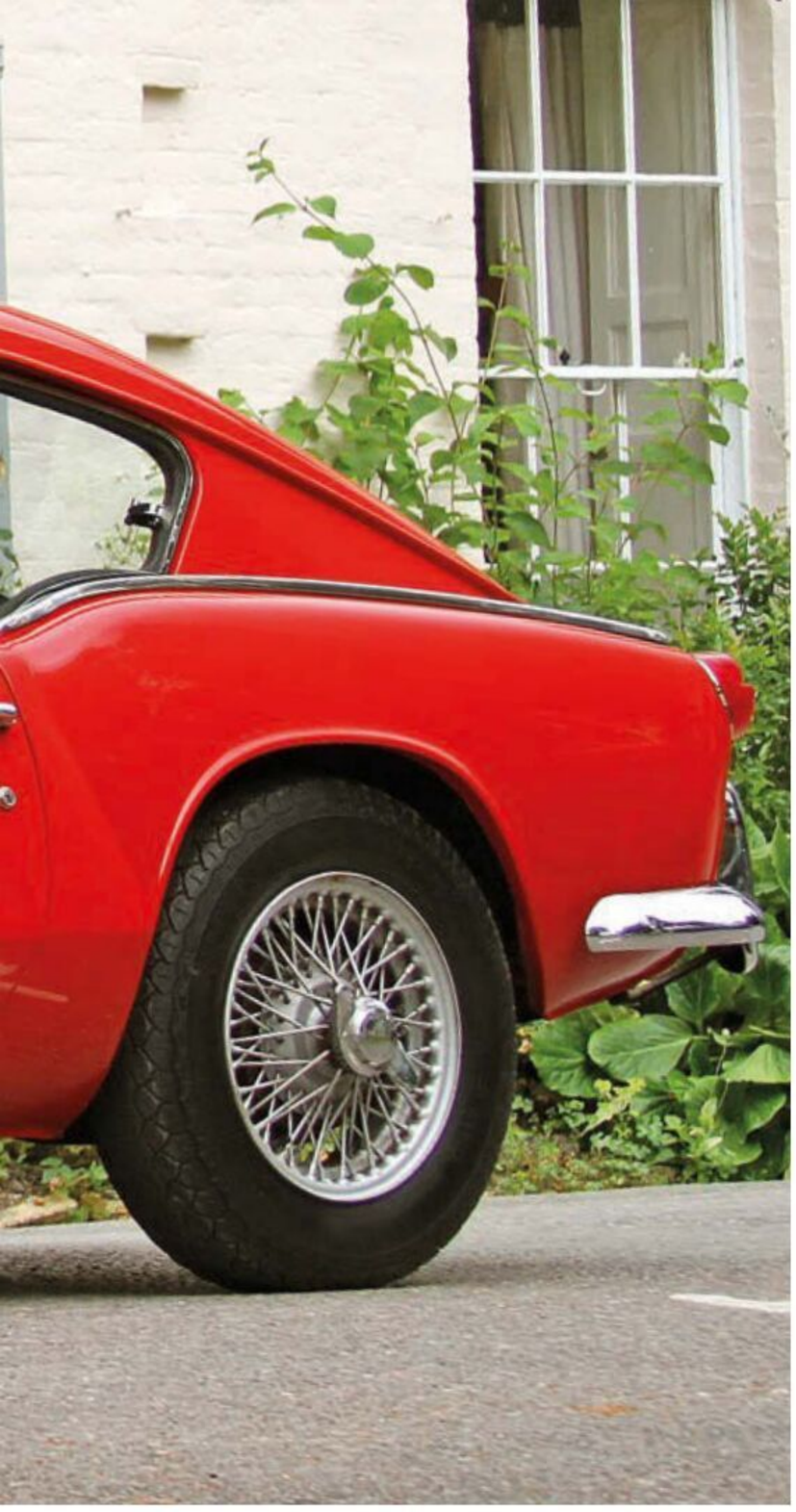
GT6 MKI VS MKIII

A grown-up Spitfire or a baby E-Type? It doesn't really matter which way you look at a GT6, but really it should be viewed on its own merits because it offers perhaps a unique combination of styling and performance

Words **IAIN AYRE**

It looks as though people are finally catching on that the Triumph GT6, always referred to as the poor man's E-Type, is actually not at all a bad option when compared to an E-Type. I have experience of both, and nearly snagged a solid Series 1½ E-Type coupé for $16,000 US, fitted with a Ford V8 – fine by me, as I have a bad history with early 4.2 Jag engines. The deal hung on the inevitably broken XK engine, which turned out to be the original, causing the price to leap out of reach due to the American matching-numbers fetish.

Nowadays, I would replace a failed 4.2 engine with either a 3.8 or even an AJ6 engine, but I'd definitely stay with a heavy straight six rather than using a V8. The straight six is the key for British sports tourers, a V12 being too smooth and a V8 too rough. The early six-cylinder E-Type coupé is one of the most



beautiful manufactured objects ever crafted, with possibly the best ever down-the-bonnet view, and the howl of a straight six getting some exercise is one of the best soundtracks ever.

The GT6 may not be quite as beautiful as the Jag, and the soundtrack may not be not quite as baritone sonorous, but its rich tenor is not far off. Individual opinions will of course vary, but I reckon the GT6 is maybe 70% as good as the Jag in every way, for 10% of the price even now.

The GT6 is obviously based on Michelotti's Spitfire, itself a deeply attractive car, and the conversion to the fastback coupé roof of the GT6 is very successful. That shouldn't be too surprising because a fastback roof often improves a car body compared to a soft top – look at the E-Type, the MGB GT and even the AC Cobra. So a GT6 is a very pleasant object to look at every day, and the bonnet styling wins over the Spitfire's rather bland top surface as there is a power bulge. It's a rare thing in being a genuine power bulge too, one that is not just there as a styling feature but because the engine is too big for the car. That bulge makes the driver's bonnet view almost as good as the E-Type, the central bulge combining with the rising wings so you look down a valley at the road, ideally an amusing twisty mountain one.

"INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS WILL OF COURSE VARY, BUT I RECKON THE GT6 IS MAYBE 70% AS GOOD AS THE JAGUAR E-TYPE IN EVERY WAY, FOR 10% OF THE PRICE EVEN NOW"

The mellifluous burble of the Triumph six hums tunefully when pottering, but howls and barks when pushed. I used my GT6 both for daily commuting when I was an ad copywriter, and for fun at the weekend. I had a clean, red 1972 MkIII, bought as a write-off with rear body damage, but there's no chassis at the back, so repairs involving a large hammer and bits of wood were easy. When the tailgate fitted its aperture again and clicked shut with one finger, after some surface cosmetics and a new bumper my GT6 was as good as new. You do →

Raised bumper and longer tail denote the final GT6, the MkIII.

May find the round rear of the earlier cars prettier - only the MkIII was different.

Interior of early models a definite step up from the equivalent Spitfire.

Six cylinder engine had previously seen service in the Triumph 2000 saloon.

“THE MKII IN 1968 OFFERED NON LETHAL NEW REAR SUSPENSION. IT WAS STILL A TRANSVERSE LEAF, BUT NOW LOWER WISHBONES TOOK WEIGHT OFF THE DRIVESHAFTS”

need to try one for size, though. At 5fy 10in I didn’t feel cramped, just snug. I find Midgets and TR6s slightly claustrophobic, but not the GT6.

The GT6 was originally conceived as a four-cylinder coupé Spitfire, although Michelotti’s fastback aero roof design was used first on the Le Mans racing Spitfires for better aerodynamics. However, the extra steel bodywork and glass added too much to the weight for the Spitfire engine to manage, so the Vitesse six was used. Clever marketing successfully confused the GT6 with the racing Spitfire programme, although all they had in common was the roof shape.

The GT6 was launched in 1966, with the Spitfire combo of very good front suspension with rack steering and unequal length double wishbones, and unstable swing axles at the back. Like the other small Triumphs, the violent jacking up onto one sidewall during hard corners only happens rarely, but when it does it is hairy. Essentially the car understeers slightly into a corner because of the heavy engine, then snap oversteers if a back swing arm does its evil thing. The front-to-back weight balance is actually reasonable at 56% to the front – the heavy back bodywork balances out the heavy iron engine quite well – so up to a point the GT6 handles well, and very much so after 1969.

The engine was initially the 2-litre (1996cc) straight six from the MkII Vitesse, with 95bhp and a very useful 117lbs.ft of torque. This engine revs less sweetly than the 1600cc MkI Vitesse engine, but has more grunt to make up for it. The full-synchro gearbox for all GT6s was still the smaller Herald/Vitesse based item rather than the heavier Triumph 2000 and TR6 box, so it’s not super tough. I would actually plan for a five-speed conversion in a car you might buy as a long-term keeper, as GT6 gearbox parts availability is not ideal now, and will probably not improve.

The gearbox does have the optional overdrive, which although pleasant, just gives you more ratio options rather than a lower cruising rpm because the four-speed →

The interior didn't change much, but by now the Spitfire had caught up.

differential has a 3.27:1 final drive ratio, and the overdrive-equipped cars come with a 3.892 rear end.

The earlier GT6 weighs 1904lbs, which is 300lbs heavier than a Spitfire and so the ride is notably smoother. There are other pleasing details as well – you get opening quarterlights, missing from lesser cars such as E-Types. The MKI GT6 tops out at 106mph and averages 20mpg, though both performance and economy was improved in later models.

The MkII in 1968 offered non-lethal new rear suspension. It was still based on a single transverse leaf, but now there were lower wishbones taking the weight off the driveshafts, which were fitted with Rotoflex rubber couplings. These Rotoflexes are quite stressed by frisky driving, and need occasional replacement. As so often happens with parts for classics, replacements may not be up to OEM quality.

The MkII got the new bone-in-the-teeth front bumper to match the Spitfires, due to American bumper height regulations. It looks better than the original low bumper, although possibly more modern and less classically classic. Pillar and bonnet vents also appeared. More power was provided in the MkII, with bigger valves and tuning tweaks giving 104bhp and a substantial improvement in efficiency, as shown by the fuel economy improvement to 25mpg.

The MkIII GT6 of 1970 benefitted from the same body updates and upgrades as the contemporaneous Spitfire, with the collected clutter of lights at the back blended into elegant new light units, and the tail end bodywork simplified into a rather elegant corporate new look resembling the Triumph 2000 and the Stag. Like the Spit, the rather clumsy visible welded joint along the top of the wings was removed rather than being covered with a bit of trim as

Square tail denotes the final models.

before, and the slimmer bumpers are blended into the bodywork.

