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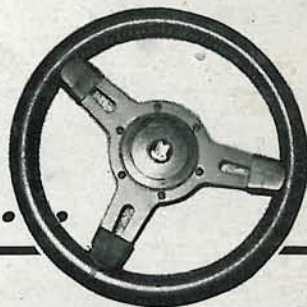
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TURNING CIRCLE

Editor: P. J. WILLIAMS



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Editorial

WELL, it's taken more than a little while but here at last is the Spitfire IV/1500 Turning Circle the second of this title, the previous one being Turning Circle Number 8 way back in 1985. Many thanks to all those who took the trouble to write in with your articles, a couple of which were/will be carried over into the Courier.

I certainly enjoyed reading them as I'm sure will the rest of the Membership.

On a more subdued note, Mk.IV/1500 Spitfires represent the largest section of Club Car ownership by far and it was disappointing to receive so relatively few articles for this issue - even more so following the very enthusiastic response of our Bond owners for the previous edition. Is it that the majority of Spitfire enthusiasts are just too busy underneath their cars to respond or are they simply the equivalent of couch potatoes? Alternatively, is the format of Turning Circle burnt out?

More than any other Club publication, *Turning Circle* depends on the response of the general membership rather than relying on the regular articles generated by our hard pressed Officers and Register Secretaries (thanks of course goes here to John Thomason for his article) so let's have some feedback to put in *The Courier*. I won't mind reading through a sackful of mail. Mark your envelopes 'Turning Circle'. All constructive comments welcome.

How about it?

Peter Williams. Editor, Turning Circle.



TRW 857J. My thanks to Malcolm McKay of 'Classic Cars' magazine for obtaining this previously unreleased photo from the 1971 'Motor' road test.

The Spitfire MkIV/1500 Press Cars

John Thomason

John Thomason casts his journalistic eye over the background and references to the Triumph Spitfire Press Cars.

In many ways, the initial success of a new car or model range depends very much on good advertising and the opinion of the Motoring Press. A bad road test could spell disaster for a new car. This is why manufacturers spend a small fortune on advertising and go to great lengths to ensure that their Press Cars are well prepared and are at their very best.

In the early days, Triumph were no exception. However, by the time the Spitfire MK.IV/1500 arrived advertising was noticeably reduced. Triumph were now part of British Leyland and preference certainly appears to have been given towards MG and the TR7. In the mid to late 1970's, TR7 adverts were quite prolific whereas those of the Spitfire 1500 were very rare. I only know of two. It must be to the credit of the Spitfire 1500 that despite the lack of advertising and apparent preference towards the MG and TR7, it still continued to sell so well. It could be argued that the Spitfire was so much better that it sold itself



GRW 177N, the car that featured in the road test against the MG Midget in 1975. Courtesy, 'Classic Cars'.

and didn't need advertising! The following is a list of the UK Spitfire IV/1500's that Triumph used as Press Cars or for advertising in the Motoring Press of the day. I have also included those cars that appeared in the Motoring Press that were not 'official' Press cars, eg. HME 678N that was actually bought as a 'Staff Car'.



The cost of living is less than you'd think.

0-50 before the others get into first.

Instant air-conditioning. Suntan guaranteed.


Reclining bucket seats with plenty of room for manoeuvre.

But would you believe 45mpg at a constant speed of 50mph? Autocar says so. So that excuse has just run out.

Aim the nose, spoiler and all. Show them your sexy rear.

And away. Sandy beaches. Country lanes. Freedom.

All for the cost of a small saloon.

Until you've owned a Spitfire  you haven't lived.

'74 TRIUMPH SPITFIRE

OVC 208M featured in a stirring magazine advertisement.



GRW 976N looking very smart in one of the early Spitfire 1500 brochures.



HME 678N bought by 'Autocar' as a staff car and featured in their long term report. It is still in circulation today.

It pulls beautifully.



The Triumph Spitfire's twin-carbed 1493cc engine gives you all the thrust you'd expect from a classic sportscar.

Yet, unlike other sportscars, it has a boot big enough for more than just your own suitcase. It can do over 50mpg*. And it costs less than £3,400**.

So go to your showroom for a test drive today and see what a great deal you'll get.



Two rare advertisements for the Spitfire 1500. Have you seen any others?



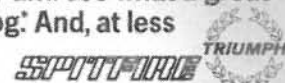
0 mph.

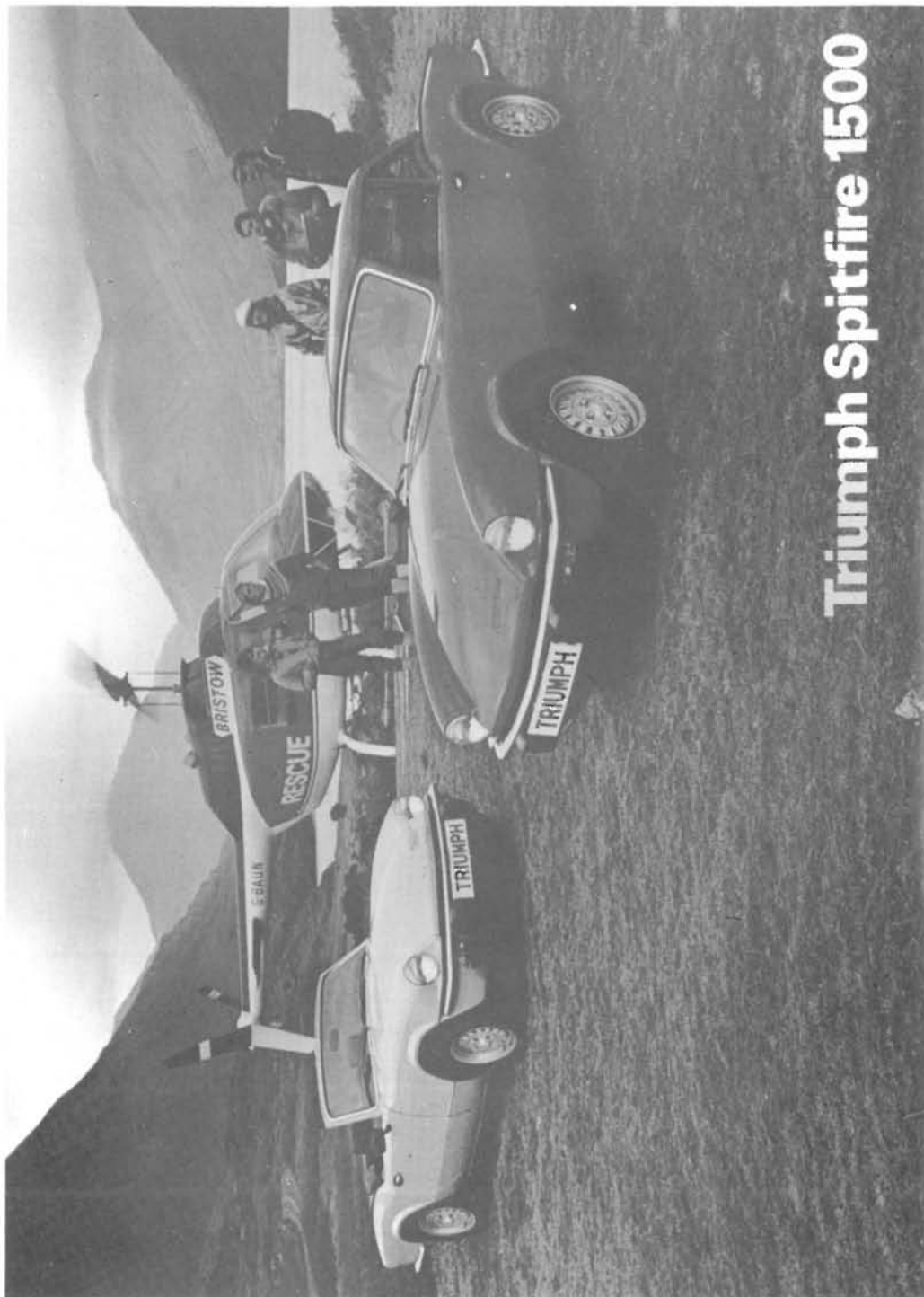


Oomph.

Even at the kerb, the Triumph Spitfire is a hard car to pass. Uncurbed, it bursts away with full thrust from its twin-carbed 1493cc engine.

Go and try a Triumph Spitfire at your showroom today and see what a great deal you'll get. It's the only sportscar that can do over 50mpg*. And, at less than £3,800**, it leaves all the others standing.





Triumph Spitfire 1500

Late Spitfire 1500 brochures didn't carry number plates thereby making them timeless.

Spitfire Mk.IV

Reg. No.	Colour	Source/Use	Date
RVC 436H	?	Autocar: 'Buying Second-Hand'	20-4-74
TRW 852J	?	Publicity Photo	
TRW 852J	?	Publicity Photo	
TRW 853J	White	Autocar: 'Buying Second-Hand'	9-10-82
TRW 857J	?	Motorsport: 'Road Test'	- 7-71
		Motor: 'Brief Test'	7- 8-71
SWK 936K	White	Brochure T/441/1070/ENG	-11-71
SWK 936L	White	Retouched Photo of SWK 936K!	- 1-73
JVV 818L	White	Featured in Toledo Advert	
MLF 726L	?	Publicity Photo	
OVC 208M	White	Advertisement/Publicity Photo	-10-73
ORW 969M	Blue	Brochure T/	

Spitfire IV's, TRW 853J and TRW 857J were the two Press cars released to the Motoring Press for the road tests. The cars featured in the *Autocar*, 'Buying Second-Hand' articles were publicity photos originally released by Triumph. In 1973, Triumph tried to pull a 'fast one' by releasing the 1971/72 Spitfire MK.IV brochure with a retouched photo of SWK 936K to show an 'L' registered car!

It's interesting to see that the majority of Press cars were white. Was white the 'in' colour in the early 1970's?

Spitfire 1500

Reg. No.	Colour	Source/Use	Date
GRW 175N	Red	Brochure T/1131/11.74	-11-74
GRW 176N	Red	Auto Sport: 'Road Test'	27- 2-75
GRW 177N	Red	Motor: 'Bigger Burner'	7-12-74
		Motor: 'Twin Test'	24- 5-75
GRW 179N	White	Autocar: 'Auto Test'	1- 3-75
GRW 976N	Red	Brochure T/1143/1.75	- 1-75
HME 678N	Orange	Autocar: 'Long Term Test'	3- 1-76
CVC 228T	Red	Motor: 'Sports Car Comparison'	19- 5-79
VEW 364T	Blue	Publicity Photo	
...T	Java Green	Publicity Photo	

Obviously the series GRW ...N was the range of Press Cars. It would be interesting to know if there was ever a GRW 178N and if so, what happened to it. It may be that GRW 175N, '176N, '177N and '976N were in fact the same red car fitted with different number plates: not an uncommon occurrence with Press Cars. Of the Press Cars, GRW 177N is probably the most famous. This is the car that did battle with the MG Midget in the *Motor*, 'Twin Test' of May, 1975 and won. The conclusion reached was that the Spitfire was the faster, quieter, more economical and most attractive of the two.

