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# Turning Circle

**November 1985 No.9**



**Vitesse 1600, 2 Litre MkI  
and 2 Litre MkII**





**The 2-seater beater.**

## New Triumph Vitesse Mk2.

Bad news for the two-seater boys. The new Triumph Vitesse Mk2 shatters the notion that hot performance is strictly for them.

0-50 in the Vitesse Mk2 is a swift 8 seconds. A time that makes quite a few top sports cars look shame-faced. And it's a full four-seater.

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And ask yourself why you aren't a Vitesse man already.

Triumph Vitesse Mk2 saloon £972 6s. 5d. Convertible £1,020 12s. 6d. Both prices include purchase tax.

Standard-Triumph Sales Ltd,  
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**Triumph put in what the others leave out**

**TURNING CIRCLE**  
Editor: W. E. SUNDERLAND



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Peter Williams - Cover (Chris Iane's immaculate Vitesse MK1 saloon). Denis Benson, Peter Pexton, Tetsunori Morita, Mark Griffiths, Stan Walters, John Malcolm, John Griffiths, Graham Baldwin, Geoff Ault, and Dawn Storton.

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# WELCOME THE VITESSE

Bill Sunderland

Far from exciting .... More affordable .... Handles unpredictably .... Out-accelerates most .... The Triumph Vitesse, along with most other motor cars, takes praise and criticism from Press and public alike. Only time and situations can endorse or belie these opinions. Fortunately the Triumph Vitesse, along with most of the Herald family, is still thought of with affection by many and represents the ideal alternative, both in performance and style to the modern 'tin box'.

I have pleasure in introducing you to the Vitesse Turning Circle, Number 9, in which members have kindly donated articles telling of various experiences they have had with their VitesSES. Some have given much encouragement, we hope, to those of you who may be considering a total rebuild. I'm sure most would agree that the standard of rebuilds described herein have undoubtedly provided their hardworking owners with much satisfaction and pleasurable motoring for years to come. The Triumph Vitesse is, to my mind, one of the very last true British motoring champions.

The Vitesse was manufactured between 1962 and 1971, at which time it ceased production along with many other Triumph models. By discontinuing the range, Standard-Triumph had effectively brought to a close a decade of motoring.

The first Vitesse, launched in 1962 was the Vitesse 1600cc, available in saloon or convertible form, with a six-cylinder engine and twin solex downdraft carburettors. This model came in many new colours (pastel shades were most popular at the time). Often the paintwork included a stripe to enhance its already stunning looks.

In 1966, after record sales in excess of 30,000 cars, Standard-Triumph introduced the 2-litre version, provided with basically the same engine specification, but with twin Stromberg carbs to greatly improve the fuel consumption. This was 'hay day' time for Triumph and customers benefitted from various factory extras, such as full length sun roofs in the saloon. The convertible was earning the reputation of being the "two-seater beater" - although some people refused to recognise the

Vitesse as a sports car. I'm sure the Vitesse owners among you would wish to argue that point. I think the car was originally designed to accommodate a driver measuring not over 5ft 9ins tall, although I have seen people over 6ft 3ins shoe-horn themselves in behind the steering wheel, as they don't want to miss the driving experience.

By 1968 Triumph had launched the 2-litre Vitesse MKII, claiming that their new model had major handling improvements and increased engine power - now some 104 bhp incorporating the new, big valve cylinder head, the same as that used on the new TR5. The MKII featured various changes in body styling but did not detract from the basic good looks.

The overall sales figures for the Vitesse are:-

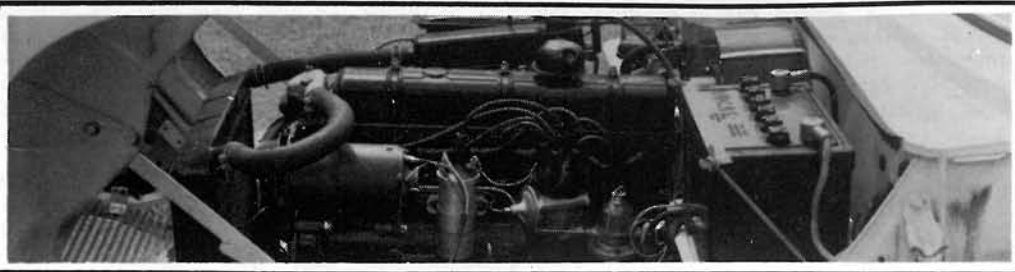
1600 Saloon	23,000
2-litre MKI Saloon	7,500
2-litre MKII Saloon	5,500
1600 Convertible	8,500
2-litre MKI Convertible	3,500
2-litre MKII Convertible	3,500

During the nine years that the Vitesse was in production, total sales numbered in the region of 50,000 cars; of these there are only approximately 7,500 still on the road, making it all important to halt the declining numbers of this most deserved Classic Car.

I own a Vitesse MKII convertible which, due to various other commitments, I haven't driven much over the past two years. A friend recently asked me to drive one back from Macclesfield to Northants; this was just an incredible experience. The car in question was a 1970 MKII convertible and, driving through the Peak District and back down the A6 and M1, gave me that brilliant feeling of what a superb allrounder the Vitesse is. Had any one of you out there been my passenger on that trip, I'm sure you would have ended up a certified Vitesse addict!

## Triumph Vitesse The Allrounder





## VITESSE ENGINE REBUILD

Steve Ash – Plymouth

Three years ago, in an effort to give my Vitesse MKII extra power, I fitted a 2.5-litre saloon engine without petrol injection. The engine was rebuilt by a local garage and ran satisfactorily until 18 months ago, when it began losing oil pressure and power, and consumed one gallon of oil per 500 miles! I decided that a new engine would be needed, and to cut costs, I would revert to a 2-litre engine - I already had an overhauled cylinder head and a set of little used pistons for a 2-litre engine.

I bought an engine from a fellow Devon Area member, and a friend of mine agreed to rebuild it for me. On stripping, it was found that a rebore and regrind was needed, along with quite a few new items such as cam followers, timing chain and gears etc.

The engine was despatched to Brickwood and Strathon Motor Engineers, along with my own Hepolite pistons for all the necessary machining, which came to £155.00.

At this stage, I decided to tune the engine, and went to Skip Brown Cars for help. They recommended Kent Cams T.H.3 Road/Rally cam which, at £48.00 outright is £42.00 cheaper than the equivalent SAH cam! They also balanced the flywheel and pulley, crank and new clutch and cover for a very good £23.00. Meanwhile, Warren Brothers of Plymstock supplied the £108.00 worth of Uniparts required, and the rebuild began. I would recommend anyone rebuilding an engine to use 'Graphogen' rebuilding lubricant liberally on all working surfaces - this excellent compound eliminates any chances of bearing or cam damage on starting.

The worst part of the whole job was timing up the cam - a must here is dial gauge indicator to make sure the valve is fully open and check timing is spot-on. My friend and I decided to remove the bonnet to refit the engine, and operations began on Thursday 18th July. The changeover proved very easy, and the car was running by Friday tea-time. Initial cautious road tests have proved that, despite the 2500 - 6800 rpm cam powerband, the car still pulls well from low revs. With an SAH exhaust system, engine braking is now non-existent, and with the eventual fitting of 175 Strombergs, I've been promised 0 - 60 timings of 7.5 seconds. The car certainly feels incredibly powerful and I've only used the engine up to 2½ - 3,000 rpm so far.

I would like to thank the following people for their help:-

Brickwood & Strathon, Octagon Street, Plymouth.

Skip Brown Cars, Kay Close, Plympton, Plymouth.

Warren Brothers (Unipart), Plymstock, Plymouth.