There was one further major change in 1973 when, late in the production run, the Spitfire rear suspension was adopted, with the rear spring free to revolve around the differential and an anti-roll bar added to the front of the car to keep the roll stiffness up. There's no deterioration in the handling, but the system was cheaper to make, and it eliminates repeated Rotoflex coupling replacement so can definitely be considered a bonus.

The final iteration of the GT6 weighed 2030lbs, which is not too bad a lifetime weight gain compared to many evolving car designs – the VW Golf has put on 1100lbs since 1974, which is why it now looks morbidly obese. And despite that modest weight increase, efficiency improvements in the Triumph engine and the aerodynamics of the GT6 yielded a final top speed of 112mph and fuel economy of 28mpg. Yes, you really can gave your cake and eat it too...

The later versions of the GT6 were slightly improved over the early ones, but they're all good cars. Even the dodgy early rear suspension is not really a worry if you don't plan on driving near the limit. However, buying a GT6 is getting more expensive. £35,000 and £28,000 are the top prices currently being asked through the trade, although those seem premature. The CCB price guide suggests £1100 for a major MkI project up to £13,000 for a very nice car through a private sale, with similar prices for the MkIII although tailing off slightly lower at £11,000 for one in Condition One.

Price guides are only ever that, though – guides. Similarly, asking prices do not always reflect sale prices. We found the price asked for a restored car to be around £13,000- £16,000. Unrestored, we had a 1970 MkIII for £7000 with minor cosmetic rust which looked like good value, while an interesting option was a 1972 convertible GT6 or Spit 6, with a Heritage Spitfire shell and a tuned engine at £12,500. That might or might not be a good investment.

In the lower reaches, an abandoned restoration, rust free and running with the mechanicals sorted but requiring paint and reassembly, seemed worth a look value at £8000, but an imported lef hand drive US project at 10,900 Euros in Holland didn't sound like top value even though it was rust free, and the price was rising daily as the pound sinks.

Overall, the most important element in choosing your GT6 is the styling you prefer, and there doesn't seem to be a premium for any particular period. A total of 40,926 GT6s were built, split roughly evenly between the three Marks, and supposedly about 1000 are left on UK roads with a further 800 on SORN. ■

MK1 2000 VS MK2 2500S

In contrast to the Stags, there were major differences between the first and last of the big saloons on which that car was based. Colin Radford is the man tasked with unpicking the models and suggesting which one might be best

Words **COLIN RADFORD**

The Mk2 - especially in 2500S trim - looks more like a four door Stag might.

Many like the Italianite delicacy of the Mk1 2000 saloon.

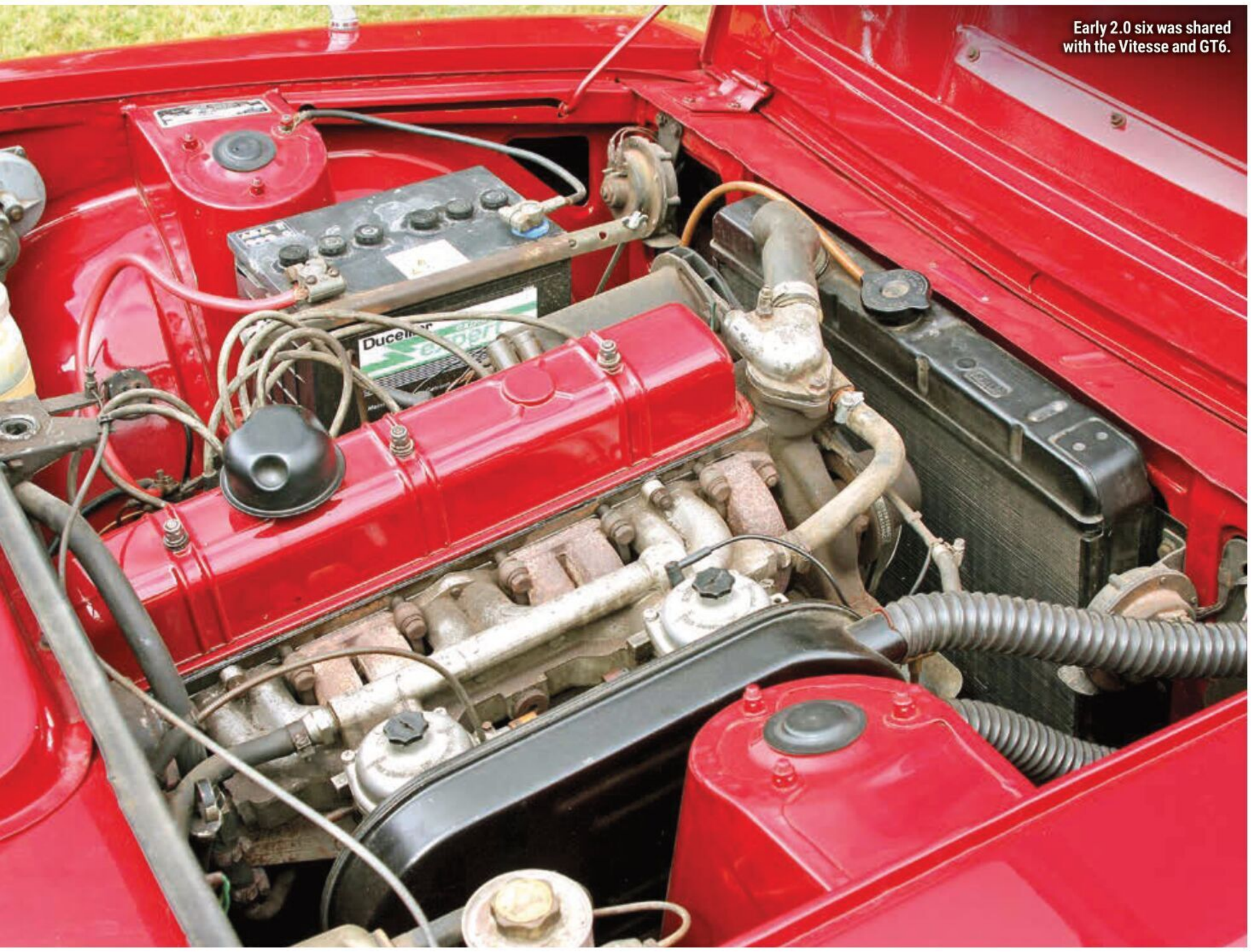
Originally unveiled to the public on 15th October 1963 at the London Motor Show, with sales beginning in January 1964, the Triumph 2000 changed the way people thought about executive cars. Along with the Rover 2000 P6, unveiled at the same time, the car buying public realised that executive cars did not need to be big, lumbering hunks of metal with large inefficient engines and no driver appeal.

The original series was produced from the end of 1963 to the launch of the Mk2 model in October 1969. It was then known as the Mk1.The Mk2 series was then produced until midway through 1977, being replaced (ironically along with the Rover P6) by the all new Rover SD1 range.

The very first Mk1 2000 and the last Mk2 2500S are quite different cars considering how much is shared by both. The basic sub structure is the same, only minor detail changes to door shells differentiate the entire body structures between the front and rear screens, with the welded in base structure for the dashboard on a Mk1 giving way to a bolt in dashboard shell on a Mk2. The same basic design of front and rear suspension, with just the addition of a front anti-rollbar on some Mk2s and a few redesigns to rear suspension subframes/bushes during almost 14years of production.

Outside, inside and under the bonnet there were quite a few more changes. The front and rear looks of the Mk2 got a complete makeover. Clever design left the inner front wings and chassis legs unchanged, the bulkhead between engine bay and cabin was altered putting the heater unit inside both under and behind the new bolt in dashboard shell. The outer front panels were a little more angular, longer and modern. Gone was the shark like nose cone and shallow wide grille below, replaced by a wide stainless edged aperture containing the signature twin headlights set in the grille and a new 'half an oval' sidelight/indicator unit. →

"THE VERY FIRST MK1 2000 AND THE VERY LAST MK2 2500S ARE QUITE DIFFERENT CARS CONSIDERING HOW MUCH IS SHARED BY BOTH. THE BASIC SUBSTRUCTURE IS THE SAME BARRING SMALL DIFFERENCES TO THE DOOR SHELLS"



Early 2.0 six was shared with the Vitesse and GT6.

Mk1 interior a work of art.

Shorter boot than Mk2, with daintier tail lights.

This gave a much wider look accentuated by the more angular (less fussy but much heavier) bumper which was no longer adorned by over-riders. The rear end also received a new longer more angular set of panel with a fixed rear panel that was no longer part of the bootlid with bigger rear lamp units. The bootlid itself was basically a flat panel mimicking the bonnet in that way, but the increased boot space afforded by the greater body length, came at the cost of lifting items much higher to load them.

Inside the Mk1 had a stylised dashboard with two gauge and warning lights in a binnacle above the steering column with a shallow wooden strip extending across the remaining dashboard width. A passenger side glovebox was complimented by a central console cubby hole, also lockable and under dash parcel trays, initially on just the passenger side but added to the driver's side within a year. This was a time before multiple function column stalks and touchscreen infotainment with lights, single speed wipers and windscreen washers controlled from stylised chunky rocker switches either side of the binnacle and a foot operated headlight dip switch. Doors had deep wooden cappings

"THE DONOR SALOON BODIES FOR MK2 ESTATES WERE MADE WITH THE REAR OF A MK1, AS THE ESTATE REAR END WAS NEVER UPDATED, LEADING TO THE UNUSUAL QUIRK OF THE MK2 ESTATE BEING SHORTER THAN ITS SALOON COUNTERPART"

which like the dash wood was finished in a high gloss varnish. These were carried over to the Mk2 albeit with hidden fixings and a satin finish. Sometime in 1966 the heating and ventilation system in the mk1 was changed to include a through flow element with vents in the underside of the rear roof overhang and 'eyeball' vents, repositioned heater controls and a time clock added to the dashboard. These mk1 facelift cars also went from vinyl to leather seat trimming.

Mk2s by contrast had column stalk control for wipers/washers a rotary switch also on the side of the column for lighting and the column itself was height adjustable. The dashboard was a more upright affair with wood inserts and the new roundel for warning lights first seen in the Triumph 1300. Fuller instrumentation was enjoyed by the injection and S models. Seats were either full ambler or with optional cloth centre inserts, later on this option was replaced by Bri-nylon full cloth seats. Continental mk2s in certain territories could still be spec'd with Leather.

Under the bonnet the Mk2 had the full width head previously introduced with the 2.5 pi mk1, on all models both 2000 and 2.5. The narrow heads have a manifold face inset about 1" from the edge of the cylinder head to block mating face. The head studs and nuts sit under the manifolds once they are fitted, whereas the full width head has the securing nuts at the same height on both sides of the head. The nuts are above the manifold height rather than below.