HME 678N was not a Press Car, but a car bought by *Autocar* as a 'Staff Car' for long term testing.

The next series of publicity photo's appeared in 1978 when the Spitfire 1500 was slightly updated with cloth seats and TR7 switchgear etc. Unfortunately, this didn't appear to attract the Motoring Press' attention except for *Motor*'s 'Sports Car Comparison' in May 1979.

By the mid/late 1970's, Spitfire 1500 brochures and advertisements ceased to carry number plates: only 'TRIUMPH' and 'SPITFIRE'. This of course made the photos timeless which meant that a new brochure or advertisement didn't have to be produced each year.

I am sure that my list of Press Cars and publicity photos isn't exhaustive. If you know of any others then I'd be pleased to hear from you. Better still, do you know the whereabouts of any of the Press cars? Where have they all gone?

STOP PRESS!

I now know that...

GRW 177N HME 678N

GRW 179N CVC 228T

GRW 976N SWK 936K

...are still alive and well! Are their owners in the TSSC? If so, I would like to hear from them.

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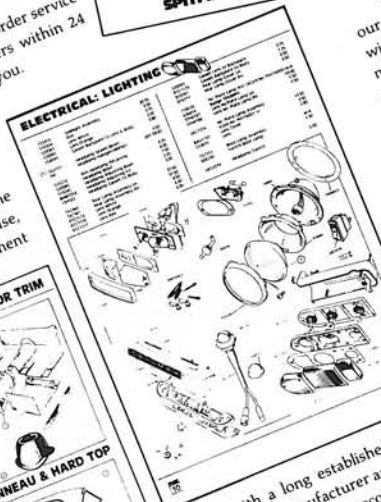
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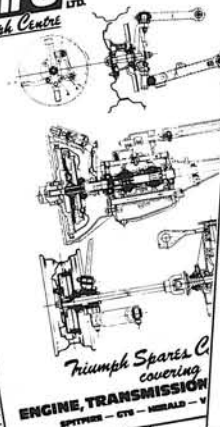
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Ken Dayus and Kim Maddocks

Rebuild.

Ken relates how he tackled his first rebuild, resulting in a car to be proud of.

My girlfriend and I purchased our Spitfire in March 1989. It was in very good condition with hardly any rust due to the fact that it was wax treated when new in March 1973.

We didn't buy it to rebuild it but just to drive it in the summer months. After visiting many shows throughout the summer, we 'got the bug' and decided that we really wanted an immaculate example.

So, in March 1990 exactly a year after purchase date, UYA 783M was ready to be fitted with a new bill of health.

We borrowed a friend's garage which was very well equipped with hydraulic ramps, compressor etc., and then myself, my brother (a car sprayer by trade) and a friend from work set about the job of rebuilding it.



Figure 1. The sills were cut off about an inch from the original seam, the excess being later ground away more delicately.

The interior was removed completely and so was all of the exterior trim and doors, rubbers, windscreen etc until just the bare shell was left. Next the car was jacked up and braced and the outer sills cut off. The actual structure of the car was excellent including inner sills, 'A' posts etc. Holes were found in both inner sills at the front. These were dressed and plated.

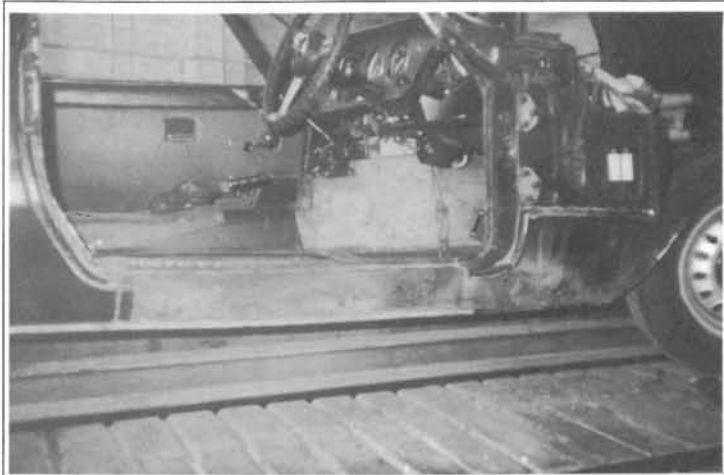


Figure 2. With the sill cut off, further damage was found in front of the A post. The bottom of the A post was left on at this stage to act as a reference point for aligning the new sill but was later itself replaced with new.

Holes were also found in one rear wheel arch and around the rear jacking points. These were also dressed and then plated. Whilst all this was being done, my brother was busy preparing all the bodywork for spraying. The outer sills were then welded on in exactly the same places as the original sills. The bottom 'A' posts were then welded in place. All welded areas were cleaned and dressed ready for spraying. A new front offside quarter valance was fitted. The car was then primer-filler sprayed and a black, very fine guide coat sprayed on to highlight all the high and low spots on the bodywork. When the bodywork was eventually flat, the car was sprayed with a final coat of primer. That was rubbed down and next came the job of spraying the top coats.

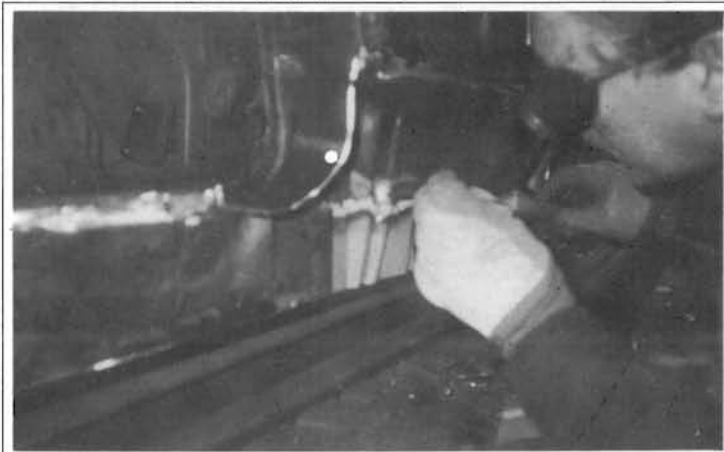


Figure 3. Repairing the bodywork forward of the A post is a common requirement. The car has had three previous

Six top coats were applied altogether, each being rubbed flat before commencing with the next. The final coat was rubbed down with 1200 'wet and dry' using plenty of soapy water. The car was then machine polished with rubbing/cutting compound, T-cutted and then polished.

'New carpets were fitted together with a new radiator, new clutch, new rear leaf spring, all new rubber weather seals, new trim clips and various other new exterior and interior trim parts.'

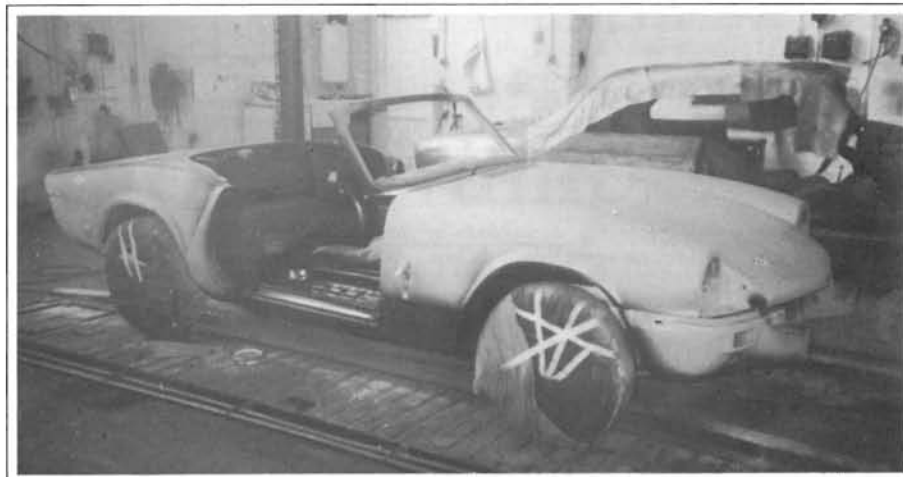
The project took a month of work to complete including weekends, sometimes working until about midnight. The car has been finished in its original Carmine Red colour inside and out. The interior trim is tan and black. The car is now in excellent condition and has been Scholtz under-body protected and waxoiled so hopefully it should last another 17 years before another rebuild is required.

This was the first rebuild any of us had ever tackled and we were all pleased with the end result (the colour photos look great -ED). It just goes to show what can be achieved with minimal knowledge and a limited budget. The whole cost of the rebuild was about £1500 which seems a lot but put that with the original buying price of £1200 and the question of just where could I get a Mk.IV Spitfire in this condition (and part of British Heritage) for £2700? All parts used were original BL replacements.

owners, all of them being family or friends and has a full service history. It has 73,000 miles recorded but we intend to put a few more miles on it this year driving to different events.'



Bodywork complete and ready for priming.



Primer and the first top coats applied.



Resplendent in Red!

The Spitfire

Roma Walton

Flying through the air, sailing across the sea as at home as if over land. Is it Supercar? No, it's Roma's Spitfire.

MY husband is a Radio Officer with the R.F.A., which supports the R.N. In 1989, he was serving on the L.S.L., R.F.A. *Sir Geraint*, which is used to land vehicles for the army.

It's rather like a Roll-on, Roll-off car ferry, but equipped to carry tanks and the like.

As she was due to spend a few days in Gibraltar and was running there only part loaded, permission was obtained to transport my Pride and Joy, Spitfire 1500, JPW 9V.

With much trepidation and fear of grounding, she was driven up the steep ramp onto the Tank Deck, taking care to avoid the huge Michigan trucks which were being driven around with gay abandon by young soldiers who didn't look old enough to handle a BMX bike let alone a giant lifter. The car was firmly lashed to the huge eyebolts used for securing large vehicles, and then disappeared from view surrounded by an assortment of military vehicles.

Once the ramp was raised and the little Spit sealed in the bowels of the ship, I was besieged by doubts - what if one of those huge trucks broke loose; what if the tank deck flooded? Perhaps it wasn't such a good idea after all. Throughout the crossing I worried about the little car every time the ship rolled heavily - no stabilisers on these ships!

Having left the UK in miserable weather, we arrived in Gib in glorious October sunshine. My husband, bless him, had neglected to mention one small point. The *Sir Geraint* was to be alongside the quay, so the Spit would have to be craned off! I decided I didn't want to drive the Spit into Spain after all. She could stay just where she was. I didn't want my little treasure floating through the air. Again, all the 'what ifs' ran through my mind.

However, I was persuaded that everything would be OK, the crew did know what they were doing after all. The huge hatches were slid open, and the crane towered over the opening. It seemed an awful long way up and then down again! She was eased onto the cargo nets with old lifejackets to protect the paintwork and then gently lifted up through the hatch. It seemed as if there wasn't an inch to spare. A moment's panic from me not the crew, as she started to swing, and then up and over she went into the sunshine. It seemed an age as she was suspended. Now was the time for a quick study of the underside. Who needs a ramp! And so, gently



Has Landed

was she lowered to the quayside to be parked proudly outside OHM's office while I had a large gin!