R Jacobs (engine rebuild), c/o M Jacobs Transport, Plymouth.



## FROM RAGS TO RICHES

Dennis Benson – Bromsgrove





After several attempts at hunting down a 'Morgan' suitable for restoration, but still at 'ASDA PRICE', I decided that funds would only stretch to a replica. After several partings of £ notes for various brochures, the decision was the Moss. This appeared to be the most pleasing in appearance and also one of the better produced kits available at the time, fairly good value for money and easy to construct. The instructions read: 'insert one Vitesse/Herald ...'

The thought of the 6-cylinder straight six seemed the ideal toy (this was where the problem set in - where have all the £50 Vitesse gone?). Then, one day I spotted a rather sad, totally unsalvageable Vitesse convertible - exit one Moss!! This was ideal - open top, interesting engine and you can even shoe horn two people in the back.

After a fair amount of research I learnt that Triumph produced a 1600, a 2-litre and a 2-litre MKII. The latter was noted to be the better and off I went on what appeared to be a needle in a haystack hunt. Advertisement after advertisement, "Sorry, it's sold", until after a few words with another vendor, the magic words were said - "Pop round, I think I've got what you're looking for".

Shock, horror! There standing next to a sold MKII convertible was a hand-painted in red primer (some 8 years ago), rather sick looking Vitesse with moss growing all over it. On close inspection it had only done some 44,000 miles and was 98% complete and un-butchered - just a side quarter valance and a sill was missing, apart from a large proportion of the carpet! She was a mess, having stood/shunted around for some 10. years, with three owners all meaning to restore her. The main reason for the lack of use was two things: no second gear and loss of oil pressure when hot.

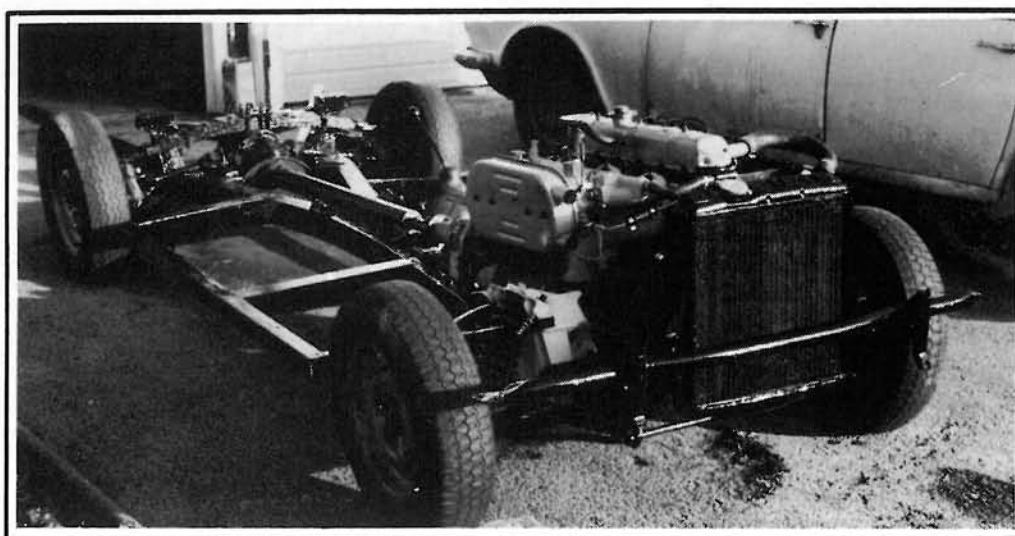
After parting with some notes, she was towed home (by a Triumph 1500!) and naturally, due to the temperature being about -20, it was hood down all the way. Amazingly, only the exhaust pipe dropped off! The usual bits were rather rust-worn: door skin bottoms, bonnet corners and arches, front scuttle mountings and door tread plates edges. Worst of all, due to split hood rear windows, water had caused damage to the rear arches.

All the rubber bits, seals, covers, bungs etc., had either perished or hardened beyond use. The seats were unblemished and a small rip in the rear seat sides

seemed to be the only thing impairing the interior. That was until I sat on the rear seat and heard a ripping sound. I was rather annoyed because they were newish jeans but even more annoyed to find the source of the noise was the stitching in the rear seat which was rotten! Luckily it was only the rear seat base which was affected in this way.

The rebuild began starting with the chassis. A full set of new outriggers were employed as a matter of course and the main spine was perfect. This was under-sealed and coated in numerous coats of polyurethane paint. The rear running gear was rebuilt using new trunnions, bearings, rotoflexes, brakes, cylinders, pipes etc. The front suspension was fitted out with new bearings, trunnions, brake pipes and hoses, steering rack and column was re-bushed and new trackrod ends awarded to each side of the rack! Wheels were shot-blasted and poly-silver enamelled, re-shod with Dunlop SP4's.

The engine and gearbox were stripped, cleaned internally and externally and - shock horror - a big-end shell came out in eight small fragments! On further straining of the eyes and a micrometer, it was found that the conrod was oval and one big-end bearing beyond service (all the rest were perfect!). One crank re-grind later, one set of shells, rings, timing chain, gaskets and a new conrod, I was once more in business assembling what seemed to be the world's heaviest engine (I would like to see Geoff Capes try to lift one!). Valves were re-ground and some studs replaced due to some previous owner torquing the head down to 2,000 lbs. ft. - thus snapping, stripping and stretching various head studs. The engine bottom end was assembled. The gearbox was found to have a non-existent second gear and a few shims missing, and in the wrong place. It looked like the same idiot had also had a butcher at this. Due to the weight problems now realigned, a basic engine was fixed to the gearbox and this added to the chassis. The head and ancillaries were then bolted on. New jets etc., for the carbs, radiator re-painted and all new hoses provided a mean-looking power unit - just waiting the burst into life. A temporary oil gauge was fitted together with a tachometer, a good strong battery and all fingers crossed ignition, fire - we were off! It was like music to hear her running. A few adjustments left her running as smooth as silk, except for over 100 lbs. sq. inch oil pressure on tick-



over. This, I thought, was a sticking pressure-release valve, but turned out to be what looked more like a 'bed spring' instead of the usual 'biro' spring. When the proper one was found, it was at last a perfect engine.

The bulkhead was repaired by removing the front mounting points, welding in new metal and replacing the mountings. The doors were re-skinned and shot-blasted to find out where all the holes were. Amazingly, the inner skins were suffering from minor 'tin worm' and so only needed odd bits of welding rod here and there. The bonnet needed extensive work doing to it and while looking around for perhaps a better one to repair, a friend of a friend etc. told me of an old chap in Warwick with an unused brand new bonnet littering up his shed. Within seconds it was on my trailer - heading home. It was all systems go for the body assembling phase. First the bonnet was set up with the bulkhead, doors set up to suit the lay of the bonnet and, in turn, the rear end to suit the doors. A new front valance, two sills, two quarter valances and rear valance were offered up and fixed, thus transforming what was a mere chassis and power unit into the car.

All the paint was removed (including primer using Nitromors, which incidentally stings your skin somewhat painfully and I advise any one to wear gloves and a long-sleeved jumper/shirt). Many more hours were spent filling the odd dent and grinding out the rust pits, and finally the

Autumn was upon us, together with damp and surface rust. So away went my lovely silver Vitesse to have its paintwork started. This I chose to be done professionally as this is the largest single item and the most noticeable. After several coats of primer, a quick top-coat was put on just to see what she would look like and also to find out if there were any body adjustments to be made. She looked superb. Just a few adjustments and then it was ready for a final prime and top-coat layer, rubbing down between coats (this, it was agreed, I could do under supervision to help out my costs - it is also the most tedious job of all). 11½ litres of white paint was used together with tonnes of wet and dry paper, not to mention elbow-grease.