Narrow heads have the inlet and exhaust ports, although round and square shaped, horizontally in line. Wide heads have inlet →

ports positioned higher than the exhaust ones.

On the camshaft, distributor, spark plug side of the engine, the narrow cylinder head has exposed pushrod tubes.

Wide heads have a larger inlet valve and improved chamber design said to give a power increase of 7%, the wide head was designed as part of the 2.5 long stroke engine and for financial reasons it made more sense to fit it to the 2000 engine too, hence it's adoption on all mk2s. Not sure how you condense that down to add in to the piece though.

All models came with an alternator rather than dynamo and Power Steering was an option on the injection models and later standardised for the 2500S. Automatic transmission was available as an option after a few months of production on the mk1 and was also an option on all mk2 versions, as was overdrive.

There was also a very stylish and useful estate version of both Mk1&2 models. Introduced late in 1965, saloon bodies were supplied to Carbodies who removed and replaced the roof and fabricated everything else, then the bodies were returned to Canley for paint and build up. The donor saloon bodies for Mk2 estates were made with the rear end of a Mk1, as the estate rear end was never updated, leading to the unusual quirk of the Mk2 estate being shorter overall than its saloon counterpart.

In comparison to a Mk1 2000, the last of the line, top of the range 2500S had PAS, Alloy 14" road wheels from GKN, front anti rollbar, Sundym tinted glass and headrest equipped front seats. Fully loaded as they say.

Driving the first 2000 Mk1 or the last 2500S Mk2 you will be struck by how good both cars are and how they are not so far removed from modern cars in their ability to be used as daily drivers. There should be no feel of wooliness in the suspension or steering. The long travel springing and higher profile tyres may not be the last word in road holding but they will soak up potholes and provide the type of smooth ride that most modern executive cars can only dream of. The steering on manual steered mk1 and Mk2s is quite low geared, you seem to need an extra bit of turn at the wheel to negotiate turns, power steered cars enjoy a more modern geared (higher ratio) setup, Mk1s also seem to suffer a little less from initial understeer, less weight and overhang combined with a little more shell stiffness due to the welded in dashboard. The extra rear overhang and boot capacity of a mk2 saloon can lead to tired rear springs, the popularity of these cars with caravanners over the years may not have helped. Power from the 2000 at 90bhp will be more than up to modern traffic and motorway use, especially with overdrive, a 2500S with it's 106bhp will have overdrive as standard if it's not automatic and will lope along at the legal limit at a relaxed 2700rpm. Fuel consumption on a decent run will be high 20s to mid 30s mpg.

Parts availability for all models is good in general, mechanically much is shared with

Stag theme is continued to the rear of Mk2 saloon, emphasised by 2500S spec black trim.

Nylon seats and Stag-aping dash dominate the Mk2 interior.

other Triumphs including the Stag, bodywork is getting better with the remanufacture of many previously obsolete panels, trim is not so easily sourced, good secondhand items being the best option.

In summing up, the first and last big saloons are equally as good as each other. Looking at Club Triumph's Round Britain Reliability Run, usually around a third of all entrants use a 2000 based model, they are all great, useable cars. That leaves the question of which car is best and it really is a personal choice. Do you prefer the original design, look and individuality of the mk1 2000. It's obvious 60's (with a sprinkle of the 50's) look, sewing machine sweet, narrow head engine and classic conservative colours? Or is your head turned by the 2500S's pseudo Stag looks (introduced a few months later than the Mk2) and alloys, torquier 2.5 litre engine, power steering and bright later 70s BL colours? You could, like many owners do, have more than one model with perhaps a rare estate added for good measure.

Prices for the later 2500S are perhaps a little higher than those of a Mk1 2000, but as with most classic cars you should always buy on condition rather than mileage or colour. Barn finds needing lots of work will usually start below £2000, nice useable examples of either car requiring no immediate expenditure will be around £5000 with the best cars nudging towards £10000 with estates especially sought after due to their rareness. Concours cars will always be a matter of what you want to pay.

At whatever level you're looking, neither of these big saloons will disappoint, particularly if using the car rather than looking at it is high on your priority list. Get one before everyone realises how good they are.

Delicate hubcaps and open mesh grille mark an early Vitesse like this car.

VITESSE 1600 VS MK2 2-LITRE

For those who liked the Herald package but wanted a little more oomph, Triumph offered the Vitesse. This time it is Rod Ker who compares the early and late versions of this surprisingly potent little family saloon

Words **ROD KER**

After much turmoil behind the scenes, Triumph finally launched the Herald in April 1959, effectively replacing the Standard 8/10/Pennant range. Notable features included sharp Italian styling by Michelotti and independent rear suspension. Less notable features included a basic interior and slightly wayward handling, mainly caused by the aforementioned independent rear suspension.

While speed isn't of the essence in the small car world, the Herald was certainly not fast by any standards (no pun…), which is where the Vitesse enters the picture. The Herald's original 948cc four was later expanded in ways that could never have been imagined in 1953 when it first appeared in the Standard 8, rated at 27bhp from 803cc. The final version mustered twice as much power. Yet that pales into insignificance besides the Vitesse, in which Triumph created something of a monster.

The Frankenstein ingredient was, of course, a six-cylinder engine developed from the ohv fours by adding another couple of pots

to the block. Apparently, this modular ruse had first been investigated in the mid 1950s, ultimately as the power source for a larger, all-new car, known simply as the 2000 when it arrived in 1963.

It seems that the Vitesse came about when Triumph's technical head, Harry Webster, wanted a faster means of getting from the Coventry works to places south. A two-litre version of the experimental six was duly shoe-horned into a Herald's nose, and hey presto, the Kenilworth Dragster was born, a compact Q-car with double the power.

S-T were heading for a financial crisis in the late 1950s, but they still managed to develop the six and install it in the Vanguard for a 1960 debut. Fitted with downdraught Solex carbs, 80bhp at a lowly 4400rpm was claimed, but sales were modest and Standard was a fading marque, due to disappear completely when the 2000 arrived in '63.

Meanwhile, the unassuming Herald was being put on steroids. Although space was obviously tight, the compact six just fitted into the engine bay with its cylinder head squeezed up against the bulkhead, the other pots extending forwards (you can see the join), necessitating relocation of the radiator. Not ideal for weight distribution and handling, you might imagine. so perhaps this is why the Vitesse was released as a 1600 (1596cc from 66.75 x 76mm dimensions, to be precise), with 70bhp claimed. Some of the power was expended by the inevitable extra weight – at around 2000lb, it was about 200lb up on the Herald.

Unveiled in May 1962 in saloon and convertible guises, the Vitesse 6, aka Sports 6 or plain 1600, benefited from an effectively new chassis. Generally referred to as Mk2 (not to be confused with the Vitesse MK2, or MkII model name), it followed the same pattern but the main rails were made of stronger, rectangular sections, rather than the original 3in square. The mountings for the differential and suspension were also comprehensively beefed up, along with the front suspension and engine locations. Incidentally, although it wasn't touted as a buying incentive, the new Herald 1200 was given the stronger trellis at the same time. One way to tell them apart is that the first version had the exhaust pipe running through the diff mountings.

Give or take a few badges and pieces of brightwork, the Vitesse was very similar in external appearance to its four-cylinder brother. From most aspects the two could easily be confused until you reached the front, where a remodelled bonnet with quad headlamps and angular lines gave the car an aggressive mien. Simpler to spot, optional duotone paintwork featured a contrasting stripe extending back from the headlamp pods. True car anoraks →

Grille slats and Rostyle-aping hubcaps for the 2-litre MkII, the Vitesse we all know.

From the rear, it was hard to tell Herald from Vitesse until you saw the badge.

(if such existed in the 1960s) might have noted the alloy bumpers and wheel trims.

From 1961 in the hands of Leyland, Triumph's resources were stabilised, enabling more meaningful forward planning. One of the effects was that the Herald and Vitesse family became increasingly plush. A luxurious wooden dashboard became a marque speciality. A very basic fleet version of the Herald just didn't sell, but add in carpets and rain forest offcuts and customers would happily spend more. Sales of the 12/50 were increasing at a time when the separate chassis concept was looking quite quaint and old-fashioned.

Having launched the Vitesse, Triumph left it alone until 1966 while the FWD 1300 was being signed off. Also, it's likely that several years of Herald experience had sorted out the teething problems with bonnet fit, water leaks, droopy doors, etc. The proposed coupe version was abandoned, probably because the Spitfire and GT6 fulfilled a similar need. A small batch of Vitesse estates was made to order, but that was another dead end. The more commodious 2000 estate was obviously a better bet for those with things to shift.

In some respects, the Vitesse was still quite advanced by the mid 1960s. Triumph pioneered disc brakes in ordinary production cars, and independent rear suspension was considered high-tech. But, but… there was IRS and there was IRS! The Herald's swing-axle set up transferred directly to the Vitesse and Spitfire, with potentially disastrous results. Driven carelessly, the rear wheels jacked up and were subjected to a huge camber change, causing sudden loss of grip and perhaps a backwards tour through the scenery.