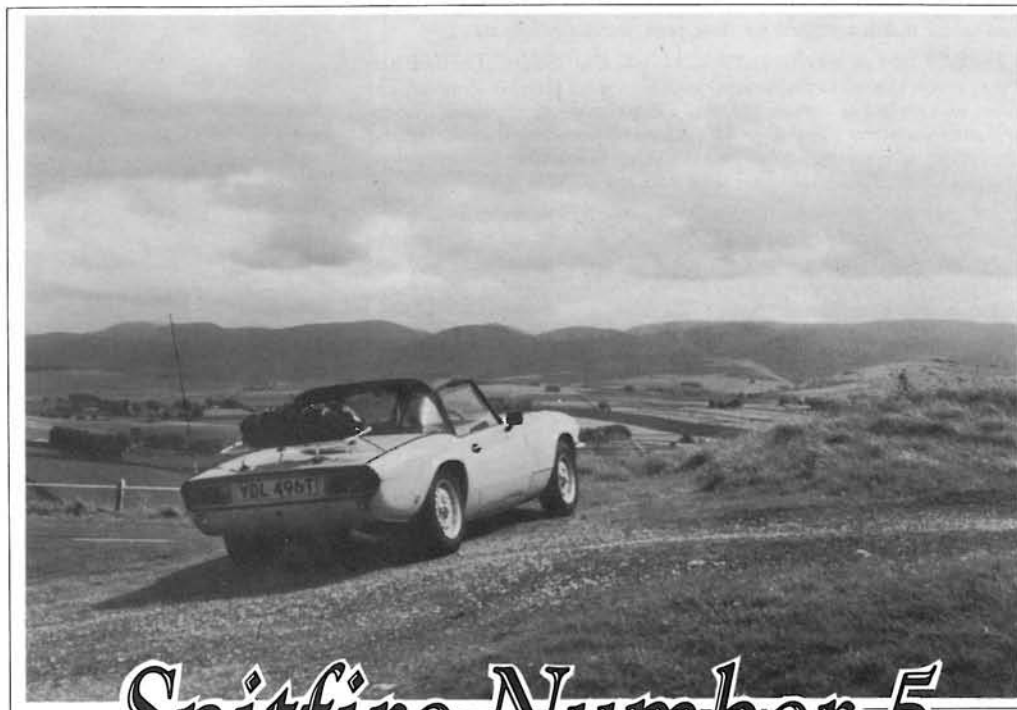
We had a lovely few days. She made it to the very top of the Rock quite happily, escorting those members of the Ship's staff who were doing a Rock Run for charity. I wondered just how many Spitfires had been up there, beyond the areas open to the public. We avoided the Ape's Den for obvious reasons, not wishing to lose any Spitbits!

Having been to Gib several times, the lure of Spain was strong. It was great fun to get off the tourist track and wander the mountain roads in search of local bars. We had to stop often, you see, in case she overheated! We were quite surprised by the scarcity of convertibles in that climate and greeted the only other Spitfire we saw, a blue one with local plates, with much enthusiasm. Sadly, the traffic didn't allow us to turn round and to get a closer look.

All too soon it was time to load up again. I'm afraid I didn't feel any more confident the second time around. There I was up on the Bridge Wing with heart in mouth again. In fact I had to go and have another large gin. But of course it all went smoothly except for the fact that the Captain himself decided to park her once she was safely in the Tank Deck. It's a good job he drives ships for a living because he nearly put her through the bow doors. 'By Gum!', Sir said, 'That clutch is a bit fierce isn't it!' So that meant yet another gin!

Off we went to Cagliari, where the Sardinian locals who had gathered at the port had quite a surprise when the bow doors were opened, and there in solitary splendour on the Tank Deck was a red Spitfire. Once again she was surrounded by military vehicles and we set sail home.

Back at Marchwood she was driven off into the November cold before setting off to Derbyshire. I'm sure she, like me, would have been happy to stay in Spain, even if the means of getting there was a bit undignified.



Spitfire Number 5

Cruise across to the Isle of Wight to meet yet another Spitfire enthusiast. They're everywhere!

Peter Back

I have been in the TSSC since 1985 when I bought a 1200 Herald Estate after passing my driving test in an Escort.

From starting off on Heralds, I progressed to Mk.3 and Mk.IV Spitfires and bought my current Spitfire 1500 (my fifth) in April 1989. This was at the time when Spitfire prices just seemed to be creeping up and I looked at several overpriced cars before finding YDL 496T. There were a few areas where 11 years of flying stones had chipped the Inca Yellow paintwork and caused some surface rust. The seats were tatty and the clutch was slipping. But this was a late 1500 (Commission Number FH1305190) with overdrive that was almost totally original. The asking price was £1000 and I was so thrilled with the car that I didn't even try to haggle.

As with my previous cars, I treated, and still do treat this car as a rolling restoration: the car not being off the road for more than a week at a time.

Being nearly summer, I drove the car around as it was for a while before deciding on what job to tackle first. I must admit, I didn't do the jobs in any order of priority. I just did what I felt like doing at the time. The jobs done so far (in chronological order, I think) are as follows:-

1) The wheels were wire brushed and sanded with aluminium oxide paper to remove rust. They were then treated with Jenolite and sprayed with black 'Smoothrite'. This gives a stove enamelled effect. When the Smoothrite had fully cured (about 3-4 weeks), it was sprayed over with 'Pro-match' Wheel-silver (available from Unipart). Acrylic laquer was applied over the silver and I found this gave exactly the right shade of silver to match the wheel centre caps. Wheel-silver on its own is much too 'bright'. I believe silver Smoothrite is now available. This would save 4 weeks of driving around with black wheels but I'm not sure how good the colour match is.

2) The seats and interior trim was removed. The floor pan was cleaned up and 'Jenolited' where necessary. It was then given a good coat of yellow Smoothrite. This was brush applied.

Owners of Inca Yellow cars should note that yellow Smoothrite is quite a good colour match and ideal for floor pans, interior panels etc.

3) The most time consuming and dirty job was now tackled. The underside of the car was cleaned up and painted with Finnigan's Number 1 primer. The primer was applied in copious amounts using a brush which meant that my hand and most of my arm also got a good coating. Because of the critical curing times involved with this sort of rust inhibiting primer, I ended up spaying the top coat of Inca Yellow after dark with the aid of a torch.

4) I had noticed that whether my car was parked in the street or at one of the several shows attended by the TSSC locals here on the island (Peter's from the Isle of Wight - where my GT6 Mk.1, 'JDL' also originated - ED), one of the first things people look at is the interior. This fact, together with a numb behind, made me decide it was time to do something about those knackered seats.

New 'houndstooth' seat covers were therefore purchased from John Hills. The old seat covers were stripped off and the seat frames painted with black Hammerite. A local trimming company replaced the foam in the seat bases while I recovered the backs. I was very pleased with the results and must say it really is quite easy to do and makes a vast difference to the interior.

5) By this time, my slipping clutch was getting so bad I could hardly pull away in the morning to go to work. Foolishly, I purchased a 3-piece clutch kit from Serk Marston. I was first given the wrong clutch plate (luckily I spotted this before fitment) and then a warped clutch cover (unfortunately I didn't spot this!). The warped clutch cover had the effect of making the clutch both stick and slip! I ended up having to get my local garage to fit a Borg and Beck unit. To be fair, Serk Marston did refund me for the defective clutch and paid for the garage's labour (after about six months) but I discovered you can save yourself a lot of hassle by not always going for the cheapest alternative. Back to the bodywork:-

6) The sills, front bulkhead and rear wing lower quarters were stripped back to bare metal using water soluble Nitromors. Areas of surface rust were rubbed down to good metal and the whole area was treated with Jenolite. The bare metal was then sprayed with Finnigan's Number 1 primer and refinished in Inca Yellow. To protect my nice new paint from further stone damage, vulnerable areas were coated with 'clear stone chip protect' (much better than the black stuff).



Sills were paint-stripped with Nitromors, treated with Jenolite and Finnigan's Number 1 primer.

7) The only area of the bodywork now requiring attention was the bonnet. The outer halves of the inner arches had become detached from the front wings



Inca Yellow applied and vulnerable areas sprayed with clear stone chip.

(if you know what I mean). Replacement arches were bought from SOC Spares but only the RH arch was good enough to fit. I got a refund on the LH arch and fabricated my own. I am toying with the idea of getting one of the new British Motor Heritage bonnets which seem to be very reasonably priced.

On the mechanical side again:-

8) I have fitted new rear shock absorbers and just fitted new front springs, shocks, top ball joints and rebushed the wishbones. The difference in ride and handling is fantastic.

9) Copper brake pipes have been fitted.

10) A TSSC stainless steel transverse 'sports' exhaust box has been fitted. This is louder than I anticipated. In fact a Police Land Rover Discovery pulled up behind me and announced that I needed to replace it. I must admit when the car is being pushed it probably breaks the legal noise levels. (I think they must have forgotten to put the baffles in).

I use my car everyday to travel to and from work and out in the evenings etc. As mentioned earlier, I also take it to the local shows including the Fire Engine Rally. Last summer I went on a week's camping holiday in the Lake District with it. That was fantastic. It



Seats were recovered with new foam and seat covers.



Out and about on the Isle of Wight - First Island Camping Weekend.

really is a beautiful place. Driving that week I travelled over 1000 miles and only saw one other Spitfire. My next big (?) job is repairing the zip on my Tonneau cover.

Happy Motoring.

SALES

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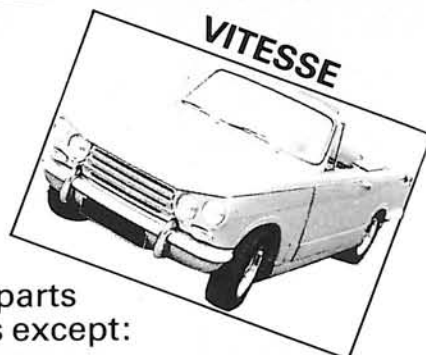


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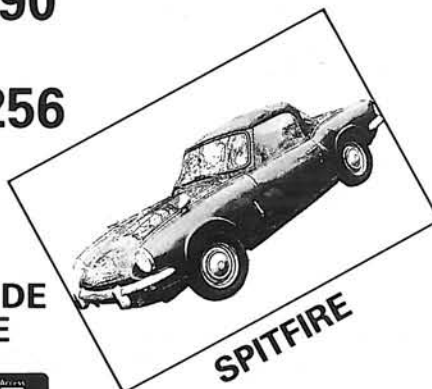
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SPITFIRE

Open Top Fun

Alan Walch

The Spitfire 1500. The top practical, driving fun car?