UVT 962G came home once more to be semi-trimmed out. The dash was fitted, door quarter lights set up, bulkhead fittings and brakes set up and wiring sorted out. This was done with much more care, but I still managed to chip the paint here and there. This was the reason for the next stage, in which she went back to the body shop to have all the chips, screwdriver slips blotted out and a final top-coat or three put on. From now on it was - think before anything was fitted.

Headlights, grille, sidelights, badges, handles, boot hinges, overriders and side trim were fitted. I replaced as much of the bright-work as was available. The largest problem was carpets: no originals were available - good secondhand ones



were non-existent and reproduction sets were very poor, so I bought some carpet and, with the help of a carpet fitter friend, stripped old carpets off useable felt backings and re-covered them, proving that good carpet sets can be made but they take a lot of time and patience. These were fitted to the car, trimming and modifying edges where necessary. The rear seat, together with a saloon rear seat cover were dismantled. The saloon seat cover was modified to suit the convertible seat shape and, using the original method of fixing, an 'as new' seat base was made with material matching the other trim. This was proudly fitted after a generous Waxoyling to the spring base.

The front seats just needed the frame clips re-fitting and a good ol' clean. Seat belts were next in line for fitting, together with the windscreen; this I also had done professionally in order to reduce the risk of damaging the paintwork and getting the black sealant all over the car. The hood-frame was shot-blasted and powder-coated like most of the other fiddley and rusty parts, giving a very high standard of finish. This was set up very carefully to ensure a good fit. The hood was something else that I thought best left to the specialist: they 'tailor made' a hood to suit the car and fitted it, this being probably one job not to do yourself however versatile you are! Many people have since asked how I got the hood to fit so well.

The MOT was just a formality and, I am pleased to say, she passed first time. The carbs, although very closely balanced, proved to be giving a slight malfunction, so the car was booked into a local Stromberg specialist to be sorted out. They informed

me that I had a tiny air leak between the manifold and the head. After he had spent an hour or so trying to get them to settle down it was found that the manifold was not at fault at all, rather the head - so, off came the head. A lot of cursing resulted when I found that the phantom previous owner had struck again and had obviously hit the manifold face with a hammer. The head was skimmed and now all was well. A few teething problems were soon ironed out and after 2½ years I am now the proud owner of a MKII convertible.

Two and a half years of sweat, holes in the pocket, pain (rust in my eye cost me Xmas in hospital so be warned, use goggles when de-rusting) but it was all worth it! She certainly turns a few heads when we go for a drive and is often the star attraction in pub car parks. I'll thump the next person who calls it a Herald - no offence, of course.

Our first meeting was MOTEC and my enthusiasm was increased even more when she won 3rd in the Working Original Class and even more when she won Best Vitesse at Caldicot Castle (Wales Meet 1985).

I look forward to many more meetings and much more driving her. Not one of the most comfortable cars, nor one of the most well-equipped, but there's one thing no modern day car can offer - sheer driving pleasure! Try buying that from Halfords!

**Many thanks to:**

**R W Rush - Bromsgrove - bodywork**  
**Don Trimming - Birmingham - hood**  
**John Kipping - Coventry - bits and bobs, and a dam good waffle!**



## PREPARATION OF MODIFIED AND RACING 2 LITRE ENGINES FOR VITESSE

**Gareth Thomas - France**

This short article derives from a couple of sections of the Tuning Manual and it is for that reason, somewhat less detailed than the ideal.

There are six different engines available for Vitesse models:-

**Vitesse 6 1596cc and MKI 1998cc** - identified by the crank-case breather next to the fuel pump.

**Vitesse MKI 1998cc** - this has the same bearings as the MKII.

**Vitesse MKII 1998cc** - this has the MKII head and is used in GT6 MKII/III '71 - '72. It is also used in MKII 2000cc saloons before 1972.

**GT6 MKIII 1998cc** - usually put in by mistake/cheapness. It has domed pistons and mild cam.

**TR5/6 2498cc** - the difference being MKII head, long stroke, pistons and camshaft.

**2.5Pi 2498cc** - also used in post '73 model TR6. The least powerful 2.5 engines. The strongest engines are the early MKI Vitesse, as these have the largest bearing area.

Figures are as follows:-

**Vitesse 6/MKI 21./GT6 MKI/2000 MKI - 67.76"².**

**Vitesse MKI/II/TR5/6. 2000 MKI/II - 63.44"²**

The most highly stressed engine is the TR5/6, which develops 142 bhp DIN from 63.44"². The others:-

<b>Vitesse 6</b>	<b>64 bhp DIN</b>
<b>GT6 I Vitesse</b>	<b>93 bhp DIN</b>
<b>GT6/Vitesse II</b>	<b>98 bhp DIN</b>



Both valves should be modified as Kastner suggests in his American tuning

If you use a non-standard camshaft with your engine, you will need to change the valve spring ratings, and fit a duplex chain set. The timing cover is the same but the tensioner chain and gears are different. Valve springs are as follows:-

Electronic ignition systems of proven design can make a great difference to losing misfires. Lucas distributors can suffer contact bounce on six-cylinder cars at 6,000 - 7,000 rpm. Contactless designs are not necessarily the answer as it makes the centre and drive prone to wander and resonances in the drive system. One good system is available from Micro-Dynamics in Caterham. Try also C-T spark in Loughborough.

Finally, have fun safely: the Vitesse, when modified, is a born mickey taker for modern cars.









## VITESSE IN JAPAN

Tetsunori Morita – Tokyo

My Vitesse MKII saloon was delivered to Japan from England in 1970. I got this car about three years ago and since then I have driven the car almost every day with no major problems.



The Vitesse is very rare in Japan and very difficult to get spares for. It was fortunate that I noticed an article in a Japanese car magazine and I was happy to apply for membership. I enjoy reading The Courier very much.

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## TRIUMPH VITESSE 1962 - 1971



2 Litre MK1 Estate (not produced by factory)



2 Litre MK2 Convertible





## MY 16 YEAR WAIT

Mark Griffiths – Surrey

560 HAA was purchased on 24th May, 1963, from B A Ralfe & Sons of Romsey, by a Mrs Violet Pritchard. Her husband, a local coal merchant at the time, had previously declined her request for a Herald and, being a firm believer in cars of the six-cylinder variety, offered to pay for one of the new 'Vitesse 6' range.

For £735.00 560 HAA was taken away and for the following 15 months proved to be reliable and trouble-free. Mrs Pritchard's only complaint at that time was that she found the steering a little heavy and she decided the car would have to go.

So, sometime in late 1965, 560 HAA was purchased by a Mr William Benton. I think he must have been rather chuffed at the time, considering it was his first car and that the new model had only been out for 2 years or so. For the following few months it was driven up and down the motorway to and from Romsey, each day faithfully covering the miles – until the day came when Mr and Mrs Benton moved to Gt. Bookham in Surrey and I was to lay my eyes upon the car for the first time.

Then, at only 7 years of age, my spending power was rather limited as you can imagine but my dream from that day on was that I would one day own it.

Some Sunday afternoons, when Mr Benton was out gardening, I would always trot over to chat with him and inspect the car. He jokingly said on a few occasions,

"Fancy it for yourself?" I then said that, should he ever keep it long enough, I would one day make him an offer. He just laughed and smiled at me and that was the end of the conversation.