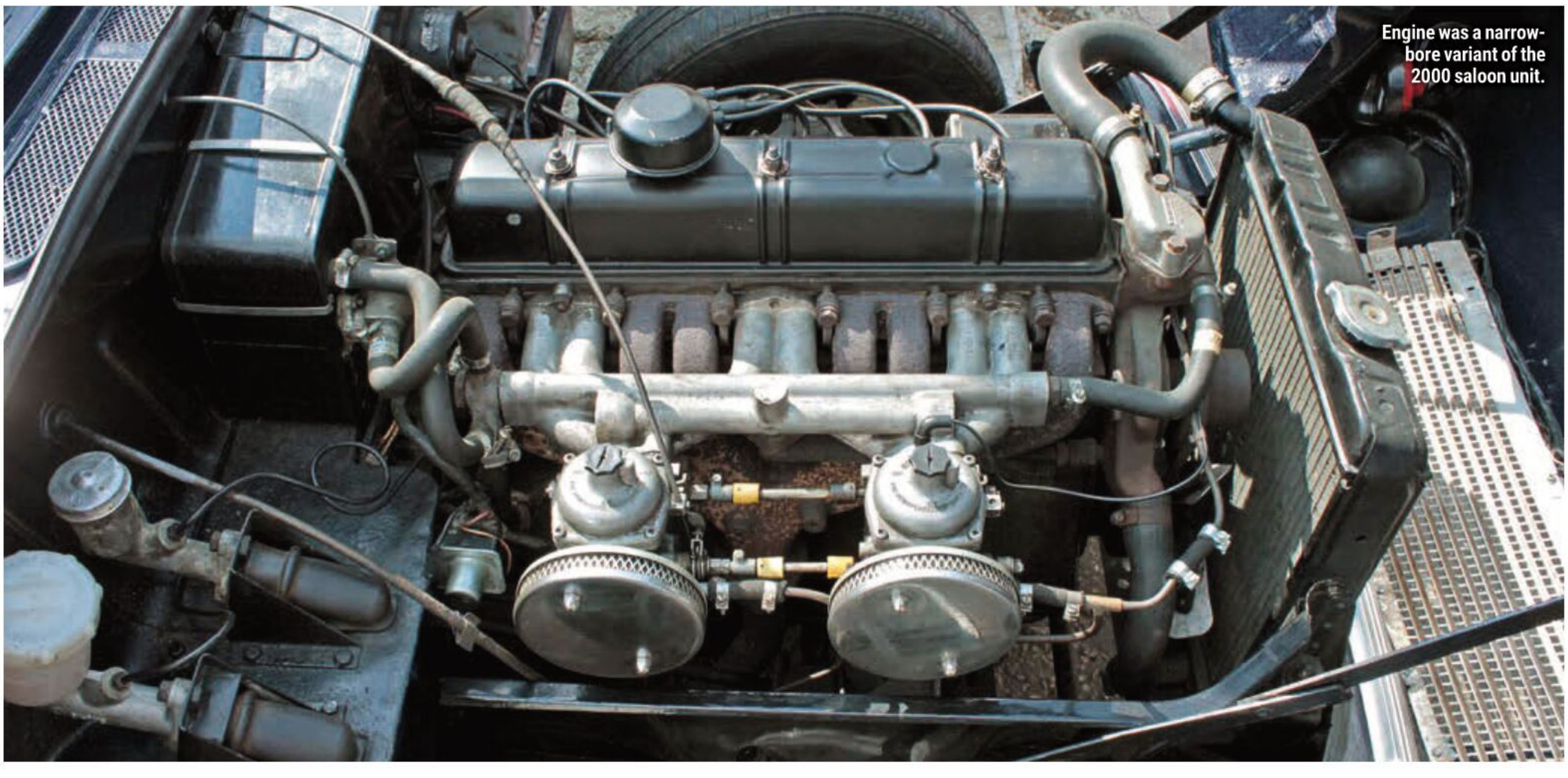
This situation was compounded on the six-cylinder cars, firstly by the extra weight and where it was distributed over the front wheels, secondly by lower geared but heavier steering that made it hard to cope with sudden changes of direction. Triumph strengthened the springs at both ends naturally, and fitted wider wheels with 5:20 x 13 crossplies or 165-13 radial tyres,

"MEANWHILE, THE UNASSUMING HERALD WAS BEING PUT ON STEROIDS. ALTHOUGH SPACE WAS OBVIOUSLY TIGHT, THE COMPACT SIX JUST FITTED IN THE ENGINE BAY"

but that didn't deal with the fundamental issues with camber change. Interestingly, early-type Dunlop Duraband radials had been an option on the Herald soon after the launch. That didn't help much, either.

While 1965 saw the Solex carbs being replaced by Stromberg CVs, taking the top speed to 90mph the first milestone event for the Vitesse came in Autumn 1966, when the 2-Litre hit town, hopefully not literally. Under the distinctive →

Walnut dash marked the Vitesse 1600 as special, when contemporary Herald had painted metal.



Engine was a narrow-bore variant of the 2000 saloon unit.

Vitesse MkII gained additional gauges.

Trendy aluminium infill was unique to the MkII Vitesse - no Herald had it.

'furrowed brow' bonnet (a look copied by BMW and Rover about 30 years later) lurked a 95bhp@5000rpm upgrade of the 1998cc six, as used by the new GT6, 2000 saloon and now defunct Vanguard. In a compact car this was good enough for 100mph plus, accompanied by a sonorous exhaust note.

So much for good news. The bad news was that the chassis and capricious swing axle rear end were the same, so it was much easier to go faster and/or apply power at the wrong time. Motor magazine's opinion wasn't flattering: 'One can't help feeling that the Vitesse might have established a greater niche for itself, particularly as an occasional competition car, if it had started life with a live axle...'. In an era when the press tended to gloss over faults and generally call a spade a digging implement, this was serious stuff.

After a 40-50% power boost, most manufacturers would probably have re-badged the 2-Litre as a MK2. Instead, Triumph waited another two years, apparently because the GT6 was being developed in parallel and the two MK2s would appear at the same time. Thus, what turned out to be the Vitesse's final phase began in 1968, the price tag being a few quid short of the £1000 psychological barrier. The cheapest six on the market, no less. The MK2 'poor man's E-Type' was £1125, if you're wondering, and the Herald 13/60 a snip at £747.

The Vitesse immediately looked different, with its fashionable Rostyle wheel trims (which were subtly different from those used elsewhere, as became evident if you tried to fit the wrong ones). Curiously, the tyres were now slightly narrower section, at 155 x 13 instead of 165 x 13. The second most distinguishing feature was a new face with a horizontal bar grille. Designed by maestro Michelotti again, the front was a quad headlight version of the 1967 Herald 13/60's nose.

Hinging the bonnet open, much was the same, including the brace of Stromberg CDs, but these were now attached to a TR-type cylinder head with integral pushrod tunnels. Apart from being leak-proof, the head gave better breathing and pushed the power to 104bhp. Still more speed is available by transplanting a 2.5 litre engine, but the 2-Litre is sweeter and happier to rev.

Also similar to the 13/60, the revised wooden dashboard had extra instruments and recessed switches, as a nod to safety legislation. Which was all very well, but didn't address the reasons why you might have an accident in the first place! Fortunately, Triumph had finally answered criticisms of the handling, so the MK2 boasted 100% new rear suspension that greatly reduced camber angles when cornering. The differential and transverse spring acting as a pair of quarter elliptics were in the same place, but the driveshafts were two-piece, incorporating Rotoflex couplings that accommodated extension and angular movement. Loosely described as double-wishbone, the spring located the top of the upright, with cast iron arms pivoting in the chassis locating the lower end.

That's not all, though, because additional radius arms and lever arm dampers were also used to control the suspension. The previous telescopic dampers were not part of the package, leaving the chassis with redundant bracketry. Apart from smoothing the ride, the suspension has to keep the tyre tread in contact with the road, which the Rotoflex setup did far more successfully than the old swing axles, but at the cost of complication and about 50lb in weight at both sides.

The odd thing is that Triumph had experimented with other suspension ideas in the early Herald days, and come up with the simple, cheap and effective 'swing spring' layout that was adopted by the MkIV Spitfire in 1970 and 1973-on GT6. Why didn't they use it on the Vitesse? The simple answer is that BL had lots of other fish to fry. A 1959 car lasting into the 1970s was a feat in itself, so the 1971 demise of the Vitesse family to make way for the new 1850cc Dolomite was no surprise.

Despite suffering from more than its fair share of rust, the Herald clan survived better than many of its contemporaries, but half a century on from the launch the numbers aren't huge. Some 50,000 Vitesses of all types were made over a nine year run, and it seems that around 1500 are left, with little variation over the last ten or fifteen years. What has varied, however, is the price, which has ascended gracefully. Nowadays if you find a cheap one there will be good reason why. ■

Early TR7 Coupe looked awkward after the brutish TR6.

TR7 COUPE VS TR8 CONVERTIBLE

There is a world of difference between the earliest production TR7s and a last of the line TR8. Such were the changes that if it weren't for the almost identical cockpit, it would be difficult to tell from behind the wheel that you were driving what is fundamentally the same car. John Clancy is your guide

Words **JOHN CLANCY**

There is a world of difference between the earliest production TR7s and a last of the line TR8. Such were the changes that if it weren't for the almost identical cockpit it would be difficult to tell from behind the wheel that you were driving what is fundamentally the same car.

Introduced in January 1975 with a 1998cc slant 4 engine, a fixed head unit-construction body and a strict two seater, the TR7 was a revolution in British sports car design; a revolution that not everyone liked. The four-speed transmission and light rear axle kept the weight down which aided performance but it was also a major source of criticism.

The LT-77 five speed gearbox was offered as an option towards the end of 1976 and soon became a standard fitment for North American cars whereupon lack of supply meant it was withdrawn from the rest of the world. In March 1977 a series of revisions were brought in which included lowered suspension along with the introduction of tartan trim and full width wheel

trims. These days, even the earliest TR7s have that same lowered suspension installed.

The 16 valve Sprint engine was always intended to go into the TR7 but an ongoing strike at the Speke assembly plant killed this derivative just as it was ready to go into production. Around 60 are believed to have been built and many of these were quickly snapped up by BL employees who were eligible for a management company car. The fastback, four-seater derivative, code named 'Lynx', was another casualty of the strike but the first batch of pre-production TR8s were completed before the Speke closure. These were shipped to America without any decals, many bearing the identity of 'TR7 V8' on the chassis plate rather than 'TR8'. The TR7 Drophead was another derivative to survive the closure and several

"IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE NEAR IDENTICAL COCKPIT IT'D BE NEAR IMPOSSIBLE FROM BEHIND THE WHEEL TO TELL THE TR7 AND TR8 ARE FUNDAMENTALLY THE SAME CAR"

of the first pre-production Dropheads built at Speke are extant today.

Introduced to America in 1979 and the rest of the world in 1980, the Drophead certainly made the TR7 feel like a completely different car. By then there had been such an improvement in overall product quality that this impression really shouldn't have come as any surprise. Right from the start the Drophead outsold the original Coupe and by the end of production this was by a factor of nine to one. The four-speed had been dropped from the line-up completely and although the five-speed had a higher top speed (114mph as opposed to 109mph) the acceleration times were markedly slower. The often quoted 9.1 seconds for the 0-60 dash is actually taken from the four-speed performance figures with the five-speed varying from 9.6 seconds up to 11 seconds. The four-speed is the more capable car on twisty country lanes with the five-speed having the advantage on motorways. There was a three-speed automatic from 1976 and this variant is actually a very nice car to drive and surprisingly peppy.

It has been easy to blame the original Speke factory for the poor quality of the early cars but more recent research has largely belied that story. There were undoubted problems with many, if not most of the early cars, but even after production had moved first to Canley and then onto Solihull, build quality cannot be cited as consistently good. Speke was →

Alloy wheels and the open roof improved the styling no end. V8 did the same for power.