MY first interest in fresh-air motoring was awakened by a friend's venture into kit cars. He built an excellent example of the Marlin Roadster, using a K reg. Marina 1800 for the donor car. His success got me interested in kit cars, but I wanted something a little bigger with better weatherproofing.



A Kit Car?

I collected lots of leaflets and magazines, went to several shows, and found some kits which came close to my requirements. However, a day at the Stoneleigh Kit Car Show finally caused me to abandon the idea. The main reason for this was that the kit car vendors I visited had very limited resources to cover vital areas of car

design such as road handling. Also, the provision of detailed parts and assembly instructions to build a complete car without recourse to DIY improvisation was often lacking. Larger organisations offering 100% complete kits to some form of type approval would revolutionise the kit car scene, though some would argue this would

take the fun out of building them.

A Production Car?

The requirements for this were:

1. Must be open top
2. Must be practical for everyday use
3. Easy spares situation, and simple maintenance.

4. Have attractive styling

This quickly boiled down to a short-list of four. The MGB, the Spridgets, Vitesse and the Spitfire. The later MGB and Midgets failed the fourth criteria because of those awful rubber bumpers. I reluctantly abandoned the Vitesse due to the rarity of convertibles in good condition, particularly in the North. Then followed the viewing of many Spitfires. I restricted this to late 1500s only and I saw lots of sad looking rusty cars for sale at up to £2000. I finally bought an 'original' 1500 in good condition that had been rustproofed from new by 'Bodyshield', a W reg. in Brooklands Green. It was made in the last production run in August 1980 and first registered in March, 1981.

Off the Road

The Spitfire was put up on axle stands in the garage for the winter. The underside had been well protected by the rustproofing and needed only minor attention. Everything was lavished with Waxoyl (for which I have the highest praise). All the trim was stripped out and cleaned or replaced and again Waxoyl sprayed everywhere, including all the internal sections.

Mechanically, everything was given a complete service plus including tightening-up the front wheel bearings, replacing suspension bushes and steering ball joints, etc. Lots of underseal was scraped off the sills and front and rear surfaces. Several items of trim, door fittings etc. were replaced. The bright windscreen surround was also replaced. This was far more difficult than I imagined but it finally went on using a special tool made from the drawing in the Haynes manual.

Electrics

The electrics were in need of attention, the dash panel lighting, interior lights, door switches, reversing light switch, rear fog lamp switch, headlamp switch and hazard lights all failed to work correctly. This was nearly always due to the cheap untinned copper contacts in the switches being green with copper oxide. Cleaning with emery paper easily fixed most of these, although the reversing light switch had



Copious Waxoyling to keep the tin worm at bay.



Attention to detail pays off.

to be replaced later when the gearbox was out of the car. In addition, one of the horns was silent. This was easily fixed by adjustment of the small top screw (a technical tip in *The Courier*).

A peculiarity is the way the rear fog lamps are wired. They will only light if the headlamps are ON and main beam is OFF. This can cause you to waste a lot of time investigating non-operation when the only problem is that the steering column stalk is in the wrong position! To add to the confusion, the Haynes diagram showed the 12V supply to the lamps simply coming from the dash headlight switch. Rear fogs were a very late addition to the 1500 and are not even shown in the Triumph Owners Handbook circuit diagram.

Back on the Road

The following May, the car was put on the road. It ran fine - once I had fitted the spark plug leads in the right order! The car even passed its MOT without mishap. There was a problem with judder on taking up load from rest, so I decided to open up the clutch myself (a brave step forward as I had no experience of this sort of work). The friction plate was replaced by a more substantial

Unipart plate from the local Rover dealer.

The fun came re-fitting the gearbox to the engine. This was finally and successfully achieved when the gearbox bellhousing was fully supported from above on ropes and long bolts fitted at the four corners to help alignment. I had also previously centred the friction plate using a length of dowel the diameter of the gearbox shaft with masking tape wound round part of it to the diameter of the splined centre. The new clutch action was much improved though still a little severe compared to modern cars.

Cockpit Storm Cover

We had made our own version of this with five one-inch wide black elastic straps securing it on the car. It can be used with either the hood up or down provided the windows are up. The straps fit over the bonnet handles, rear wheel nuts and petrol cap. We have found it more useful than the tonneau (which I suspect has hardly ever been used before). It is much quicker to fit and provides complete cover from the elements when the car is parked.

Overheating

The cooling system on the 1500 is not one of its stronger points. It actually has a smaller radiator than the original 1147cc Spitfire4 ('MK.1') and Mk.2. It also loses airflow by being mounted well back from the narrow aperture. If the radiator and engine block water path are kept clean then the cooling system is adequate most of the time. But, if stuck in slow traffic on a hot day, the temperature gauge will rise and the engine can start to splutter due to fuel starvation. The 30+ degrees C. temperatures seen in the summer of 1990 were just too much for the Spitfire.



The office awaits.



Coming up like new with a little help.

Although wishing to keep the car original, something had to be done. I fitted a large Bosch fan on four brackets ahead of the radiator brackets. This allows later removal without trace if required. The fan is wired to a switch below the dash and was taken from a write-off Golf 1600. Yes! Owning a Spitfire and visiting scrapyards seems to go hand-in-hand. (See other article by Christopher Elwell. I also spent some of my formative years foraging around the scrapyards close to Nottingham University for replacement parts for my Spitfire Mk.3 -ED). The Bosch electric fan is very effective and moves much more air than the mechanical one. It's used to keep the temperature down below the gauge half-way mark and the engine running smoothly on the hottest days.

I am tempted to remove the original fan and wire the Bosch fan through a thermocouple/relay, but that would mean going further down the slippery slope from originality. I think I will gain more experience with the present arrangement first and maybe seek advice at Stafford before proceeding further.

Open Top Fun

The car is now used most good summer days, including sometimes to the office. It is at-home in Cheshire, with its plentiful supply of uncrowded country lanes. We get a lot of pleasure from the Spitfire, rarely using it with the hood up. It's much more fun than modern cars, very reliable and always starts at the first touch. It has only let me down once. This was due to a broken accelerator cable which failed just at the wrong time - whilst I was attempting to overtake! I had previously noticed a couple of broken strands and ignored it so I blame myself for that one.

The Spitfire suffered the indignity of being towed home by my wife's Metro!

Member's Cars

Nigel Young

I purchased my Spitfire in October 1975, an immaculate 1973 Mk.IV in Magenta. 21,000 miles, soft top, Ziebarted and one owner from new.

The car had been advertised in the local paper and we had gone in my dad's car (RKS 410M) to view it. By a 'one in a million' coincidence, the registration turned out to be RKS 409M, which had to be a good omen. The owner was selling the Spitfire to purchase a new TR7, one of the 'legendary' Speke built cars!!

The Spitfire was the best car I ever owned, never letting me down once in three years and providing me with many happy memories. However in 1978 now married, and after much deliberation we decided to sell the Spitfire and move to four doors.

In 1988, having always wondered what happened to my old Spitfire, I placed a photo and story in *Practical Classics* 'Where are they now?' section which produced absolutely no response.

Eventually through a friend of a friend, I managed to get an address from Swansea of the then current owner - now in Maidstone, Kent. On contacting him the car would apparently be for sale at the right price which turned out to be quite expensive. I left it for 12 months and wrote again, which turned out to be quite providential as a French lady upon leaving Folkstone had travelled 2 miles and run into the rear N/S wing/door of the Spitfire.

We agreed a price for the car and in August 1988 I set off overnight some 360 miles to Kent and towed RKS 409M home on a trailer.



Nigel's car as collected from Kent.

The engine and gearbox are still the original units although the gearbox appears to be untouched and is getting quite noisy. It is now bright yellow with a GT6 bonnet, ventilated sills, Volvo alternator and a 'Move Over - ***.***' sticker. I have since overhauled the brakes, fitted a second-hand radiator, new rear spring and various other parts but a full rebuild will have to wait until my never ending TR6 ground up restoration hits the road.

Mike Garlick

DUE to a recent visit to America, I have been unable to drive the Spit for three months. EPP 333T was left in the trusting hands of my father - an MGB owner (too late to change him now).

On my return, the Spit had been sprayed, welded and wheel arches rebuilt or replaced. The car has never looked better thanks Parents (extra Brownie points). Shown (over) is a

photograph of myself next to an American spec Spit taken in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, Canada (get a load of the bumpers!). When my American friends realised



'TSSC, thank you for doing such a good job in developing the Club and allowing me to be part of that experience over the last four years.'

I had a car of this type their comments were, 'How do you get into such a small car?' I tried to find the owner of the Spit, but was told it was a 'local' visiting the dentist (teething problems).

At the time of writing, I am looking forward to going to Holland in Martin's Spit, the one on the front cover of the July '90 issue of *The Courier* and also seeing the rest of East Kent & Essex Area especially BOO, Kevin Perry's 2-Litre Bond pictured on the front cover of the September '90 *Courier*.

MIKE, owner of the two legged Spit, last seen at 'It's a Knockout 90' in a grass skirt, representing East Kent.

Jason Clive
Donovan

MY car is a 1973, M reg. Mk. IV which I purchased early last year after looking long and hard for the right one. However, since buying it I've had some trouble as when taking up drive in all gears, out comes a terrible rumbling noise which is both annoying and embarrassing as it is quite loud. I have changed the prop-shaft and all of the UJ's but the rumbling continues. I was told that it could be the diff but I am not very mechanically minded. I did raise the back end of the car and took it through the gears and the rumbling disappeared but unfortunately, I can't keep the car on stands all the time (Also decidedly dodgy? - ED).



'Get a load of the bumpers.'



Jason's Mk.IV. Is the owner still a member?

I know that the original colour of the car was white and that it had a good respray in black so if the former owner of SME 738M is still a member of the Club, I'd be pleased to hear about what other work has been done on the car before my ownership. (Any letters to Jason can be forwarded. Hope to see you at the shows Jason. - ED)

The Tale of the Honest Spitfire

The MG Midget. A real Classic. A sports car amongst sports cars. The ultimate in affordable rag-top motoring. Got to have one.

—Monica and Arthur Findley

NOW that we have your attention we had better explain. fast, how it is this article appears in this publication and not in the journal of the Muttering Gnomes Owners Club.

The fact is that when we started searching for an interesting sports car we were initially perhaps just a little interested in, well, one of those but we quickly came to our senses after seeing the winsome curves of a Triumph Spitfire 1500. Very nice. Where could we find one?

Plenty in Auto Mart and so armed with some useful buyers tips from the TSSC and clutching a screwdriver (rot probe) and a consenting sports car expert (rot detector) off we went. A trail of the obviously horribly bodged and the too good to be true led ultimately to a green Mk.IV with a tan soft top which Monica spotted hiding behind a hedge in the College car park and sporting a 'For Sale' notice in the back window. It looked promising and we arranged an inspection and test which it passed with a few reservations: of which more later.