16 years later, he still had the car and by chance one day I had occasion to remind him of his offer long ago. This took him quite aback. "You're not still interested are you?" came the amazed reply. "Yes, why not?" I replied. I was then to find out that, after 18 years the decision on his part had come to have a change, not that anyone can say he didn't get good wear for his money! A deal was finally struck in October 1980 for the grand sum of £250 to be exchanged and the 16 year wait was finally over.

Since then, I've never regretted the purchase. I've put about another 36,000 miles on the clock, bringing the total to about 135,000. In that time I've had half the chassis replaced, then a full respray and the eventual cure of all those niggling little things that we all come across now and again. Total cost around £1,250 over 5 years. This has been money well spent as far as I am concerned and you can keep your modern tin-pots!

I enjoy counting all the raised eyebrows on the motorway while cruising at 90 mph. In the meantime I've had an offer for the car – a certain Mr Benton! No, I'm sorry, you've had your fun!



## THE RESTORATION

Stan Walters – Devon

For some years I had fancied a nice Vitesse MKII convertible, but with two very young children it was just not practical. Also the chances of finding one of these cars in immaculate condition was very slim. It was in August, 1983 that I acquired WUX 312G for a modest sum and, after a very close inspection, I realised that it was basically very sound and was an ideal rebuild project. I then had to convince my wife that this could be the best thing since "sliced bread", and that by the time it was completed the children would be old enough to withstand the trauma of the rear seat with the hood down. Anyway, we reached the agreement that the car should be fully restored with some modifications to aid handling and performance, and that I should aim at finishing it in time for MOTEC 1984.

### THE WORK BEGINS

The car was driven into my garage in early September and after some three days was totally stripped to the bare chassis, which proved to be in almost excellent order; even the original side-rails were completely rust-free. However, the two rear outriggers were replaced, bearing in

mind their particular importance. This was then taken to be grit-blasted. It was then collected the following day in its bare metal condition and 100% rust free! The chassis was then given two good coats of red oxide primer, followed by three coats of grey primer, and then three coats of black cellulose gloss, all applied with a spray gun.

My attention then turned to the suspension parts and these, again, were sent for grit-blasting; this is by far the best cleaning and time saving method I have come across and be sure that any rust will show itself when grit strikes it at some 400 mph. New bushes were fitted to the wishbones front and rear and after painting, were fitted to the chassis. The number of shims behind the front, lower wishbones was increased to three, in order to give a hint of negative camber. New front shockers were fitted, together with a

new (not reconditioned) steering rack from John Mann; these, by the way, come complete with greasable track-rod ends. All ball joints and trunnions were also renewed. The wheel bearings were in perfectly good order, so were left well



alone. Work now began on the rear suspension so, first things first, a 3.63 differential unit was fitted, followed by drive-shafts and rear spring.

It was decided to fit a Spax Telescopic conversion in place of the lever-arm dampers. A vast improvement in handling on the MKII, but some soft ride comfort is lost.

The brakes were next in line and it was thought that money would be well spent in this area. The front calipers were overhauled and the kit for this is best obtained from a BL dealer, as some confusion seems to exist at the local factors, and I at first ended up with the incorrect kit. A wife with extra long fingernails comes in handy here when you try to insert the caliper pistons through the new, rubber dust covers! All metal brake pipes were replaced with copper ones, which were all made up to fit with a hand operated flaring tool. Approximately 30ft of pipe is required for the complete car. All flexibles were renewed and care should be taken to ensure that the front pipes are long enough when full lock is applied. I went out of my way to acquire flexi's with coil springs fitted to avoid chaffing. Finally to round off the brakes, new rear cylinders and new linings all round were fitted. No disc or drum skimming was required but these were given a good rub with some emery cloth to remove the glaze.

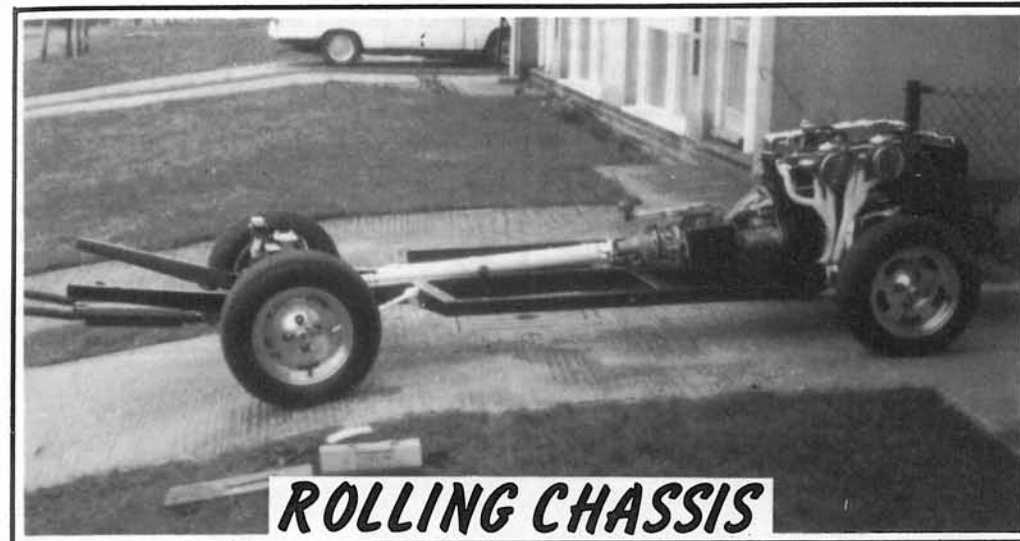
After seeing all this installed the chassis was now fully rolling and with everything so carefully painted, enquiries were made about the use of Silicone Brake Fluid, and some incredible advantages are to be made. The first was that it does not remove paint when spilt or splashed, which was my main worry; once it is installed in the system, it is there for life and need never be changed and it doesn't absorb water, so internal corrosion in the system is minimised and an important advantage to all you budding Nikki Laudas, it has a boiling point of over 260 centigrade. The only draw back is its price at £13.00 a litre.

### WORK CONTINUES

With the chassis now rolling, it was time to sort out the engine and gearbox. Here I was fortunate in having good, recently overhauled units, but the engine, which was a 2.5-litre from a 1971 TR6, was showing excess crankshaft end-float and, on removal of the sump, it was obvious that the crank required some machining of the thrust face. The engine was, therefore, stripped and the necessary work carried out. This was then lowered into the chassis, complete with a recently BL reconditioned overdrive box. It was decided to run the engine on the carbs, as opposed to PI, so I obtained a pair of Stromberg 175Ds, which originally came from a TR4. These were then totally rebuilt and, after consulting a needle profile chart, they were fitted with 2E needles, which proved to be spot-on. An extractor exhaust manifold was purchased from SAH and coupled to an SAH exhaust system, which I had purchased some time before. A Wood Jefferies electric fan was installed, which has now proved itself to be an excellent engine modification, giving very fast warm-up, much quieter running and not least, saving a fair amount of wasted 'horses'. The ignition is looked after by 'Lumenition' - simply the best.

### TIME TO START BODYWORK

The time had now come to start on the dreaded bodywork and, as the original bulkhead section had severe windscreen pillar rot, another bulkhead had to be found. One was located on a car which was being broken on a farm in Cornwall, so off I set with car and trailer in some very inhospitable weather as Christmas was fast approaching. After a few hours work I was on my way home with an excellent



piece of car, needing - just minor repair work to the floors and several other goodies.