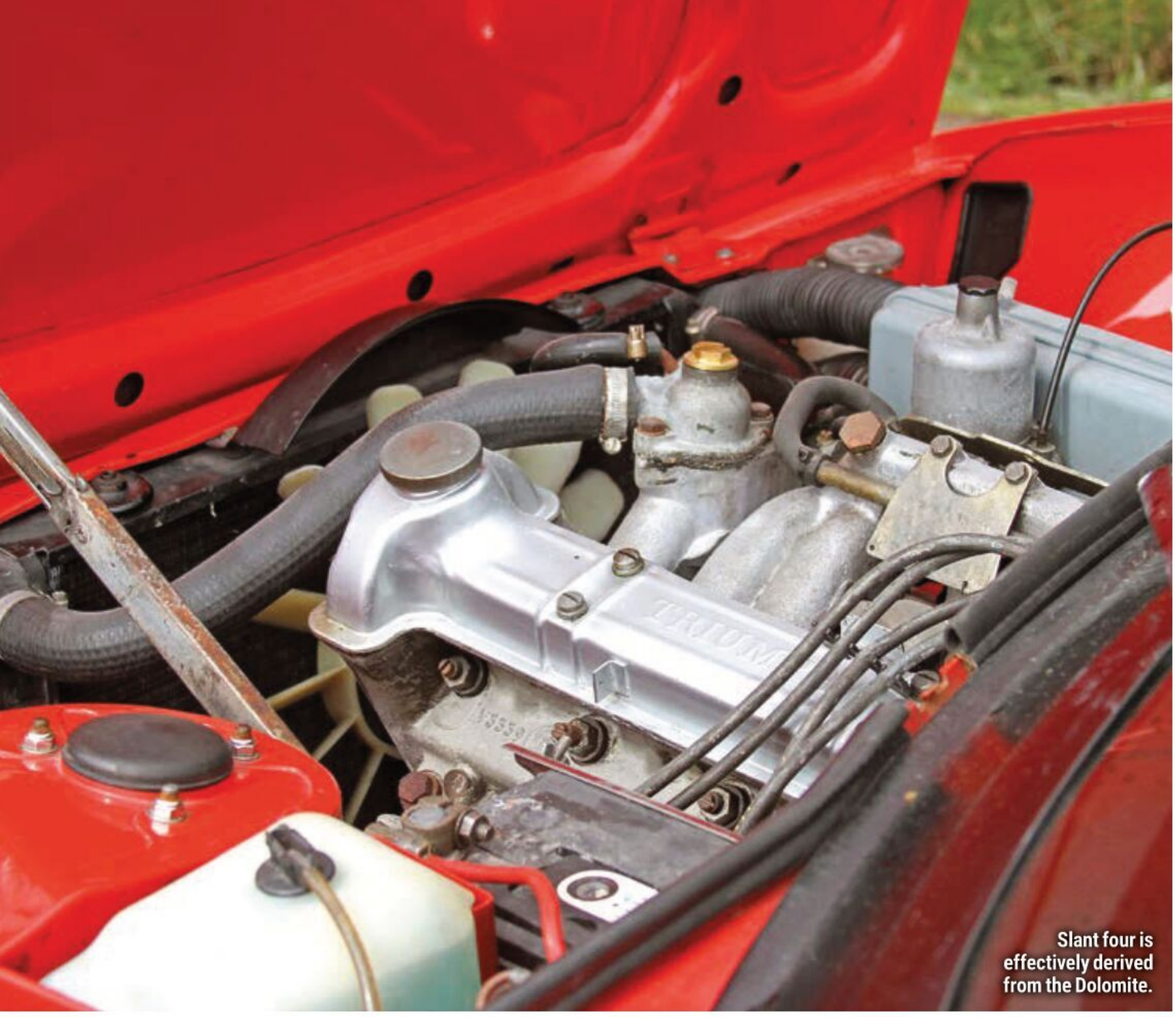
closed in May 1978 and Canley therefore took the credit for all the improvements that had been planned with good publicity being made for the 200+ enhancements that were claimed. The final move was made to the Rover factory at Solihull late in 1980 and the best quality cars are generally considered to have been built at Solihull. However, due to some jiggery pokery this was somewhat messed up soon after when SD1 production line workers were switched to building the TR7 and vice versa. On the face of it, not the most successful management decision for a pair of products considered so important to the future prosperity of British Leyland.

It is usually difficult to compare a four cylinder car with a V8 but in this case the last of the line four cylinder cars do stand up surprisingly well. Group 44 race team driver and owner Bob Tullius summed this up better than anyone else I have interviewed when he said, "The TR7 and TR8 are the same car, just a different motor." Yes, there were slightly bigger brakes on the V8 cars along with revised suspension, but once the TR7 had adopted the five speed gearbox and stronger, heavier rear axle the engine was the only significant factor to distinguish the two models. Then again, we also need to consider that there are American versions of these cars and rest of the world models; by 'American' read 'gutless'! The TR8 was only ever officially sold in North America and so the world never had much chance to drive the full-fat, un-molested 155bhp version of the V8 car. It was all set for production and at least 18 pre-production examples went down the line at Solihull just before cancellation. Ironically, the product planning department, who had been scratching around for ideas of how to sell more cars, came up with a "marvellous idea" and sent a representative to see TR8 UK Executive Engineer George Spence and his manager Brian Cook the day after cancellation. The representative said to them, "Let's do a special edition of 1000 TR8s and we'll sell the lot - they'll go like hot cakes!". Unsurprisingly, he was not received with much enthusiasm and was told quite curtly that.if Product Planning had have come up with the idea a day earlier they might have saved the whole project.

"IT'S USUALLY DIFFICULT TO COMPARE A FOUR CYLINDER CAR WITH A V8 BUT ONCE THE TR7 HAD ADOPTED THE FIVE SPEED GEARBOX AND STRONGER REAR AXLE THE ENGINE WAS THE ONLY REAL WAY TO DISTINGUISH THE TWO MODELS"

Suspension on the American market cars is somewhat softer than on UK cars although this is not something I can state as being catagoric across the whole range. I was riding with Jim Tencate, senior Triumph Wedge Owners

Black rear panel denotes an early Canley build car.



Slant four is effectively derived from the Dolomite.

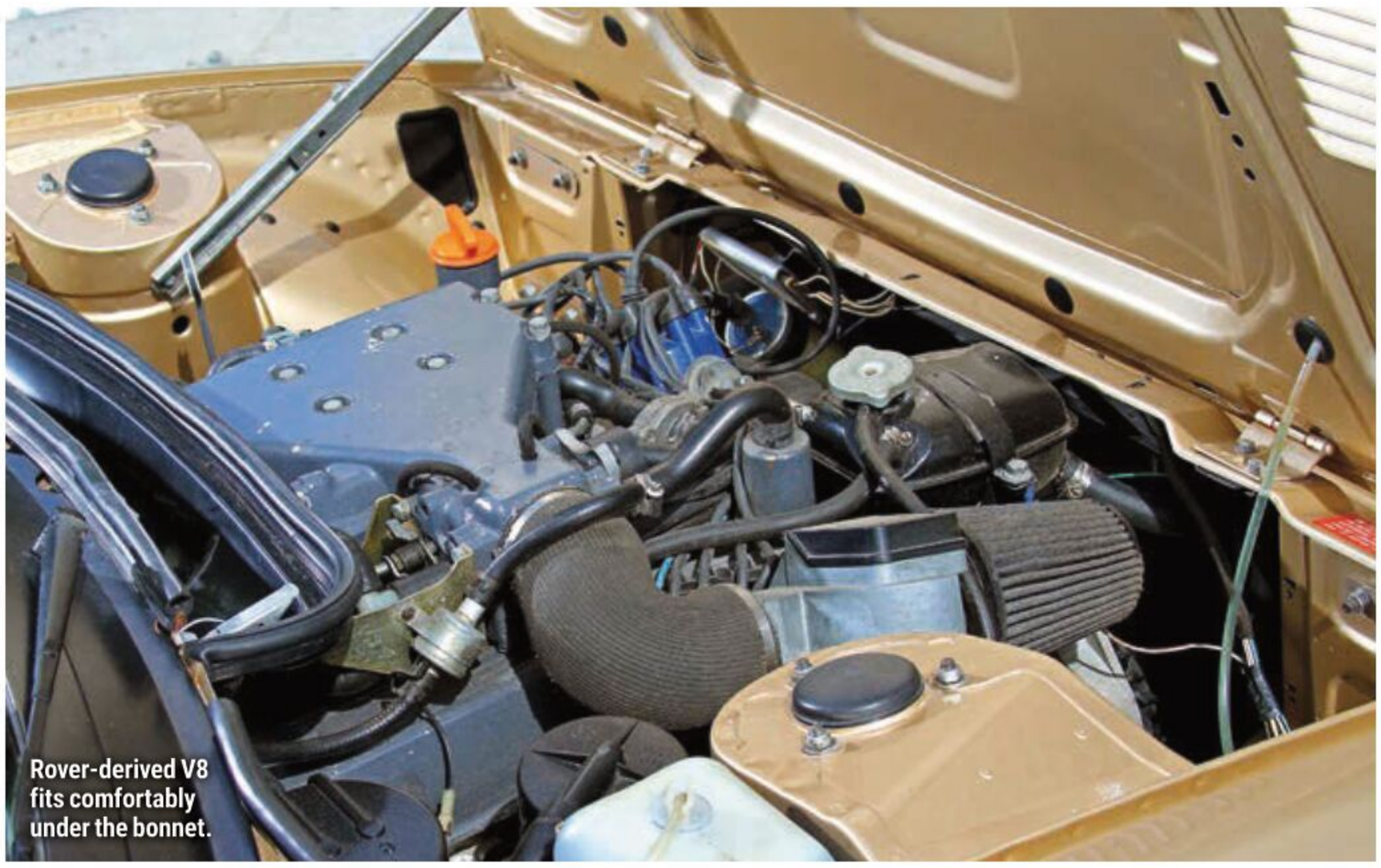
TR7 interior was bang up to date for the mid 1970s. No walnut here!

Association official, in one of his TR8s when I noticed that he was not preparing to avoid a sizeable highway pothole about 100 yards ahead of us. I braced myself for the impact as we approached this cavernous black hole of enormous dimensions, but the car breezed over it with hardly a sound or any variation of direction. This would not have been the case with my own TR7. I prefer the firmer ride of the UK cars but America was the target market for these sportsters and they had requested a boulevard cruiser rather than an old-style bone shaker that had been the norm up to that time. The Drophead bodyshell is not as robust a structure as the Coupe and those of us who know the TR7/TR8 well can identify the lesser quality of the Drophead as a driver's car. The compromise is not that great however and so anyone who really cannot imagine a sports car without a rag top it should not be a consideration. If only the money had have been available at the start to carry out the original Harris Mann style with the knock-out roof panels things might have been different. Alas, money constraints, plus the fact that the engineers were originally designing the car to withstand a 40mph impact test, consigned the concept of the TR7 with a removable roof panel to the scrap heap. But the Drophead is still a very good car to drive and when you consider that the TR7/TR8 range is the best handling of all production Triumph models then you will appreciate that you have a pretty good starting point. Only the peculiarly short wheelbase requires that the car needs to be driven with more care in wet conditions but otherwise the grip provided by any TR7 or TR8 is exceptionally good.