Being careful types, we then arranged for what amounted to an MOT and general inspection of the underbody, suspension etc. at a friendly garage and again it passed, the verdict being that it seemed a sound, honest motor. Money changed hands and we collected the car one dark night in March 1988. A few miles down the road in the middle of nowhere the engine coughed and died. We rolled to a halt. If the night was dark our thoughts were

darker. What to do?

What had the vendor said as we were leaving - do not trust the fuel gauge. It was showing one quarter full. We looked in the tank - bone dry. A quick trip in the support vehicle to the nearest petrol station 5 miles away cured the problem and we arrived home without further incident. Thank you vendor.

So how 'honest' was our car? An obviously relatively recently installed re-con engine, apparent absence of rot, seemingly genuine mileage of 72,000 and regular spraying of the underbody with oil all seemed promising enough. It also had the original hood bag and spare wheel cover, a tonneau cover (which however did not fit) and some 1500 interior trim.



Immediately apparent problems were the usual sloppy gear-change which also lacked a 'stop' on reverse, non-locking choke cable, a rather soft brake pedal, weakish handbrake, a mixture of carpet tiles and rubber mats in the footwells and an armrest covered in blue fabric. Oh, and it pinked like hell.

The choke and gear-change were quickly sorted by obtaining a new part and canni-

balising a scrap gear-change extension respectively with an immediate and massive improvement in the car's driveability but the other jobs would take a bit longer.

The brakes: being used to a modern, over servoed system it was difficult to accurately assess how good or bad they were but we were not very happy with them. We suspected old fluid so this was renewed together with the hydraulic pipes which were found to be pitted. Result - no discernable improvement.

The linings were checked and found to be worn, also the drums were scored and the discs rusted to the extent that the swept area was 50% of what it should have been. These were all renewed. Result - transformation. A firmer pedal with shorter travel and generally a much sharper feel. Hoses and seals were checked and seemed alright so were left but are being watched. We hope to replace these shortly.

Next, we tackled the pinking. The timing was incorrect at 10 degrees BTDC compared to the handbook's 6 BTDC. This was reset and the pinking disappeared to be replaced by running on. The mixture was wrong too but before playing with the carbs, we wanted to give the engine a full service including new air filters, points (yes, timing was reset afterwards..), condenser, checking valve clearances etc., to do the job properly. Incidentally, engine oil/filter and gearbox oil were renewed and the diff. oil checked at the same time.

So began a veritable search for the Holy Grail. After many hours careful fettling of the carbs, even resorting to setting them on the road, we were getting nowhere. We suspected wear in

the distributor could be ruining the accuracy of the points setting, and hence the timing, and so this was cross checked using a dwell meter, but all was fine.

We even considered the possibility of the engine running hot as the pinking/running on seemed worse in warm weather, and although the temperature gauge did not indicate overheating, the radiator was removed, reverse flushed and the system hosed clean. A new thermostat was installed. All this did reduce running temperatures a little but the main faults remained. We realised that the engine just wasn't going to run properly with the handbook timing setting. The problem was eventually attributed to reduced levels of lead in petrol, apparently confirmed by an immediate improvement when a proprietary lead substitute was added to the tank.

A helpful TSSC Guru at Stafford last summer suggested retarding the timing according to the formula "(standard book value x 50%)-1", this being reckoned to yield the maximum safe retardation. Accordingly our 6 degrees BTDC became 2 BTDC and after more carb tickling and dropping the idling speed a little to discourage running-



on, all is well and we even have the regulation greyish tail pipe. Average MPG rose from 28 on purchase to 32+ following tuning. We noticed the car was described as a '1500' on the MOT certificate and as this was completed by the garage who also did the routine servicing for the previous owner we wondered whether this explained the initially wrong ignition and carb settings.

'The engine now runs very sweetly indeed and returns approaching 40 mpg on a long run, even reaching 47 mpg a few weeks ago.'

This seems very high but was achieved over about 140 miles mostly very lazily driven at 40 mph or thereabouts on a self-filled 'brim to brim' tankful. Original road test results record 49.5 mpg at 40 mph and 52.5 at 30 mph which are not inconsistent with our result. Pretty good for a non overdrive 17 years old sports car.

Back to the story! Having reached this heady state of perfection, the engine broke down.

Well, it was not quite so clear cut and neat as that sounds. The dreaded intermittent fault. You know, there one minute, fiendishly gone the next just when you are trying to demonstrate to an 'expert'.

It was really quite a dangerous fault as the car suddenly would not accelerate and barely even 'pull' at all. Perfect for that busy junction...

This took hours to solve spread over a few fraught weeks and included changing coil, plugs, condenser, distributor cap etc., but turned out to be a faulty ballast resistor.

What next? In between various oilings of the front trunnions, having read accounts of the possible consequences of neglect (ours were checked at the time of purchase and found to be fine - they were actually fitted with grease nipples, suggesting proper attention in the past). We scratched around at various chips and bubbles in the paint and discovered fairly advanced rot lurking in the front corners of the bonnet. This explained its engaging habit of bobbing up and down excitedly at speed. We also found some blistering around the front wheel arches.



We do not enjoy doing bodywork so eventually sent the car to a repairer, recommended by a friend, for new front wheelarches and headlamp support brackets. We supplied the latter, offered to get the former but the repairer said he would get them himself.

18 months later, we know he did not. The rust is back. Filler!! At least the bonnet looks secure at 70 mph now. We are now looking for an honest, good body repairer. While on the subject of bodywork, someone in the past has applied a gold stripe to the flanks which brings out the car's lines beautifully - maybe this is visible on the photographs.

What else? The exhaust failed - actually with a big hole in the base of the silencer. It sounded rather interesting and whilst Arthur wanted to preserve some of the tuneful rumble with a straight through 'box', Monica was having none of it, not wanting a noisy exhaust note attracting unwelcome attention and, would you believe, our insurers (not the TSSC then) would not have covered the car as it would have been 'modified'.

'A standard replacement was fitted and the opportunity taken to attend to two stripped manifold/downpipe studs, another common Spitfire problem'

Take care - check with insurers before changing ANYTHING from standard specification - alloy wheels, spacers, non-standard manifolds, suspension mods etc. - all could cause problems when you least need them in the event of a claim. By the way, one of us works for an

insurance company - not the one concerned here we would add. The cover was arranged via the Bain Clarkson Classic Car Scheme and we have had to remind THEM that renewal was imminent the last two years! The car is now insured via the TSSC scheme which seems much better.

Back to our car. Last summer we decided to strip the carpet tiles/mats etc. to fit a complete new set. With a little trepidation this was done revealing only a few minor brown blemishes on an otherwise pristine floorpan. The new carpets transformed the interior but the water leak we thought we had cured with new door seals turned out to be the windscreen seal instead. This has now been changed. Incidentally, the opportunity was taken to Waxoyl the sills whilst dealing with the floorpan rust spots. For rust generally, we find Finnegan's No.1 quite effective after wire brushing etc., and know one restorer engaged on the no expense spared ground-up restoration of a Jaguar XK120 who swears by it.

Time for a little history. The car is as we have said a Mk.IV Spitfire 1300, an early one with a black dashboard and narrow rear track. As it was first registered 1st June 1973 and the above features were changed/added in February of that year, we think it must have been 'old stock' when purchased.

Thanks to the DVLC we know 'Spitty' has had 8 previous owners, including 4 females and all of them lived in the Merseyside/Lancashire area. We also know it had a new engine sometime between 1974 and 1977 but this in turn was superseded by the present unit. In case you are interested, we can also confirm that the road fund licence was £25 in 1973.

And so back to the car. Other non-routine service jobs include renewal of various seals and bushes (suspension, steering column), driver's seatbelt, door casings, several tyres, clutch etc. We also stripped and cleaned the carbs recently which yielded further improvements in general running.

The road wheels have been wire brushed and repainted to the considerable benefit of the car's overall appearance and here we would mention the car's appetite for wheelnuts: three having been stripped to date. The problem seems to be age rather than over tightening.

The gearbox is a bit noisy in the lower gears but is otherwise fine and as we are told the time to worry is when it becomes noisy in top we are leaving this for a while.

Even after the brake work described earlier, the handbrake remained rather long-travelling and although this can apparently be normal for Spits, further investigation revealed that the rear wheel brake cylinders were seized to the backplates. Needless to say, these have now been sorted and the handbrake is improved.

So what is our car like to drive? Certainly much smoother and more precise than when purchased before our 'improvements'. It is still a hard ride though and the dark colour and low profile mean you can be easily overlooked on the road. The tan hood helps but defensive driving helps more. Roadholding is really quite good and the handling is neat, thanks largely to the quick, positive steering. The engine is willing enough if hardly a power-house but what is really revealing is that you can have plenty of excitement at speeds which are quite modest by today's standards and at 70 mph you really feel you are flying. This ensures total concentration and suggests perhaps the hidden danger of our sophisticated 90's Euroboxes which for all their improved safety features, do isolate the occupants from the reality of just how fast 70, 80 or even 90 mph actually is.

The most endearing quality of the car however is its ability to bring a smile to the face of even a saloon and motorway numbed business driver - and that is with the hood up! With the hood down it really blows away the mental cobwebs especially on nocturnal country drives.

Unexpected fringe benefits include a considerably expanded tool kit, unseasonally early sun tan, a big welcome in our local BL parts department and having an appreciative asset on the drive. Snags? Lack of security against thieves and difficulty seeing over high curbs.

The car always needs something doing on it however and this brief record has already taken too long, so it is off into the garage now. We hope this has been of some interest.

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Premium Spitfire

I acquired my 1972 Mk.IV Spitfire in December 1987. Actually it was a combined birthday and Christmas present and as I was just turning sixteen at the time, the idea was for me to give it a total, year-long rebuild.

Christopher Elwell

THE car ran (just) but it really did need a lot of work so the rebuild started. Firstly Dad and myself stripped the interior, took off the body, bonnet, engine, gearbox, suspension etc. until we were left with the bare chassis.

As it turned out, the chassis wasn't too bad. The front crossmember needed replacing both sides and the outriggers were refabricated. The chassis was then Black Hammerited and undersealed. The suspension was cleaned up and also Hammerited with just the rear spring needing replacement. New copper brake pipes were made up, along with new brake disks, pads and shoes.

An overdrive gearbox, spoiler and other oddments were bought from an ad in the local paper. We rebuilt the box and put it in with the overhauled engine. We ported the head with air drills and we similarly tweaked the manifolds in an attempt to attain better airflow. I also took out the valve on the butterfly in the carbs and soldered it closed. The screws also were filed off to reduce turbulence within the carbs. Apart from this head work, the engine block was just checked over to make sure it was OK.

I bought a Triumph Tune manifold which I am very pleased with, allowing the engine to rev much more freely when mated to a straight through silencer which we will come to later.

The body needed new front quarter panels, wheelarches, nearside sill and B post panel, boot lid repairs and boot floor strengthening. A hardtop was bought and sprayed with the car by my Dad to the original colour - Pimento Red.