With winter now closed in, I was restricted to only some two hours work a day in my spare time, so progress was slow and at this stage, I was suffering from the usual loss of enthusiasm; it became very easy to understand why people give up at this stage. Anyway, the front bulkhead was completely cleaned up and all the necessary welding was finished. It was then given two thick coats of zinc paint. After thorough drying, it was then followed by several coats of primer and the complete section, including the underside of the floors, were finished in top coat. By the way, the car was to be finished in white with red interior and hood. After the paint had hardened off, which only takes a very short time with cellulose, the front body section was bolted to the chassis. This was a great morale-booster, as I could now see real progress and, what's more, the car was taking shape. The New Year was here and, as I was going abroad for some ten weeks, everything was stored away and covered in cotton sheets, to try and keep all the dampness at bay.

During my time away, work still continued in that my wife was busy ordering and receiving parts that would be required for my return. I came back to the UK near the end of March and it then suddenly hit me as to how much work I

still had to do in order to finish the car. My hopes were still high that I would make it to the National Concours on May 19th, but at the same time I didn't want to rush things, and chance ruining everything.

### WORK RE-STARTS

Spring was now almost here, so a fair amount of work could be carried out in my drive. The rear end was in very sound order, just requiring a replacement spare wheel pan, which I obtained from a local scrapyard. My great displeasure was in demolishing the boot floor of a perfectly sound Vitesse convertible in order to remove it, but undoubtedly this would have all been crushed up in the end! A new door tread-plate was also welded in position and a few other areas were also cut out; plates were made up to pattern and fitted. The complete rear end was then turned up-side-down and thoroughly de-rusted and cleaned. The whole underside was then given two good coats of 'Davids Isopon Zinc 182', and then given a good 24 hours drying time. It was then primed and given plenty of top-coat.

After drying, the rear end was up-righted and the whole exterior was stripped of all paint with the aid of a can of paint stripper and a wallpaper scraper. This job is a bit tedious, but it's better to know exactly what is beneath all that old paint and you will also avoid any chance of a paint reaction with the cellulose, which I was using.

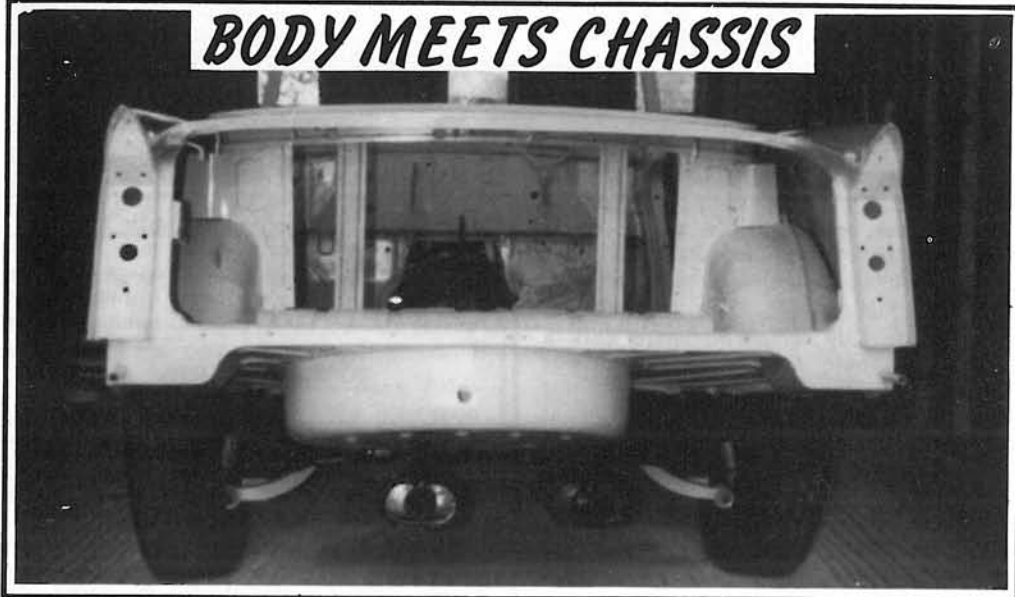


When the paint was thoroughly hardened off, the rear end was bolted into place onto the chassis. A good tip here is to fit the handbrake compensating lever and cables in place first, otherwise you're in for a 'knuckle scraping' couple of hours work afterwards. New rubber sealing strips were fitted between the front and rear body section floors. With the body in position, the mounting bolts were left untightened as, when the doors are positioned, the rear end would need to be jiggled around in order to get the gaps correct.

gaps are correct and then the body can be finally tightened down.

All the sills, valances etc., can now be fitted after painting and I again stuck to the genuine BL items, but some of the original panels were in good condition, even the front valance which I was pleased about, as they are expensive items when new. A good boot-lid was obtained at a very good price and only required minor dents sorting out before painting and fitting to the car complete with new hinges.

## BODY MEETS CHASSIS



Attention now turned to the doors: two good door frames were obtained as the originals were beyond repair. These were then fitted with new door skins. Genuine BL panels were used here, as I have had some bad experiences with reproduction copies in the past. Fitting a door skin proved to be quite a simple task and nothing to be afraid of. The main thing to remember here is not to weld the strengthening plate beneath the quarter-light until the door has been 'test fitted' - then, if necessary the complete door can be given a slight twist in order to get a perfect fit. Then, while it is in the correct position, the strengthening plate can be welded up. The door can then be removed for painting and subsequent fitting to the car. Once the empty door-shells are fitted, the rear end of the car can be moved backwards or forwards until the

The bonnet was next in line: this did prove to be a slight problem as it required a new front panel, which I eventually obtained from John Kipping. The bonnet was pretty rust-free but a few problems with dents took some time to sort out. It was, however, eventually painted and was ready to fit to the car. Anyone who has ever attempted to refit a Vitesse bonnet will be aware of the problems of lining up such a large piece of car. In fact this turned out to be one of the worst I have ever experienced, owing to a bent bonnet frame. Anyway, after working very late into the night, a good result was obtained. The engine bay balances were shot-blasted and re-fitted after painting.

All that was left now was the exterior chrome and the interior trim. While the dashboard and door cappings were being

refurbished by a friendly, local cabinet maker who specialises mainly in grandfather clocks and bar fittings, I or rather my wife set about painstakingly cleaning all the interior trim, which was basically in good condition, but was in-ground with 15 years of dirt. A set of John Kipping's carpets were fitted which I must say are excellent. The dash was fitted, which proved to be an easier job than was expected with no major wiring problems. Obviously, the ability to read a circuit diagram is a great help! the seats and other trim were then fitted and then polished off with STP Son of A Gun. All the lights and exterior trim were next in line and, again, after another late night, all lights were working and the car was almost roadworthy.

With only a week left before the National Concours at MOTEC, the car still needed a hood and it was decided that a red hood would be fitted to match the interior. The engine was coaxed into life and the car was driven the 10 miles to Autotrim at Ivybridge. This is a very small company giving a very personal service. The car was at the coach-trimmers for some four days as I also had a full tonneau cover made and a hood stowage cover. This was all made to measure and, although more expensive, you are guaranteed a perfect fit. The car was ready on Thursday, 17th May and was taken across the road for an MOT which, needless to say, caused no problem. The car was then driven back home and the hood covers inspected. A very excellent job was the verdict and I would now recommend Autotrim of Ivybridge to anyone. By this time, the car was looking quite stunning and, with only two days to go to MOTEC, I did nothing but polish like crazy.

Friday 18th May was here and I set off for the National Concours, taxing the

car as I passed through Exeter (thanks Adam) and, after suffering a few minor problems with the electric fan and the electronic ignition which were, in fact, my own fault, I made it to MOTEC in the company of Adam Egeland with his recent-

ly completed rebuild. Well, anyway, the car was shown and won the Modified Class and also won the Spitfires UK trophy for Best Convertible.