Purchase prices vary greatly and bargains can be had if you are lucky but as a rule of thumb I suggest around £20k for one of the 18 pre-production UK spec. TR8s in good condition whereas around £12k will get you a reasonable repatriated American car. TR7 prices tend to start at about £2k for a basket case up to over £10k for a top-notch car. Price variations between Drophead and Coupe have largely gone now as people increasingly appreciate the Coupe as the original and purest form of TR7. A genuine TR7 Sprint value is hard to estimate as there are so few of them around and any prospective purchase will need verification from the TR Drivers Club as some fakes are to be expected nowadays. Up to £20k for a top TR7 Sprint would be my guess but perhaps I'm biased as it is my opinion that the TR7 Sprint is the best car of the entire TR7/TR8 range. TR7 Resident Engineer Peter Wilson had one as a management car and he didn't want to give it back at the end of his three year tenure. Peter explained to me that the 8 valve and 16 valve cars feel very much the same until you get to 4000rpm; above 4000rpm and the Sprint becomes a →

Colour coded rear panel and revised trim mark the last, Cowley built models.

totally different animal. I concur with Peter. The TR7 Sprint feels like the car that the TR7 always should have been and given that we are talking about 1978 here, this model would have been a real road burner at the time. Its performance was quite special but I expect the brakes would have been considered marginal at best - a criticism that can be levelled at the entire range. The TR8 was strangled somewhat by emission controls but California did get a fuel injected car that put some of the lost power back into the engine. EFI was standardized across the Americas for 1981 when the TR7 also got EFI across all States. Sadly the TR8 was never a great seller owing to its high cost (due to the unfavourable £ to $ exchange rate) and the fact that the world had just been through the second energy crisis which put gas guzzling V8 cars out of favour. Even in its detoxed 133bhp state of tune, the 3500cc Rover V8 engine has such torque that driving one is effortless. By comparison the early TR7 is very different. The four-speed transmission means the car is wonderfully undergeared but in American form there is a distinct lack of power to make full use of this (90bhp compared to 105bhp for UK and rest of the world cars). Californian cars had even less power up until 1977 (76bhp) as there was only a single carburettor due to the State's even more stringent emission test. I have not driven a single carburettor car that I can recall but serial TR7 enthusiast Steve Thomas from North Devon has one and he very much enjoys the way it drives. When you consider Steve has a plethora of these Triumph Wedges including a fire-breathing, genuine TR8 Coupe in rally trim, perhaps the original TR7 deserves more respect after all. ■



Rover-derived V8 fits comfortably under the bonnet.

The interior is mostly unchanced, barring the colour scheme.

DATABASE

TRIUMPH 2000/2500

The last gasp of an independent Triumph was strong enough to last from its introduction in the '60s until the arrival of its replacement, the Rover SD1.

Words **PAUL WAGER**

SALES

1965	13,085
1966	14,120
1967	17,042
1968	15,564
1969	13,717
1970	18,205
1971	21,080
1972	19,390
1973	21,000
1974	16,395
1975	12,333
1976	10,083
1977	6307
1978	468
TOTAL	324,652

In classic car circles it's Triumph's TR sports cars which generally get all the attention but the 2000/2500 saloons are of greater significance to the company's history than is often realised.

In fact, the 2000 represents Triumph with its pulse most definitely to the ground in terms of changing consumer tastes – most notably, the shift away from larger cars in the upmarket executive segment.

It was in the mid 1950s that management of both Triumph and Rover identified a possible decline in the popularity of what was at the time known as the '3-litre' class. Changing demographics and a more youthful population meant that those in a position to afford or choose a car a cut above the average were after more than simply physical size and perceived prestige.

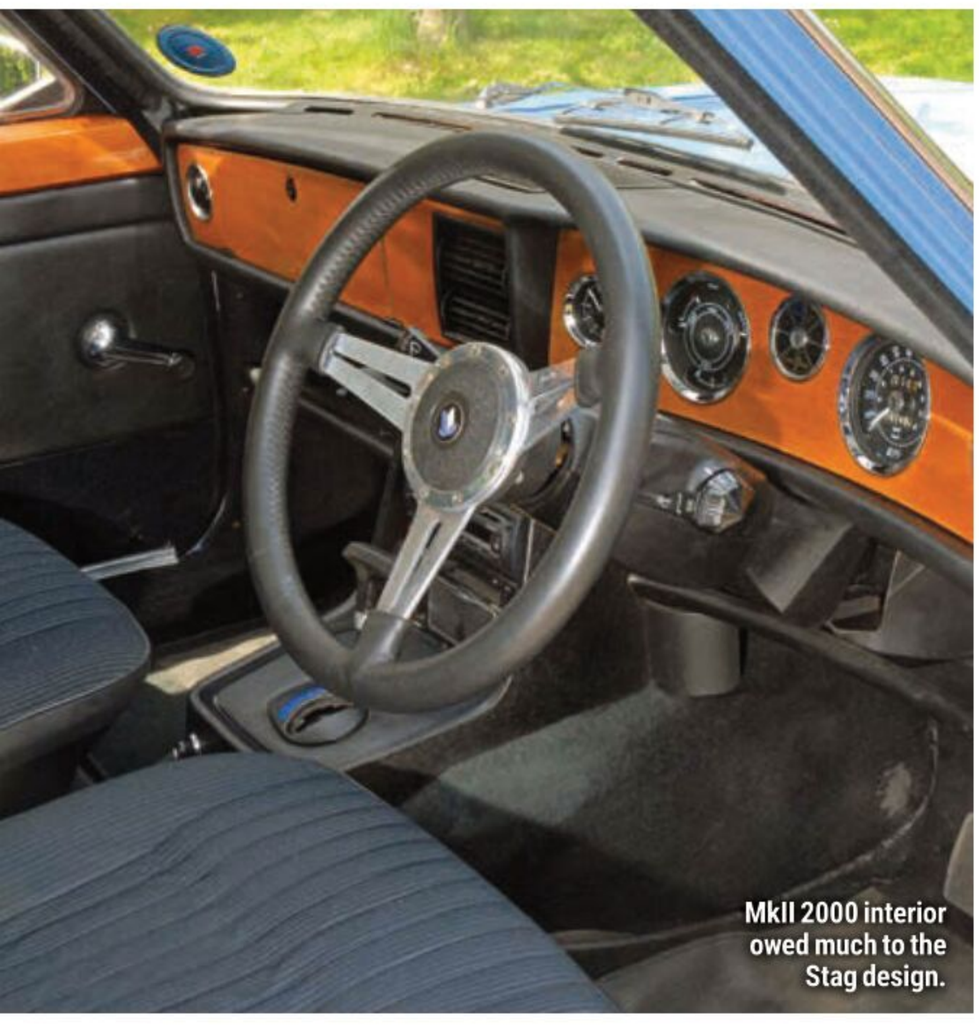
They were planning to drive themselves for a start and with the new motorways under development would be covering greater mileages than their predecessors in the course of business. As a result, they wanted spritely performance, nimble handling and perhaps above all, modern style. As the prewar fashions of the 1960s had morphed into a new, stylish world and the '60s were on the horizon chintzy curtains and heavy furniture at home had been jettisoned in favour of G-Plan or Habitat and buyers wanted their cars to reflect the modern world.

All of which explains why Triumph management identified a gap at the top of their range for a modern, driver-focused upmarket saloon.

It was a gap which perhaps unfortunately for Triumph, its then-competitor Rover had also identified, with the Rover P6 appearing within a week of the Triumph 2000 and the two eventually becoming in-house rivals.

When work began on the new Triumph in 1957, the firm's big saloon car was the Standfard Vanguard which was by then an ageing design with a worthy yet staid appeal, despite the addition of six-cylinder power.

The new car would represent a complete break with tradition for the company, even more so since it had been decided that the →



MkII 2000 interior owed much to the Stag design.

BL formation led to new models, and in house competiton.

WHAT THE PRESS SAID

The early cars were praised for their refinement and quality rather than performance, with Autocar in 1974 commenting in its summing-up "The Triumph 2000 will not cause a flutter of excitement if one is looking for scintillating performance, but the more it is driven the more one likes it, particularly the good suspension and freedom from noise."

The 2500PI was regarded with more excitement: "Sumptuous family hot rod," was Motor's description of the car in 1969, adding that they regarded it as "a worthy cut-price BMW 2500." The injection was particularly impressive, the road testers commenting that "plenty of silky torque in the middle range will satisfy most people's requirements."

By 1975, Autocar was still impressed by what was then a 10-year old design, commenting that "Successive improvements have kept it abreast of its class." and adding that it was "The quickest big Triumph yet."

Standard brand would be dropped, with the cars being marketed as Triumphs – reckoned to be a more sporting brand with more youthful appeal appeal.

Codenamed Zebu in the tradition of Triumph 'Z' project names, the new car would be financed by the sale of Standard's profitable tractor manufacturing business to Massey-Ferguson. This released almost £15m – big money in 1957 – making a significant difference to a firm the size of Triumph which at the time was operating at an eighth of the volume of BMC.

In practice, the newly-released funds were largely eaten up by other expansion, notably in manufacturing facilities and so the development programme was slower than expected.

Despite this, the specification was drawn up for what looked like a pretty sophisticated car. This was a time of experimentation in the car industry and early designs involved unusual features like a rear-mounted transaxle gearbox and separate chassis, with one proposal even boasting pneumatic suspension.

It was late in development in 1959 when the project was thrown into turmoil by a tip-off from a visiting journalist who had also seen Ford's latest prototypes.

In what with hindsight looks like a shocking breach of the confidentiality agreement usually required from the press in these cases, he happily told Triumph that their new car's style – notably its reverse-rake rear screen – was very similar to something Ford was working on. By this of course he meant the Consul Classic and Triumph was thrown into disarray.

Initially a panicked facelift was employed which eliminated the distinctive rear window but Triumph had bigger problems. Interest rates were rising, leading to a credit squeeze which hit sales and the company's finances were looking shaky.

As an alternative, Triumph considered →

taking the Herald body and enlarging it into a four-door design to suit the new car but it's said that the results looked pretty awkward and the idea was abandoned.