At this time, I went to the 1988 TSSC International at Peterborough (I had been a member since Autumn '87) and bought a small steering wheel, 1500 moulded handbrake, armrest and other bits and pieces from the autojumble. I also obtained some reclining seats from Midland Spitfires who have been very helpful and giving of free advice regularly.

I made up a walnut-look dashboard by covering the car's plastic dash with kitchen laminate which looks very good to bring the car, bar engine, up to 1500 spec. For the exhaust, I scoured the scrap yards for a big bore straight through box, settling on one from the last rear drive Cavalier which fits well with ample ground clearance. The system sounds great and at £1 you can't go wrong! The finishing touch was a twin tailpipe made by cutting the manifold from an MG Montego, turning it round and welding it on. The exhaust sounded even better, plus it was free!!

Some new carpets were bought and although they were cheap and hold the bits of dirt that get in, they don't look too bad - after sending badly fitting pieces back twice that is.

As the car was finished, it was my birthday and I passed my driving test within three weeks. So now, I could drive the love of my life 'Percy' as it was now known. I had two mates at school who had rebuilt MG Midgets but there was none of that stupid rivalry which sometimes arises between owners of different marques, just some students ripping around the Midlands having a great time.

Since buying Percy, I have persuaded two of my friends to buy Spits, and although one is still looking, the other, Neil, bought a green 1972 Mk.IV which we have spent some good times mending and towing. The both of us always wait for *The Courier* at the start of the month and always love it.

All in all, the Spit has been reliable, great fun to drive snicking through the gears with the hood down, with the 50/60s soul Motown and Rock 'n' Roll blasting out. Most importantly for an 18 year old student, the Spit is also cheap to run and restore with most of the parts originating from scrap yards. By the way, Renault 5 radiators are very good, being large (but fit in), and with a thermostat for an electric fan. I've had one in for 6 months now and Percy hasn't overheated once. Also a good source of oil coolers is the Citroen AS.

Congratulations on a great mag and well run Club.

PS. Thaks Dad for all the late nights and rainy days!!!



Early stages with front crossmember undergoing surgery.



Naked chassis in for a shave. Wear gloves and goggles!



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Even the kitchen sink!!

Mavis

Mavis recounts her own story as how an initially uninvited guest and she became the best of friends. Well, with its nose just inches from her behind they just had to.

First let me introduce myself. I am a vermillion Spitfire 1500 built in 1980 and registered in 1981. I have had several dubious owners until I was bought by a very caring young lady in January 1985. Together we see the world - well Europe anyway. Three years ago, I was put into semi-retirement only to drive 3,000 miles a year. It's a pity really, I do so enjoy it but I realise that if I'm going to last for ever, at my age I have to slow down a little.

My story really starts in May 1989 when looking out of my nice warm garage, I saw a peculiar box on wheels being pushed up the drive. How strange. Even stranger, a couple of weeks later I was pushed out of the garage to see HIM all toggled up in overalls brandishing a drill. Oh how I hate drills. They remind me of the dentist, and if you think dentists' drills for you humans are bad, well..... I don't like HIM much either, although HE does treat me well I suppose. I digress. Before I knew it, HE was drilling holes in my backside, all across and under the boot. He then fixed something to my behind but I couldn't see what. A

couple of days later I overheard HIM showing off his work, 'You've got a towbar fitted then', I heard someone say. 'TOWBAR!!', I thought. 'I'm a sports car not an artic'. Well, it appears I'm now fitted with a Wheller towbar and electrics courtesy of the Club Offers. Now that HE has fitted a Flipper ball cover it doesn't look so bad. What am I going to tow I thought. Then I remembered the peculiar box on wheels - what was it?

I didn't have to wait long. The 1989 'It's a Knockout' at Aldershot was to be a test run. Well HE hitched up this

THING to my towbar and off we went. Nice sunny day, a quick 20 minute run and there we were. No problems at all. Now the interesting bit. The cover came off, yes I see, then one side unfolded, yes, then the other, then this big awning thing on the front - I've got it, a mobile des-res. I think they call it a trailer tent. For the technically minded, I read: 'Raclet Quickstop 220' somewhere, with an all up weight of 460 kilos. That's OK, I can pull 500 kilos with no problems but this was early days!

It was easier than I thought pulling the trailer. It didn't slow me up much. I still overtook when I could but I did prefer the revs kept up when climbing hills but THEY appear to be old hands at towing which makes it easier.

The four of us: HIM, HER, the trailer and me had quite a few weekends away. It was nice, drop off the trailer and I'm out into country lanes just as I've always been and the scenery - pure magic.

Then came the International Weekend at Stafford. Amongst all my old friends again, I felt a real poser next to the des-res. Jealous or What!!

We had a nice run up on Thursday and we virtually stayed on site all weekend, a nice rest. Sunday saw most of my friends headed homeward but no sign of the des-res budging an inch. Not until Monday in fact did anything happen. Everything was packed up. Bags of clothes and food put in my boot, the awning, kitchen and living equipment all put into the trailer. I'd never seen so much, even the kitchen sink. I began to worry - would my rear end take the strain?

Well off we set, a bit low but everything seemed OK. It was a pleasant day and we headed topless towards Worcester. I kept clear of the motorways. Mr Triumph didn't design me for those slabs of maniacs. Some of the road surfaces were not as good as they looked and I hit my Triumph Tune silencers on the road several times. I was beginning to get gravel rash. We arrived in mid-afternoon, sun blazing at a camping club site just outside Malvern. I don't know what the other cars thought of me, a sports car, amongst their midst. Well with a ground clearance like mine, I had to take it easy. I pottered around until I found a nice spot and stopped. Off went the des-res. Phew, that was better. After a little rest and a few enquiring people off we went sightseeing - and the sights, Wow. Heralds, Spits, GT6's, Vitesses and more old chums. This must be the Worcester West meeting.

The next day was a real scorcher and after a buzz around in the morning sightseeing I took THEM on a little treat. We went to a factory where something called Morgan's were built. Funny looking things. HE was definitely in love. SHE couldn't get him away. Eventually, HE saw me gleaming at HIM again. That did it - off again. Wednesday dear diary, what a day, certainly a day I shan't forget in a hurry. Everything was repacked, kitchen sink

and all, and off I strained again. Everything was fine at first, well my gravel rash was getting worse but I braved it. We were heading into Wales. My back end was now quite light so I stopped for petrol - down it went again. I groaned. This really put me in a bad mood, what were THEY trying to do? ... Wear my exhaust out? Then disaster. As we headed south along the Gower there it was, I saw it sticking up out of the road, I even tried to swerve but oh no HE knew better. He held me straight, and straight I went right

over it - I closed my eyes as I said goodbye to my exhaust thanks to the Welsh Gas Board. That made THEM stop - well THEY couldn't hear the music could THEY. The damage - smashed 'Y' piece, one silencer pulled off and the other smashed to pieces. It was beyond repair. Next morning I went to Swansea to see the Thick Twit Fitter. 'Yeah I can fix you', he said, 'I'll fit a standard system'. 'Oh no, not one of them, I've got one at home.' After I persuaded him

to take off all the hanging bits, I decided to stick to my new custom system. 'Straight through', finishing just in front of the diff. 'Yeah, Mega!!' I said goodbye but I don't think they were too happy, some of them had blood coming out of their ears as I pulled away. Now I was living - I was certainly turning heads.

Well, I didn't go very far for the rest of the week. THEY wouldn't let me, said I was frightening the cattle. Huh, honestly! As a final indignation, I went home on the slab for maniacs just to avoid the 'Old Bill'. I taught them though - the noise - it even gave me a headache. Home again and tucked up in my snug garage I had a think. A couple of days later HE came in to replace my exhaust - we had a chat. I told THEM straight, I just couldn't carry on like this. I told HIM what to do and in fairness, HE must have told HER.

The next outing was THE BIGGY. The International Spitfire Weekend, Arcen, Holland, taking a week to get there and a week's touring to come home. Things had to be right ... HE must have listened to me, things were definitely better. No clothes or food in the boot, just sleeping bags. Everything, including the kitchen sink, fridge, cooker and virtually the walls were put in the trailer - THEY even balanced the trailer properly - slightly nose heavy, not over the top. HE started to hitch up. I braced myself ready to sag, THEY got in and I started up. But what about the trailer? Off I went - perhaps we're not taking it at after all. I was surprised indeed when we went around the first corner, there it was following on behind, no sagging or anything. A fortnight's real fun and this season is the same, problems over, my little talk to HIM obviously worked, well I mean it was obvious. PUT IT ALL IN THE TRAILER AND BALANCE IT.

Well me and the trailer, Racey as I have come to call her, are really good friends now, and I look forward to our next trip. See you all there.



Figure 2. Pose time as Racey really shows her colours. Mine's not bad either!

Catalogue of Errors

Arcen 1990

Steve Williams

The preparation was left to the last thing for YNV 898S, my Inca Yellow 1978 Spitfire together with Tim Richardson's Burgundy California spec Spit and Chris Treece's three quarters green, and blue Spitfire. Definitely not the way to go. Talk about travelling hopefully.....

Originally all three of us were to travel in convoy the Friday before the event but unfortunately Chris' car was not complete in time so he had arranged to meet us in Arcen on Saturday. My passenger and I met up with Tim at Norman's Cross, Peterborough at three o'clock Friday morning to travel down in convoy to Dover to catch the 7.00am. ferry.

At this stage, I was full of energy and excitement for the forthcoming holiday. We proceeded down the A1-A604 to Cambridge then the M11 leading towards the Dartford Tunnel.

For some unknown reason, Tim sped off after the tolls and we proceeded to take the slip road to the M2 and then the A2 towards Dover, hoping to either catch up or meet him there.

Not long onto the M11, Tim's hazard lights suddenly came on and we both came to stop on the hard shoulder. His fan belt had snapped. The time was about 3.45am. Luckily I had a spare in the boot. We then proceeded down to the Dartford Tunnel and tolls.

We arrived in Dover at 6.00am. There was no sight of Tim so we proceeded to wait and I did some patching up on the car's exhaust gasket which was leaking. During the next hour, I was slightly cheered up with the arrival of about five Spits, one Stag and a Herald all from the Kent Area



making the same journey but no Tim. By now it was 7.00am., our sailing time, with no tickets because Tim had them!! A frantic phone call to Tim's father revealed that Tim had taken the wrong turning at the tolls and had reportedly seized his engine on the M25. Tim's father told me that he would be with Tim around noon after obtaining a transporter. We were in dire straights.

The ferry company were most helpful in saying that the only way I could travel was if I purchased a fresh set of tickets (£100) or if somehow I got the tickets off Tim. I chose the latter and in rush-hour traffic and with a blown exhaust gasket proceeded back up the A2, M2 and M25. Luckily, finding Tim wasn't a problem.