For anyone intending to rebuild a club car to a fairly high standard in a short period of time, be prepared to work every single day, even for just an hour or so - it's essential to keep the enthusiasm going and keep on thinking of what you will be driving at the end of it. Personally, I spent some £2,000 on parts, of which £200 went on paint alone (10 litres of primer, 10 litres of top-coat, 25 litres of thinners). The total number of hours worked was some 1,000. Many sleepless nights were spent pondering on various problems and consequently, I now have a few grey hairs, but boy, it was worth it!

Many thanks to all my friends for their help, mostly in lifting heavy body-shells around the garden and, not least of all, many thanks to my wife and children for all their patience and understanding during the 9 month period of the rebuild. I am now looking forward to leaving the Navy in August 1985 to start a business in the Newton Abbot area, specializing in the repair and restoration of these classics, so watch out for my adverts in The Courier under S W Classics.

We took the car on a trip around Europe, down to Italy in May 1985. We covered almost 3,000 miles and it went like a dream - even idling in temperatures of 30°C. Just the climate for a white convertible! We saw plenty of Porsches, Mercedes etc. but not a single Triumph Vitesse.





## 'VOLATILE VITESSE'

John Malcolm – Ayr

Before going any further, I will apologise to the purists that might read this. I'm a purist as well, and have owned three Heralds and five Vitesse and chose to customise a Vitesse, as I thought it the best base to work from.

It all started at a visit to a car auction with no intention of purchasing anything. However, we left with another Vitesse MKII saloon for £275 way back in 1978. This car ran in standard Valencia and black trim for over a year while I built a garage, and was Secretary of a Custom car Club. There were three custom Vitesse, two Sprints, a Spitfire/GT6, a TR6 and also a Stag and V8 Cortina in the club.

The bodywork was perfect and I rubbed it down in February, during a fall of snow. Then came the modifications: inner lips of wheel arches were cleaned and bent upwards to allow clearance for wide wheels. Aluminium flares were pop-riveted and blended over door bottoms as rust spots were present. Aluminium export model Rover 3500 bonnet scoops were bolted over pre-cut holes in the bonnet. A 1980 Cortina grille was cut to fit between headlamps. Boot spoiler was cut to fit

between the rear wing tips and holes were cut in the boot lid recess for fog and reversing lights. A perspex panel was then formed to fit over the recess, making it flush, which was painted silver with gaps left for the lights. A Mini numberplate light finished off the rear end very neatly. Aluminium bumpers were removed and no rust was present. All trim, including seats, chrome and carpets were also removed and the car masked before spraying in Midnight Blue and Strato Silver (Ford Granada colours). The existing paintwork was sealed and numerous coats of cellulose added. Then, after a few weeks, I burnished the paint. The car was polished every couple of weeks with an abrasive polish, eventually cutting the paint to a glass-like finish.

Chrome eagle side pipes were bolted to the chassis along the sills and hooked up to the downpipe. It sounded really meaty. Chrome eight-spoke wheels with white lettered 185 x 70 Grand Prix S tyres were fitted. The windows were tinted Californian Blue. The front seats came from a Colt Lancer and I upholstered them in deep, buttoned, Drayton, along with the



door panels etc. (all done on the dining room table). Tan Wilton carpet was then laid to finish off the interior, along with a centre console.

The tired engine was replaced with a 2500 S engine and overdrive gearbox from same, which had only covered 14,000 miles. Various modifications were made and a successful job completed. The jets in the 175 SU carbs had to be altered to suit the lack of back pressure from the straight through 2" sidepipes though.

All in all a very tasteful example of customising I thought (Zender eat your heart out). I now run a MKII convertible which is completely original and a SWB Land Rover for occasional hard work, both of which are steadily having new parts added to bring them back to life. My other heart throb is a 1970 3½-litre V8 Rover which should be restored by the time you read this.

I would like to know how RDU 531H is getting on - 'phone (0292) 56624.

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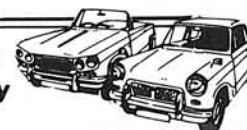
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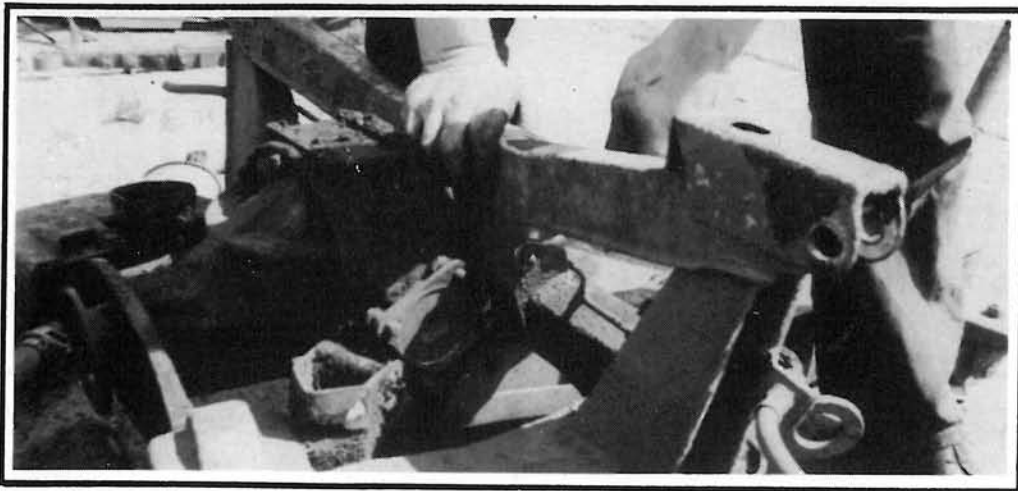
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# CHOOSING THE RIGHT GEARING FOR THE VITESSE

John Kipping - Coventry

During the production run of the Vitesse from 1962 - 1971, only two different final drive ratios were used. 4.11:1 for the Vitesse 1600 and 3.89:1 for all the 2-litre models. With standard 13 inch wheels fitted, these give overall gearing in top gear of 16 mph per 1,000 revs for the 4.11:1 ratio and 17 mph per 1,000 revs for the 3.89:1. The Triumph size cylinder engine will easily pull much higher gearing than this, with a result of more related driving and better petrol consumption.

The final combination of transmission units selected for any particular car depends on the use to which the car is going to be put (ignoring the cost of changing various items). Therefore, people who want to do wheel-spin starts from traffic lights should select a different combination of parts to those people whose main concern is fuel economy on long runs.

In addition, some GT6 MKII (and GT6 for Germany) had a 3.27:1 diff. and overdrive fitted. This in theory gives the ultimate in relaxed cruising and fuel

economy. No recommendations as to combinations of parts can be given, as this depends on the individual's style of driving (and financial standing!). I use a 3.27:1 diff. and standard overdrive in my own Vitesse MKII - this is an excellent ratio for motorway cruising, but means that starting off from rest is not very quick. Fuel economy with a good condition engine works out at 33 mpg when cruising between 80 and 90 mph.

Another factor to take into account is that an overdrive unit consumes power. Therefore, in some cases, switching to a different ratio diff. can lower petrol consumption, without the expense or complication of an overdrive unit.

At the end of the day it is a legal requirement that the speedo fitted to a car should work and be reasonably accurate. Changing diff. ratios alters the speedo calibration and, therefore, this matter should receive some attention.

At the present time all diff. ratios and various types of overdrive units are available. The main reason for this is that

many B.L. cars of the 1970's used parts which are suitable for use in club cars - and these are turning up in large numbers in scrapyards. This should mean that the supply of transmission units can be safeguarded for the foreseeable future at reasonable prices.

## ATTENTION ALL MKII OWNERS

With the onset of old age and high mileages, the Vitesse MKII suffers from two unusual problems, which have not received much attention in these pages.