At this point things suddenly changed when in May 1961 Leyland pounced, saving Triumph from bankruptcy and soon afterwards replacing most of the senior management.

The new Leyland management appreciated the need to get the new '2-litre' car into production and so funds were released for Triumph technical director Harry Webster to get on with the task.

With the new project name 'Barb', the car acquired a monocoque bodyshell, a conventional mechanical layout, suspension by front struts and independent semi-trailing arm rear and a bodyshell styled by Giovanni Michelotti. It was this which really set the project apart from the clumsy 1950s style of the Zebu prototypes, with Michelotti's design offering neat proportions with a sporting low-set stance and large glass area with slim pillars.

Meanwhile, although the car was to compete in the newly-identified '2-litre' class, it offered six-cylinder power where its rivals offered only four. This was largely dictated by the fact that Triumph's only four-cylinder engine at the time was the gruff old Standard unit also used in tractors, but whatever the reason the use of what was essentially the Vanguard Six engine set the car apart in the market.

The deadline had been established for late 1963 when the car would be unveiled at the London Motor Show and even by modern standards that's pretty tight timing when you appreciate that the team was pretty much starting from scratch. They made it though and the wraps came off the bold new Triumph 2000 at Earls Court in October 1963.

HISTORY

At launch, the car was offered in just one engine size: the 1998cc straight-six which had been modified over its Vanguard specification by being given a higher compression ratio to suit the better quality fuel now available, plus twin Stromberg carbs. The result was a →

THAT LUCAS INJECTION

The Lucas Mk2 Petrol Injection system gained a reputation for unreliability when the cars were new which hasn't been helped by the problems the system exhibited in the TR6. As so often though, many of the issues stemmed from poor maintenance and lack of understanding of the system, the result being that it worked pretty well on a brand new car but soon started to fall over when the 2500PI's started to leave the dealer network and local garages started fiddling with the injection.

The installation in the 2500 was much less troublesome than the TR6 system which suffered from the fuel pump – in fact a modified wiper motor which was marginal for the job at best – being sited just above the exhaust.

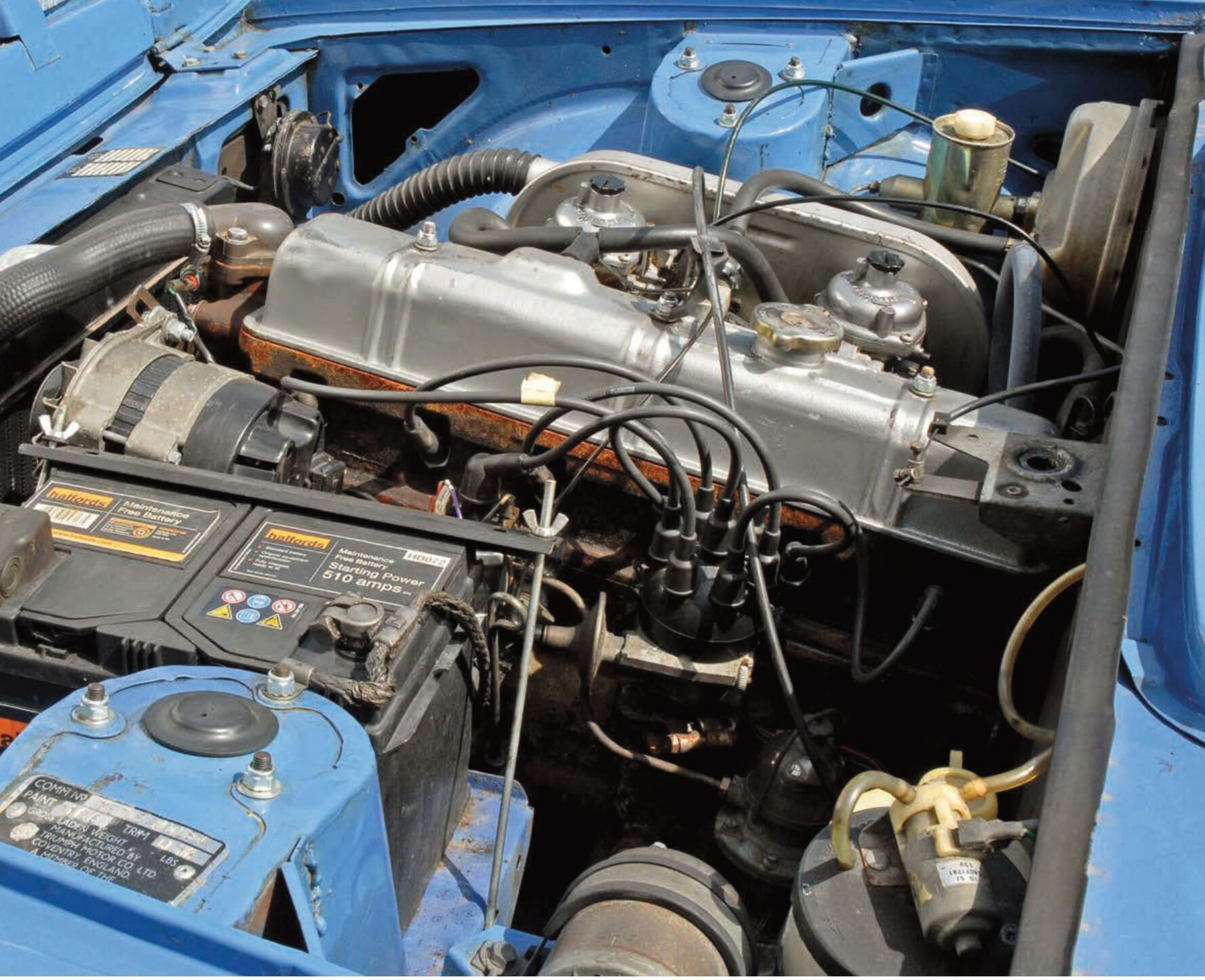
Although newfangled by the standards of the day when first launched, the Lucas system is in fact simple in its concept and is mechanical rather than electronic. Fuel is supplied at 110 psi to the metering head driven off the distributor shaft which contains a shuttle valve to distribute the fuel to the individual injectors. The total volume of fuel being introduced to the metering unit is determined by the control unit attached to the metering unit, which uses engine vacuum to move a control stop. A shaped cam determines the exact volume of fuel as engine load and vacuum changes, being in effect a hardware version of the software control 'map' stored in a modern injection system.

That's simplifying it of course, but it's an effective system when properly set-up with correctly functioning injectors and its high operating pressure does mean that the fuel is well atomised, which is why a properly set-up system can provide good power and economy.

Despite the relative simplicity of the concept though, it does require expertise to set up properly, in particular the inner workings of the metering and control units.

"IT OFFERED SIX CYLINDER POWER WHERE ITS RIVALS OFFERED ONLY FOUR. THE ONLY AVAILABLE FOUR WOULD HAVE BEEN THE STANDARD VANGUARD UNIT"

Six cylinder engine shared with Vitesse, GT6, TR5 and TR6.

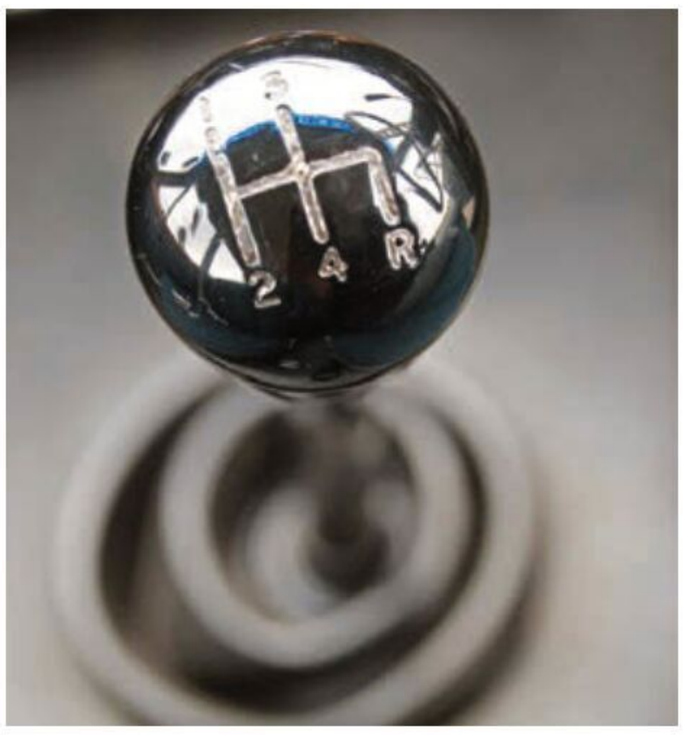


Steel wheels with hubcaps standard, 2500S gained alloys.

2.5Pi used Lucas mechanical injection system.


Early nose bored resemblance to smaller 1300FWD.


Early interior delicate and Italianite.



Early rear end more delicate, but offered smaller boot.

DERIVATIVES

The original plan had called for a variety of different models to be spun off the Triumph 2000 platform and as an example of the imagination of the team, one of them was to be a fastback which predated the SD1 by many years. Dubbed 2000GT, just a single car was built up but never made it beyond the running prototype stage.

There was also to have been a high-performance 2000TS model using a similar 115bhp engine spec to the works rally cars but again this never got past the prototype stage. It would have been quick... but not as quick as the 2500 estate run by Leonard Lee of engine maker Coventry Climax which was fitted with the firm's Formula One V8 engine...

A third derivative which did see the light of the day was a proposed 2000 convertible which was of course developed into the Stag.

creditable 90bhp which was on a par with the Rover 2000 but the Triumph enjoyed an entirely different soundtrack as well as a smoothness the OHC Rover motor couldn't offer.

Production didn't get fully under way until the following year and in 1965 the saloon was joined by an estate version. Although built by Carbodies using saloon shells plucked from the line which were then converted to estates and then returned to Canley for assembly, the Triumph estate was a regular production model which could be ordered at the dealer. The Rover P6 could be had as an estate, but only by taking a newly purchased car to one of the aftermarket converters at great cost. This gave Triumph a definite edge in the market, since the plushly trimmed and sporting estate was a world away from the utilitarian estates offered by other makers at the time.

In 1966, the cars gained revised badging and rubber-faced overriders, while inside leather trim became standard and through-flow ventilation system was improved with 'eyeball' lower dash vents and extraction vents above the rear window on the saloon and the number plate on estates. The car also gained negative earth electrics at this point and the automatics gained an improved version of the Borg Warner gearbox.