Armed with tickets and a map drawn up by Tim we proceeded not so despondent, back down to Dover, leaving Tim to follow on as soon as he could. We arrived in Dover at 11.00 and had the choice of a 2.00pm. sailing to Ostend or an 11.30am. to Zeebrugge - we chose the latter and arrived in Zeebrugge around 5pm. According to Tim's map, a small diversion would put us on the correct road. So, with hood down, stereo on, exhaust gasket blowing, we set out with a renewed hope of salvaging some of the day. The rest of that day saw YNV driving through Belgium. We stopped around six times to ask local drivers the way and I must say they weren't very friendly and some wouldn't even look at us.

Eventually, it started to rain, we were low on fuel and lost so I turned off and we eventually came to a town called Hasselt to refuel and to obtain a proper map. After having to pay £30 for a tank of petrol and a map (I had no Belgium currency), I planned the route. It turned out that we had taken the wrong motorway in Antwerp. Nobody had told us that it was like Spaghetti Junction. Still pouring with rain and now dark, we headed towards Venlo, eventually

arriving at the camp around 10.30pm.

The following morning I went to the car to give her a clean, to find to my horror a sleeping bag in the car, grit and dirt in the footwells and condensation throughout the inside. I was not a happy man. Half an hour later, Tim arrived with his car and passenger both looking forlorn to tell me he had broken down (again) 50 miles outside Arcen. The fanbelt I had given him previously had snapped and that two pairs of his passenger's stockings, used as emergency spares, had gone too. He said that he had hitched into Arcen in the pouring rain and as he couldn't find which chalet we were in, had broken into my car to sleep!

The rest of the holiday was uneventful. I repaired YNV, Chris arrived and apart from the rain, the event was enjoyed with some exceptional cars there. With one evening left, a trip to Amsterdam was agreed. Half way there, Chris and I lost Tim in traffic. Once in Amsterdam, we split up to have a look around, to meet up at 6.30pm. hopefully with Tim. Well, I waited and waited, finally giving up and going back to the car yielding no success. The final nail was when we reached YNV. No, the car wasn't stolen but Chris' car had gone with no sign or message. Our only option was to head home alone.

The main conclusion and lessons to be learned, I think, are quite simple from this article. My and Chris' Spitfires performed without great trouble. As for Tim's car, a push rod had somehow come to be lose giving him his main trouble. As for the fanbelt, I think its common sense to carry a new spare especially on long journeys (the one I had given him was from a scrapyard 'Dolly'). (And of course to properly check out your car and route well before setting out). Just to add, YNV accumulated 1067 miles over the weekend. Can anyone beat that?

Jenny L Mk.II

Jim Lavery

I was looking for a Spitfire for sometime when...

...purely in conversation, the chap at my local car spares shop told me he thought that someone he knew called Alec who used to work there, was selling his.

My next move was to ring the said Alec and make arrangements to go and see the car. When I arrived the Spit (MK.IV), to say the least, looked in a very sorry state. As it was my intention to do a complete rebuild I checked the area's thought important and decided it was worth buying. Alec's wife told me to give him 50p and get it out of her sight. I could well understand her reasoning as the car was in the middle of the front lawn minus its engine and bonnet and covered with a plastic sheet.

After the car was trailed home, a complete inventory was done and there was a lot more of the car missing than I had first thought. However, the bodywork on the back section was in very good order and also the boot. New door skins had been fitted so hopefully one expense would offset the other.

After checking and sorting trim items that had been thrown into the boot, I began to remove all the bulkhead ancillary parts. This was followed by the removal of the seating and everything else inside the car. As the dashboard was in a bad way, I decided to remove it and all the instrumentation. The wiring at the back of the dash had been chopped, hacked and generally badly rewired in places. This is down for a new loom.

Taking out the body mounting bolts presented some problems but these were easily overcome with a liberal amount of penetrating oil and a lot of cursing. Off came the body to reveal a chassis that again was worse than first thought. (When isn't it? -ED).

The first job was to remove and tag all the parts on the chassis. Both the front mounting bodies for the suspension, steering and brakes were removed as complete units. Sandblasting the chassis showed up some faults and the welding seemed to be never ending. The two main front outriggers I decided to make for myself from 2mm galvanised steel, and after one or two initial mistakes made a very presentable job of them.



Spotless chassis after sandblasting.

Next thing to do was to make a jig at work to pick up on the holes so they could be set in the correct position and welded into place (if anyone wishes to use this, it is available). After various repairs to other parts of the chassis it was sprayed with red oxide followed by two pack paint and finally waxoyled.

With the chassis complete, I then began on the front suspension. A spring compressor was made and then all the parts were aqua-blasted and painted.

All new suspension bushes were fitted, and shock absorbers and wheel bearings renewed. The trunnions were both found to be in excellent condition but the trunnion seals were replaced. When the front calipers were checked, I found that the pistons were in a bad way. New stainless steel ones were made and fitted along with new seals of course. A recon rack and pinion came with the car but new aluminium clamps were fitted together with new track rod ends. The anti-roll bar bushes and clamps were replaced. On the rear end, the diff unit was stripped, checked and rebuilt and new seals fitted. Drive shafts were found to be in good condition as were the UJ's. All brake parts were renewed and new shock absorbers fitted. The rear spring was retensioned and new rubber buffer pads and spacers were made. The chassis was then refitted with all its parts and is now back on its wheels.



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The engine strip down was my next job. This was to give me a pleasant surprise when on removal of the cylinder head, I found myself looking at four new piston tops. Further investigation confirmed that the engine had been fitted with a recon short motor. This will of course save me money. All engine parts were labelled and packed away as my intention is to make that the last job as it will probably be the easiest.

Practical Classics magazine supplied me with their publication on the renovation of a Spitfire and having read it twice I gleaned a wealth of information.

The body was, or is, now on axle stands and on inspection I found that the offside floor had been replaced but that the nearside had been badly welded especially in the front footwell corner and underneath the petrol tank. The inner sill has also gone.

Well, this is as far as I have got to date. Derek Pratt has a lot to answer for by letting me drive his 1500 Spitfire and I hope that someday my wife will forgive him.

Just a little information for any Triumph Spitfire owners in the Stockport area. The MG Centre (forgive me for swearing) - Barry Staffords at Cheadle Heath - are now supplying parts for Spits. If you put an order in on Monday, the parts are usually there by Thursday with no delivery charges, and if they have you as a listed customer there are some discounts to be offered. If you do go in, ask for Rick Hockney. He's not a bad bloke, considering he picked the wrong car to race!! I must admit he is very helpful indeed.

Finally, I hope to have the Spitfire finished for next summer and will send the pictures of her finished for inclusion in a future *Courier*.



Detail of home produced front outriggers.



Chassis painted and fitted up.

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Carolina Spitfires

Bob Sykes



Bob's first three Spitfires.

Enjoyment of Spitfires is definitely universal as confirmed here by Bob Sykes, our North Carolina, USA correspondent.

Greetings from North Carolina! I had intended to title this letter 'Tri-umphs because I was the proud owner of 3 Spitfire 1500's. However, in mid August, a week before I wrote this, something came over me and possessed me to buy yet another. It was such a pretty blue and had a factory hard top, low mileage etc. I just couldn't resist.

My cars as follows are all Spitfire 1500's:-

1978 Comm. No. FM 74408U B.R.G., bought in 1978 new
1978 Comm. No. FM 76350UO Vermillion, bought November 1989
1978 Comm. No. FM 73278U Blue (shade?), bought in August 1990
1974 Comm. No. FM 19842UO Burgundy, bought April 1990

Perhaps someone can tell me what the proper name for the shade of blue is. It is the original colour and the paint code is JMA. I have every piece of literature I can possibly get pertaining to Spitfires (Haynes, Bentley manuals, the Spitfire/GT6...guide to restoration and purchase by Porter and Williams, The Triumph Spitfire and GT6 by Graham Robson, the Brookland series books and four years worth of *The Courier*). Nowhere can I find a list of this paint/trim code.

I would like to tell you that I find the Triumph Sports Six Club publications

very enjoyable. It is always a joy to see one in the letter box and I read it cover to cover almost immediately. Being over here in the USA it is really the only contact I have with the TSSC unfortunately.

It is also very interesting to read about events taking place in the UK. I was born in Newmarket, England and lived for most of the first 21 years of my life in East Anglia. A little bit more about my cars. The



Large bumper adopted 1975 on. Registration plate lights went from chrome to black in approximately 1977. What would be the plate light on the 1974 car is actually solid (no lens). It has Triumph lettering (Sun Glare) though. Sounds like the basis of an interesting future *Courier* article here. Any takers -ED.

green one is my favourite as I have owned it for 12 years plus. When the fuel crisis was upon us in 1978 (it seems we are entering another even as I write this) I was driving an American Ford LTD (yank tank) to and from college. As it was a 65 mile daily commute and the Ford had a 400 cubic inch capacity (6.55litres), getting 10 miles to the gallon was very hard on the already strained pockets.



The new blue one. Anyone know what the alloy wheels are?

I was making a living (barely) playing music. What to do? I needed something economical to operate. I looked at all the econ-boxes and really didn't see anything I liked. Then one day I saw a Spitfire going down the road. It brought back memories of my very first car (a '68 MG Midget bought for £100, big end knock included at no extra charge) but we won't get into that. Anyway, I knew I had to have a Spitfire. Things just haven't been the same since. The Spitfire was my only source of transportation for 6 years. When it became a little worse for wear and I had to buy something that had a little more carrying capacity (American pickup truck). I just couldn't sell the Spit. So it was used occasionally for a year after which I decided a restoration was in order. It has since been brought back to its former glory with a new interior and Imron paint. The engine has 80,000+ miles on it and is still going strong. I have never taken the head off. The only disabling problem I have had with the car was a cracked clutch pressure plate at 13,000 miles. That was when I learned how easy these cars were to work on. Other cars may come and go, but I plan to keep this Spitfire forever so it only sees dry roads these days.

The other 1978 Spitfires are used for commuting and such. The 1974 model I'm afraid may be retired. I have been

'borrowing' bits and pieces off of it to support the others and it really has a bad case of floor and sill rot.

I would be glad to correspond with anyone who has an interest in the USA Spitfires or questions about their differences from the home market cars (unleaded etc.). For those of you who think owning 4 Spitfires is a bit excessive, I can only say that it is perhaps a little extravagant but I enjoy them all and they have a good time. The cost of running a motor car in the USA is much less than in the UK and our equivalent of the dreaded MOT (I remember well) is an annual safety inspection which costs 6 dollars and takes about 10 minutes. In this part of the country, rust is not a problem unless you live near the coast and cars last a long time with a bit of care and proper maintenance.

I'll close by saying keep up the fine work you are doing and I look forward to my next *Courier*. I plan to visit my parents next year (they live near London) so perhaps I can attend some TSSC event in person soon - minus my car unfortunately.

Any letters to Bob can be forwarded on -ED)

There are plenty of professional articles on rebuilding the Spitfire and with my limited technical abilities I would not attempt to compete with these by trying to write the definitive article. However.....