The first problem is cracking of the cylinder head between the valves. This results in low compression on one (or more) cylinders. Although they can be repaired by welding, it is a skilled job and I think either replacement with a new or secondhand one is better. I do not know of any way of avoiding the problem.

The second problem is the handbrake: with the re-designed rear suspension for the MKII, the cable guides were moved from the chassis to the body. Unfortunately, the body was not strengthened and over time the cable guides start to pull through the bodywork. This leads to excessive travel on the handbrake (sound familiar?). The solution is simply to weld the relevant bits back together. To check this area, lift out the bottom of the rear seat and pull the handbrake on and off.



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## Table showing possible ratio data

Diff. Ratio:1	MPH/1000 RPM in top gear (approx.)	MPH/1000 RPM when overdrive fitted (25% ratio)	NOTES
4.875	13	16	
4.55	14.5	18	
4.11	16	20	Vitesse 1600 gearing
3.89	17	21	Vitesse 2L gearing
3.63	18.5	22.5	Spitfire 1500 gearing
3.27	20	25	

# IT'S A LONG WAY HOME...!!

Brian Gray - London

I am the owner of a MKII Vitesse convertible (BUL 768H) and a Herald 1200 convertible. The Vitesse is a bit scruffy, but runs very well and, of course, the 'top comes off' (enough to convince a person that being scruffy does not really matter).

I had some problems with the road holding of the car for several months before finally curing the problem, which I must admit I cured eventually by sheer accident.

I have worked as a motor engineer for some 20 years, so I have a fair amount of experience with cars and when I come across a problem, I am usually fairly certain of the cause. Now, my Vitesse was shaking badly when hitting bumps or cornering hard - noticeably at the front. I went through the motions of checking the car and decided without doubt it needed new front dampers and also that a rear damper was leaking, to which I thought "I must fix that before the MOT". I bought and fitted front dampers - lo and behold, there was no difference. I then investigated further and found that the off-side vertical link was worn to the extent that there was no thread in the centre, very little at the top and only about three turns left at the bottom. These items being "priced to demand" (that is to say very expensive!) I acquired a second hand link from a chap named Ian Thornton from the Essex Area at a very reasonable price. This was fitted and off I went, convinced that I had now cured the shaking. But ... yes, you've guessed it ... the shaking was still in evidence.

By now I was getting desperate, so I re-balanced my front wheels ... still no change. I then, by strategic placing of rubber strips, tightened the steering rack mountings and also adjusted the rack damper. There was still not difference! In fact it was getting worse, becoming decidedly unstable and I was fast becoming a member of the "I've had enough of Triumph Vitesse club".

My next move was to fit new top ball-joints and track-rod ends and then to adjust the inner rack joints. But it was still there. I was fast losing faith in my ability as a motor engineer.

The next instalment: one Sunday when the sun was shining (very rare), I completely dismantled the steering and front suspension and checked and adjusted everything, rebuilt and lubricated as necessary (this must do the trick!). I drove out of my front to visit the workshop to set the front wheel toe-in, covered a mere few yards and there it was, my friendly shake, rattle and roll was still there. That was it, I was now cracking under the strain and turning to alcohol to drown my sorrows. I was now convinced that the chassis was damaged, although I could find no obvious damage. I thought I would get it tested and rid myself of the problem, so I checked it for the MOT and changed the rear damper that was leaking (at the rear???) for one that I bought at a boot sale at £1.00

## This is where there is a long pause.....

Yes, you've guessed it, the shaking had gone completely. I was so convinced that the problem was at the front, that I totally ignored the fact that I had a leaking damper at the back! I bet any good D.I.Y. enthusiast would have changed this at the beginning of the trouble. I must quote the saying "Familiarity Breeds Contempt".

So, if anyone who does his/her own repairs, feels a bit off when they can't find the problem on their car, or if they diagnose a fault and get it wrong, note that even so-called professionals get it wrong sometimes - very wrong indeed!

I myself am now back in the "I love Vitesse club". I am suffering plenty of ribbing from my colleagues and friends due to this oversight! If it was a customer's vehicle I would have changed this damper immediately I saw it leaking (the sensible and legal thing to do). But I am afraid that jobs on my own vehicle are listed in order of importance, as my spare time is very spare indeed - AND THIS SHAKING WAS MY PRIME CONCERN - not a mere leaky rear damper!!!!



# LONG LIVE THE VITESSE!!!!

John Griffiths - Exeter

It is always a pleasure to write about something you dearly love and share a bit of the magic with others who appreciate the good things in life! Of course, I am talking about the Vitesse.

This Turning Circle sees us majoring on the Vitesse, a car I was telling the Press in the mid-70's was a confirmed classic. At that time, there was general scepticism and Stuart Bladon of 'Thoroughbred & Classic Cars' was stating that it was unlikely that many would survive to be classics, as rust would claim them first. How wrong he was!

So what is it then that makes the Vitesse one of the most hotly regarded classics of the mid-80's?

To the lay-man, the Triumph Vitesse is a "Wolf in Sheep's Clothing", or even as Motor Sport put it .... "A Multi-cylindere Herald". But to the informed, it represents a unique piece of British engineering.

It's timeless looks and elegant design, its superb flexible performance and practical concept make it a CAR FOR ALL TIMES.

Motor Sport also described it as an 'Honest' car, a phrase rarely used in the Motoring Press. Yet this adjective describes it very well .... for here is a car that does not pretend to be something else, it is what it is and if anything, hides its true potential under the respectable coat of the Herald.

## It is a car to be driven: a car to be enjoyed

Few vehicles, even today, can provide the type of enjoyment that the famous Triumph '6' delivers. In MKII guise, its 104 bhp output can push it to 60 mph in about 11 seconds and 90 mph in 31 seconds. What's more, it will cruise happily all day at speeds up to 90 mph (overdrive fitted) and still returns approximately 26 mpg. Top gear performance is legendary. It will pull smoothly from 10 mph and also deliver 30 - 50 acceleration times of 7 seconds (i.e. faster than a Scimitar GTE-S, a 3000 Capri, a Datsun 260, a Lotus + 25130/5, and of course the MGB).



But wait, you say ..... it doesn't go round corners. Who was it who said you shouldn't believe everything you read in the papers? Whoever it was, he/she was a wise person, for here is a blatant piece of journalistic ineptitude.

OK, so the ride is perhaps a little old-fashioned, but it is just how I like it. It tells me what the car is doing and brings back the pleasure to motoring. Furthermore, it enables me to drive it around corners quicker and safer than 95% of today's pseudo performance boxes. As many of you will know, my own Vitesse, DVT 784J, has seen plenty of action on the "Hills" and Sprint courses since 1977. It has regularly out-performed, and out-handled cars stated by the Press to be its superior (i.e. Porsches etc.)

### What else makes it a classic?

Well, from the moment you turn the key and listen to that imposing "Whoomph" from under the pointy-eared bonnet, you know you're in for a treat. The engine delivers its power smoothly right through the range and the delightful short direct gear lever gives you incredibly quick changes up and down the box. The clutch is light, smooth and the action short. How

can you but get a great thrill from driving this compact, performance unit?

To add to the pleasure, the driver/car relationship is second-to-none. The seating is such that the car feels like a Dinky Toy in hand, and the confidence the car provides makes you want to throw it around with gay abandon (sorry, yet another familiar Press phrase!).

But there is something else that makes it a 'classic' for the 80's. This lies not in its ability to perform on the open road, but in its ability to provide the D.I.Y. enthusiast with real enjoyment. Apart from the E-Type Jaguar, what other cars, other than in the TSSC, offer the first-class accessibility of a front-hinging bonnet. Every aspect is simplicity itself, and this coupled with the accessibility factor, makes it a great car to own and maintain.