In 1968, Leyland merged with BMC to create British Leyland and suddenly the Rover was an in-house rival. Triumph executives were also now aware that the P6 would soon be offered with the 3.5-litre V8, but rather usefully, to keep the TR sports cars competitive the Triumph engine had already been stroked to 2498cc in 1967 and given the Lucas fuel injection for improved power and driveability plus the opportunity for a unique marketing twist. It was duly fitted into the 2000 and the new car was launched in 1968, badged as Triumph 2.5PI for Petrol Injection.

The gearbox and overdrive were uprated over the 2000 and the brakes gained an upgraded →

Stag inspired nose suits the saloon shape.


Longer MkII tail hid capacious boot.

"AS HAS BECOME POPULAR FOLKLORE, THE LUCAS SYTEM PROVED LESS THAN RELIABLE IN OPERATION. WITH HINDSIGHT, IT WAS ONLY MINOR DETAILS WHICH HANDICAPPED IT"

servo and thickers discs at the front. The boot floor pressing was revised to permit the fuel pump mounting and cosmetic differences amounted to revised badging, vinyl-trimmed C-pillars and Rostyle wheel trims. Two-speed wipers and a sports steering wheel were also standardised.

As has become popular folklore, the Lucas system proved less than reliable in operation, a situation which with the benefit of hindsight seems incredible, since it was only relatively minor details which handicapped it: the fuel pump was under-specified and prone to heat-induced vaporisation from its poisition above the hot exhaust.

Before the injection had a chance to make a name for itself though, the entire range was facelifted in 1969, the work being once again entrusted to Michelotti. Under project name Innsbruck, this was carried out to give the saloon a corporate face matching the Stag and also to provide usefully increased boot space with its lengthened tail. The car also gained the wider-track rear suspension developed for the Stag and a revised differential mounting for the saloons.

There are many who now regard the original Mk1 style as being the more successful design but there's no denying that the Mk2 was more contemporary and gave the car renewed appeal going into the 1970s. Since a lack of funds prevented the firm from doing anything more extensive it was a clever piece of work.

The interior was also suitable updated, gaining a Stag-style instrument layout and wood veneered dash. The veneered door cappings were revised and the seats became more comfortable, while the overdrive switch was relocated to the top of the gearknob. In 1970 the front anti-roll bar was made standard on the estates to reduce their tendency for body roll when loaded, having already been fitted to Police-spec cars.

In late 1971 revisions were made to the cylinder head and block castings to streamline production by using the same castings on both 2000 and 2500 engines. At this point the 2000 also gained domed pistions resulting in a →


2.5Pi engine unchanged from the MkI.


Alloys were shared with the Stag.

THE STAG

As you'll see in our boxout on proposed 2000/2500 derivatives, one model on the drawing board was a convertible but in the event it was left to Michelotti to develop this independently.

The Stag originated as a proposed motor show concept. A time-worn 2000 saloon was sent to Italy where Michelotti's studio promptly chopped the roof off, shortened it and would have displayed it at the 1965 Turin show had Triumph management not immediately decided to take up their option to productionise the design.

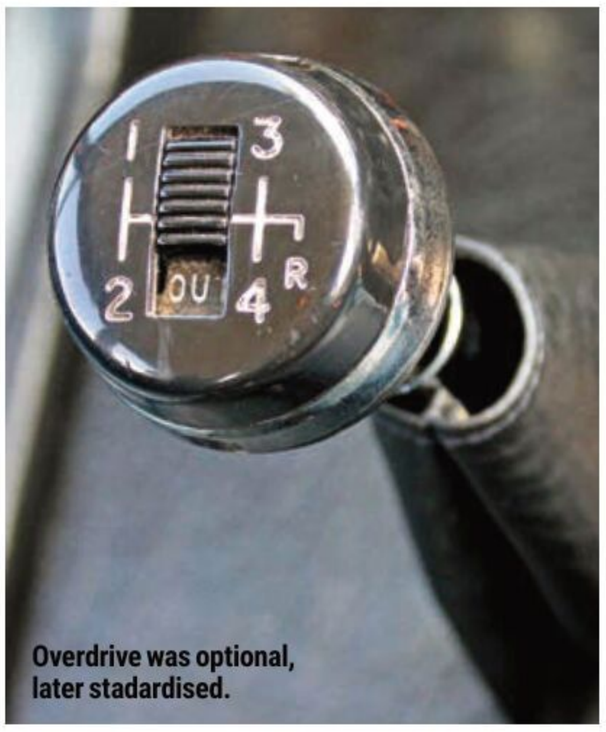
In its transition from concept to production car back in Coventry, the car gained the Stag's trademark T-bar roof arrangement after Michelotti's fully open design was found to lack structural rigidity despite the addition of double-skinned panels. With an eye to US sales, it was also decided that a V8 engine would be needed and the plan was to develop a modular engine family which would include a four-cylinder which could be doubled up to create a V8. The idea was to launch the car with the 2500 saloon's straight six and offer the V8 later.

Why not just use the Rover V8? Well the urban myths suggesting corporate pride drove Triumph engineers to make sure the engine bay couldn't accommodate the Buick unit are probably just that: the reality is that Triumph had spent too much on its V8 project to discard the investment lightly, while production of the Rover unit was at full stretch anyway. Whatever the truth, the Triumph engine was more modern and more efficient than the Rover: despite being half a litre smaller it produced more power and with its twin overhead camshafts was more modern too.

While the engine was reliable enough when new, as it fell out of the main dealer network and back-street garages struggled to work on what was at the time an advanced design, the Stag started to gain a reputation for unreliability. That didn't stop it selling well though or indeed surviving into classic status: a huge proportion of Stags are still on the road.

In reality the Stag was all but unique in the market, with only Mercedes offering a similar combination of four-seater convertible and V8 power.

MkII saloon on alloys makes for a handsome car.



Overdrive was optional, later stadardised.

Mylon seats wear, these have been partly retrimmed in vinyl.

Handsome Carbodies estate shell didn't change for the MkII 2000.

Most late models used the 2.5 litre engine, seen here in a 2500TC estate.

drop of compression ratio to 8.8:1. In November 1972, the Laycock overdrive became standard on PI cars with these also receiving revised camshaft, smaller exhaust valves and revised injection metering unit as well as new inlet manifolds and revised throttle mechanism. The 2000s also gained the smaller exhaust valves and revised cam profile, with SUs then replacing the Stromberg carbs.

These changes were nominally made in the quest for reduced emissions although power output did drop slightly as a result, depending on which measuring standard was used.

During 1973, the 2000 saloons finally received standard radial tyres, with the nylon seat trim replaced by a corded material.

As the '70s wore on, the Triumph remained a solid sales performer but was hampered by its in-house competitor, the Rover P6 which in V8 form was more than a match for the injected 2500. At least one 2500 was fitted with a Stag V8 but the idea never made it to production, while a handful of estates were also converted to use Ferguson four-wheel drive. A four-wheel drive V8-powered Triumph estate would have sewn up the market Audi later had to itself.

A further facelift arrived in 1974, which added the Stag-style radiator grille and added the 99 bhp carb-fed 2500TC model which was designed to counter the Lucas injection system's reputation for unreliability. The 2500TC proved to be sufficiently popular for the injected 2.5 PI to be dropped in 1975, at which point the range became the 2000TC, 2500TC, 2500S and 2500S estate. The range-topping 'S' specification offered the 14-inch Stag-style GKN alloy wheels, front anti-roll bar and softer front springs, additional instrumentation and tinted glass. All the 2.5-litre engines now sported a revised cylinder head, TR6-style exhaust manifold and twin SU HS6 carbs for 106 bhp. In May 1977, production of the 2000/2500 ended, the car effectively replaced by the Rover SD1 thanks to the management decision that Triumph's role within the BL empire would be as a maker of smaller saloons and sports cars.

As we now know, that plan proved to be less than successful and by 1981 the Triumph badge had disappeared from the firm's own cars, although a rebadged Honda sold as the Triumph Acclaim until 1984. ■

DID YOU KNOW...

- The body engineering for the Mk2 facelift was carried out by Karmann.
- The Mk2 estate was 5 inches shorter than the saloon since the body was based on the Mk1 car.
- A version of the car was assembled in Australia with the name '2000MD' for Managing Director. Features included knock-off wire wheels and triple carbs.
- The fuel tank was relocated under the rear floor for the estate in order to permit a folding rear seat.

TECH SPECS

MODEL	TRIUMPH 2000 MKI	TRIUMPH 2.5 PI MKI	TRIUMPH 2000 TC MKII
ENGINE	1998cc	2498cc	1998cc
POWER (BHP/RPM)	90/5000	150/5500	93/5000
TORQUE (LBF.FT)	177/2900	164/3500	177/2900
TOP SPEED (MAN)	95 mph	106 mph	102 mph
0-50 MPH (MAN)	9.4 secs	7.4 secs	10.5 secs
CONSUMPTION	25 mpg	25 mpg	25 mpg
GEARBOX	4 speed manual/3 speed auto	4 speed manual/3 speed auto	4 speed manual/3 speed auto

MODEL	TRIUMPH 2500 TC MKII	TRIUMPH 2500 S MKII	TRIUMPH 2.5 PI MKII
ENGINE	2498cc	2498cc	2498cc
POWER (BHP/RPM)	108/4700	108/4700	132/5450
TORQUE (LBF.FT)	140/2750	140/2750	146/2000
TOP SPEED (MAN)	105 mph	105 mph	110 mph
0-50 MPH (MAN)	8.5 secs	8.5 secs	7.5 secs
CONSUMPTION	25 mpg	25 mpg	25 mpg
GEARBOX	4 speed manual/3 speed auto	4 speed manual/3 speed auto	4 speed manual/3 speed auto

MODEL	MKI	MKII
LENGTH	441.5 cm	465 cm
WIDTH	165 cm	171 cm
WEIGHT	1100 kg	1184 kg

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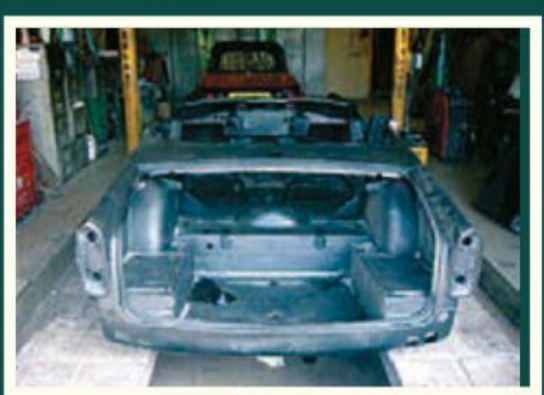

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Here at Kelsey, we own and love classic Triumphs, and we share the admiration that has earned its products several thousand followers in its near-100 year history and in the decades since. This is our celebration of everything that's brilliant about the brand, and of the models which made it great.

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