A Tale of Two Spitfires (His and Hers) Reg Baker

HAVING restored my own 1970 Mk.3 (you can see it in the August Courier) and now my wife's 1978 '1500' - 'Mine's the one with the overdrive', she can frequently be heard to say - I think I am qualified to at least go through the problems as I saw them. Some of them I am embarrassed to admit I made and others, not only did I make them on my Mk.3 but even repeated them on the 1500. So for those of you who live, like me, in offices and may be contemplating a restoration, read on.

Like so many others, I first got interested in cars when I was at school and my father had a 948cc Herald. At least he did until I wrote it off! Like the old saying goes, I had Spitfire tastes but only Lambretta money. I wonder if there is a club catering for old 'mods'?

Anyway, the 1970 Mk.3 came my way in December 1984 purchased from my future wife. It was a pale metallic blue but from under the trim you could still detect the original colour which appeared to be a 'petrol' blue. It had had some

damage at the front and rear end in the past and in fact the rear panel had been replaced with an earlier panel which had the reversing lights next to the indicators. Now every time I reverse the world lights up. I've kept both these lamps and the original later centre reversing and number plate combination lamp.

For its age it wasn't in bad condition. The sills had been replaced but were starting to go again. The bootlid was rotten along the back edge and the rear outer wheel arch lips were rusted through. The car could only be driven wearing dark glasses to shield you from the glow of the green light from the dash board. I wonder what that indicated. Perhaps it related to the engine using a full sump of oil between Wolverhampton and Dunstable. There were a selection of gears to choose from - reverse and even one or two of the forward gears should they be needed. Mechanically it was not so much tired as a refugee from the 'dead parrot' sketch.

The good bits were the doors and the bonnet. No rot at all, not even around the front side lights, and the floors were sound.

Armed with only my Haynes manual and a box of tools, I set forth stripping it out. As I said before, you've read all the articles and in fact the job was not all that difficult. It quite quickly came down to the bare body and chassis with the steering and suspension left on. I was careful to put all the little pieces into poly bags and label them, and took lots of pictures and made sketches. I had read the articles 'You can't take too many pictures etc.' Of course, I took too few.

A friend of mine recommended a local small body shop that specialises, although not exclusively, in restorations and the odd exotic classic. We viewed the shell, discussed what I wanted done, and agreed a budget and that if anything untoward was discovered we wanted to discuss it first before committing.

While it was away, I started collecting the 'bits' I would need and sent the engine and gearbox to a reconitioner. Come Spring 1985, the shell was ready. It looked magnificent and the only real problem was that the bootlid was beyond repair and a fibreglass unit was purchased (no steel version was available at the time). Also, the rear wheel arches were fixed using repair panels. 'Never again', said Phil the restorer. It's cheaper to buy new rear wings and save on the labour trying to get a good fit with the repair panels. Four years later I remembered this!

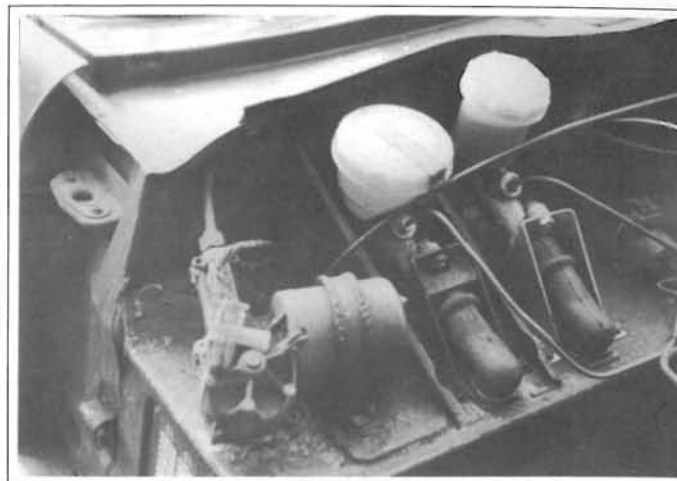


Figure 1. Underbonnet in need of a little tidying.

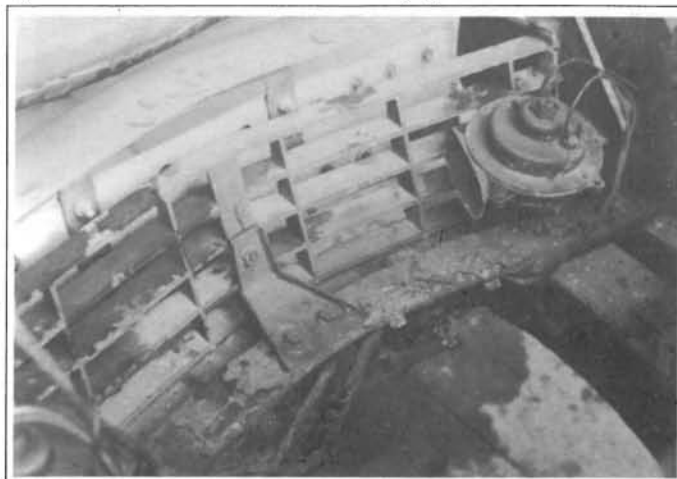


Figure 2. Front crossmember and front valances to be replaced with new.



Figure 3. Bodyshell stripped back to bare metal and treated with new rear wings.



Figure 4. and sills.



Figure 5. Minor damage was locally repaired.



Figure 6. Restored bonnet complete with new wings.

For a finale, I actually found three new rectangular Spitfire badges at the last Cranfield TSSC meeting - the rare ones that go on the quarter panels and the front of the bonnet on late Mk.3's.

I had achieved my teenage dream. A bright red Mk.3 Spitfire.

All went well until Spring 1988 when we purchased a 1978 Brooklands Green 1500 with overdrive for my wife. It hadn't improved over its ten years since new but it wasn't bad and we did like that overdrive. The only attention it needed was to the clutch slave cylinder which was only travelling through half of its length. On stripping the unit, I found the bore was corroded for half of its length.

After years of use and through a winter, it was obvious that the bubbles that were showing on most panels were not going to get better on their own and I was I concerned that the front crossmember and valances looked to be in a particularly bad way. Back I went to Phil the restorer. 'Remember me and my Mk.3 Spitfire? It still looks perfect. How much to do the same to this '1500', and I would like it red like the other one?'

A budget price was agreed and I set to stripping the car in my friend's ex-chicken shed, large garage. It houses an original 1962 Lotus Elite, a 1963 Vauxhall, two Droop Snoot Firenzias, a Frogeye Sprite, MGB GT, 4 MG Midgets, an Alvis TD21, Ford GT40 replica (not yet completed), a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud, Brabham BT40 (since sold), a brand new Corvette, and the pride of his collection, a Mk.3 Spitfire under restoration for a friend! All the others pale into insignificance don't they.

The rot on the 1500 after blasting was worse than the Mk.3 had been. Why do the bottoms of the windshield frame rot through? The shell was treated to new front and rear wings, steel front valances and crossmember, a pair of good used doors, sills, and minor repairs where the metal was holed but could be plated. The body was then sprayed bright red in two pack paint. Once again, Phil excelled himself. It was absolutely beautiful.

In the meantime, I had been busy cleaning, painting, recovering etc. the parts I had taken out of the shell. The engine, gearbox and overdrive were fine so I just cleaned and painted them. Brakes were rebuilt, cylinders resealed, copper brake pipes purchased, seats recovered, bumpers rechromed and litres of waxoyl poured and pumped into the body.

Door locks and door mirrors came up like new with an application of satin finish black aerosol paint and the striker plates cleaned and returned to their original gold finish, this time with an aerosol but it looked really good.

The rebuild went well until I got to the doors. You have to fix the outer rubber strip before the glass is inserted, but inserting the glass through the top of the door with rubber and clips in situ without scratching the glass, or removing some clips in the process is a real pig of a job. Once again, the glass would not close in parallel to the windshield frame. I had to resort to elongating the three rear mechanism mounting holes and pushing the adjusting mechanism as far down to the back as possible to achieve a reasonable fit.

Everything else went pretty well but I could not get the indicators and hazard warning flashers to work. The indicators would light but not flash, the hazards lit only at the front and also didn't flash. How did I get the wiring wrong? I didn't. I just hadn't earthed the rear lamps properly - all that new paint you know. It seems pretty obvious now but it flummoxed me for several days.

There are two holes in the A pillar next to the door. Which one should take the switches for the interior lights? What was the other one for, and how did the boot light go? It did not seem obvious to me! These and countless other little teasers told me I had not taken enough photos. I did the same with my Mk.3. Fortunately, a friend has a Spitfire 1500 (20,000 miles from new!!) and I shot off about 50 photos of all the little areas that I could find. This proved invaluable.

And there you have it, or rather there we have *them*. Two of them, his and hers, red Triumphs, open top, Beach Boys on the stereo. **Spitfires.**



Figure 7. Top coat on, waiting to be unmasked.

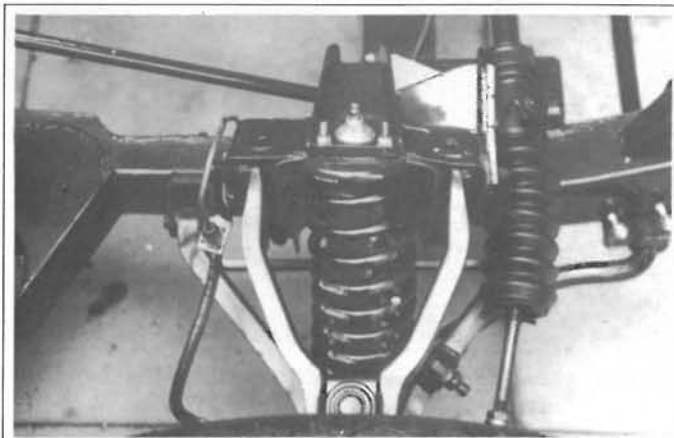


Figure 8. Shocks, springs, bushes, brake pipes, steering rack all better than new.



Figure 9. Out of the body shop, major fitting-up to come.



Figure 10. What a transformation!

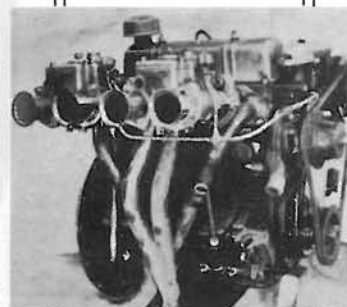
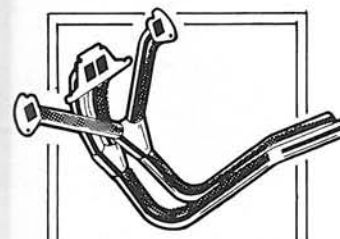
The restorations were carried out by Phil Smith who has a small body shop near Bedford. You can get him on 0234 41410. And, as you can see from the photos, he's done a good job but you really have to see the finished car for yourself to see just what a fine job he did.

As a footnote, having seen the colour photographs the work on the car looks superb so I certainly look forward to seeing the car at a Club show sometime over the coming months. ED.



Figure 11. An open invitation for a drive.

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