I have owned my Vitesse since 1975. During this time I have had many other cars, but there is no doubt in my mind, that DVT 784J will still be with me in 1995 and into the year 2000.

### LONG LIVE THE VITESSE!!!!

## VERSATILE VITESSE

Graham Baldwin - Trowbridge

In case you are wondering what load this Vitesse is carrying, it is a full-size double wardrobe (split in two for removal), which was transported fifteen miles with no damage to itself, the car, the driver, or other road users.

You may be interested to know that the vehicle in the picture averages 37mpg (without the wardrobe!) in the warmer months (no coasting!) and gives 40+ mpg on steady motorway driving.



## CARNIVAL TIME

Geoff Ault - Leominster

On 12th June, 1971, I was staying in Coventry. The Carnival was on that afternoon and I decided to watch it, if only to see the Standard Motors Pipe Band!

I was pleased to see that the Police were patrolling the route in a MK11 Vitesse saloon, which had some of the normal Police bolt-on goodies added. As it passed the Owen Owen department store, I managed to get a picture of it.



## THUMPER ON LOCATION

Dawn Storton - Birmingham

People instinctively know, don't they? There you are lying in the bath, scrubbing frantically at your hands, face, arms and, in this case, tummy (?) to try and remove the oil and grease harvested from under the Spitfire's bonnet, when the 'phone rings ("It's for you - hoo!").

On answering the confounded thing, I found myself engrossed in this conversation with a man who wanted Thumper (the Vitesse) for the BBC serial "One-By-One", set in the mid-sixties. It transpired that for £150.00, and an all expenses paid weekend in Liverpool, not only would Thumper be on celluloid, but moi aussi! The soggy, wet patch on the twist pile, where I'd stood for twenty-five minutes and the cold bath water really didn't seem to matter - Thumper and I were destined for higher things: today Yardley, tomorrow Hollywood!

The morning of July 1st dawned bright and warm, and Thumper was awake and ready to go when I got her out of the garage. The journey to Knowsley Safari Park, on the edge of Scouse-land was to be her longest run since the rebuild and up the M6 at a constant 70mph she returned an amazing 32 mpg (anyone who has the misfortune to run a 1600 Vitesse on the twin-solex set-up will understand my glee!).

Shortly after our arrival at the posh hotel they'd booked us into, the car organizer, John, arrived in a M reg., black and white striped Land Rover straight out of Daktari, along with a very sorry looking

P4 Rover, which had obviously seen better days! "The episode you'll be in is about baboons", explains John as the M reg. Land Rover rapidly becomes a 1964 B reg. using false plates. Baboons, I thought, do nasty things on paintwork, like scratch it and relieve themselves. Obviously aware of my concern, he quickly added that that was what the P4 was here for and merrily started drilling holes in the remains of the the Rover's wings to put in an aerial and a wing mirror. I breathed a sigh of relief, while Thumper oozed sympathy to the P4.

### ...Convoy to the Safari Park...

7am the next morning saw ourselves, the Daktari Land Rover and the P4 in convoy to the Safari Park to be joined by a very smart and unrestored, 1961 Singer Vogue, an elderly lady at the wheel having hysterics about her low oil pressure. While I was ushered into the wardrobe trailer, ("We're not called wardrobe! We are the Costume Department and not a piece of furniture!"). Adrian busied himself around the place, helping John get the vehicles ready and having a good oggle at the 1959 Rolls Royce Silver Cloud that Peter Gilmore was to drive (remember him - The Onedin Line?).

I emerged from the costume trailer looking the way I remember my mother looked back in the early sixties (when I was eight), wearing a snappy little tweed

number, yellow cotton turtle neck jumper, real stillettoes and crocodile skin handbag. Well, Adrian fell about and I nearly fell over. Next, on to the make-up trailer. One hour later I tottered down the steps with my hair up in a bee-hive, false eyelashes that were so long they brushed the windscreen and pale pink lipstick.

It was at this point I met my Equity Extra - the E.E. - whose past thespian conquests included a part-time clown and a non-speaking part in a margarine commercial. He leapt in Thumper, introduced himself, and looked as interested in the imminent activities as his margarine advert.

"Let's go for it!" yells the Producer and off rolled the convoy of various classic cars, interspersed with Cavaliers, Sierras and outside broadcast lorries.

There they were: great swarms of red-bottomed apes charging around their enclosure, swinging in the trees and looking generally hostile. Rob Heyland, the star, sat pouring over The Times crossword but still had time to let me solve ten down for him. He was so pleasant and unassuming and we chatted for some time, but I doubt if he'll remember me now!

We hung around for an hour or so while the P4 Rover was driven into the midst of these marauding creatures and was liberally sprinkled with bananas, apples and other dubious baboon delights to coax the beasts onto it, ready for the first scenes to be shot. The poor car emerged very much the worse for wear and only won on a marginal points decision, the aerial and wing mirror suffering heavily in the battle (as planned) and food and other things splattered all over it.

"Ok, take a 10", yells the Producer (he always yelled), which now being au fait with the film world jargon means tea-break. Certain interest was taken in Thumper by the E.E., who then started to ask awkward questions like, "Are you a member of Equity?" and "Who's your agent?" Agent, Equity? "No, I haven't an agent and no, I'm not a member of Equity, but I used to be in A.S.T.M.S. if that is any good". I'd been primed about the possibility of Equity being difficult about co-drivers - usual Trade Union co-operation - but he was very nice and said that he quite understood why I wouldn't let anyone else drive such a beautiful motor car!!

"Irate man scene", yells the Producer, nearly hoarse by now and it's my turn to perform.

To the E.E. this was all in a days work, and he continued to look bored while I was bubbling with excitement, asking him all sorts of technical questions like "What's the Production Assistant's job?" and "What's that long, cylindrical object that man's holding in his hand?" - God, I think I drove him mad by the end.

I found out that the Production Assistant's job was to cue me into action. After a few helpful hints from her, like "Go when I drop my arm" and "Don't rev the engine too hard - we want to hear what they're saying", we were ready to go. My heart was thumping now as I was rather nervous - did Lauren Bacall suffer like this in Casablanca? My eyes fixed on P.A.'s arm: it dropped. Don't stall Thumper, I pleaded, and off we gently drove into the baboon enclosure, stopping at the pre-arranged place. I looked back for a signal to reverse - it came. Well, that's it, I thought. Be back in time for lunch. Wrong! Three more rehearsals, then two "takes". By the third take, the baboons were becoming too close for comfort. There was a short interval while a white hunter was despatched (out of sight from the cameras) to hold them at bay with his 12 bore, then back for what was to be the final run.

"That's it", shouts the P.A., "It's in the can", and back I reverse for the last time to leave the baboons to their Liverpudlian jungle.

The last scene was the close-up of the actor and the actress that had had to be festooned by baboons in the P4 earlier that morning. By lunch time, I knew the script backwards and the line "You should have seen what they were getting up to right in front of lady wife", spoken in broad Yorkshire, will be imprinted on my brain forever.

All in all, I was 'working' for half an hour - all for a measly ten seconds on the screen. Viewing figures must have shot up for that episode - we'd told everyone about it and everyone had told everyone else! I even had it videoed, despite not having a machine to replay it on.

So now, when you pay your licence fee, you know where all the money goes. And what about all that carry on in the wardrobe and the make-up trailers when I never got near the camera, let alone step out of the car!

As for Thumper and myself, we're still sifting through the offers from M.G.M., Paramount and 20th Century Fox to find the best deal.

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