



'T' REGISTER NEWS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MG CAR CLUB T REGISTER

NO. 20 OCTOBER 2015



A PROUD JOHN WIGG & SON STUART AND OF COURSE THE TD

A Message from the Chairman of the MG Car Club 'T' Register - Geoff Matthews

As I write this we are within days of the clocks going back and long winter evenings are in prospect. I hope you have all enjoyed the summer and managed to attend at least one of our Register events during the year.

You will have seen, on our Facebook page, a photograph of your committee hard at work planning events for 2016 but also reviewing and discussing in some detail the outcome of our appeal for information about the future of T Register communications. As a result of that appeal I received around 52 responses most of which were simply a confirmation that the respondent had actually read TRN. Only a few made some additional comment indicating support for continuing the magazine in the present form, with a number confirming our feeling that, perhaps, we should be thinking about a change in direction. Your committee is well aware that there is reluctance on the part of some of our members to engage through the medium of electronic communication and we do understand the value of a paper communication. The problem is that we have a limited number of active contributors and also finance is an issue.

Our Facebook page is now attracting considerable attention and with the ability to see many more photographs of events and even short film clips. I would urge those of you who have not yet visited the page to do so. As we approach Rebuild, which is our next major event, we hope to be able to provide film extracts of those presentations via the Facebook page and/or Website, something we could never do through the medium of paper!

As a result of our deliberations we have decided to continue to produce TRN for another year and will be inviting any subscribers who wish to have a paper copy delivered, to register their interest in the next few days.

Meanwhile, David Wardell, our IT committee member and Chris Sundt, our Webmaster will be reviewing our website with a view to producing a modern site using the latest technology for building it, so that we can launch this in the autumn of 2016. This, together with a closer link to the Facebook page and, possibly, a regular monthly electronic newsletter, will complement the T Register communication you all receive from "Safety Fast".

We hope that this change will improve communications for the majority of our members although we do recognise that there will be a few of you disappointed not to be able to receive a copy of TRN in paper format after autumn 2016. I hope those of you who did take the time to respond to our original appeal do not feel we have ignored you and please do contact me or any of our other committee members if you wish to discuss any aspect of the above.

I trust you will all enjoy the coming winter months and I am sure it will not be long before we are again looking forward to another summer in our T Types.

Geoff Matthews

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EDITORIAL

I always leave this bit till last on the basis that when I have finished scribbling down all you have to tell me and done the reports on events past which are now merely history, what more is there to say?

Difficult isn't it.

The MG calendar year is over, the only thing left is to put the car away, plan the maintenance items and wait until the winter equinox in December and look for signs that the nights are drawing out.

However moving on swiftly from this melancholia, next year is already in the planning stage, Rebuild will again take place at Gaydon, there is a spring tour scheduled to Normandy, Silverstone Live will be earlier in June and I suspect we can all go to the T Party in July once more, so life cannot be all bad and The Autumn Tour is in Dorset.

Much talk last time and elsewhere as to the future of this publication and whether it is what people really want and do even read it. Well you can see from The Chairman's statement what the outcome of our meeting has been decreed, which we will put into place in the coming year.

It is proposed to continue with TRN into 2016 with the 4 editions being available free on line for download by going on the T Register website at; www.tregister.org and follow the links. For those who still wish to receive a hard copy by post there is an application form at the end of this issue, just follow the instructions therein. If you would wish to be given notification when the next issue is available send an email to The Secretary Sally Silcock at; treg.sec@virginmedia.com and notice will be duly given.

Cheers for now, enjoy the festive season.

John W

BROWN & GAMMONS

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We embarked on a re-engineering programme 5 years ago in order to address the difficulties many MG owners encounter when trying to replace parts that are no longer available or of inferior quality. All the parts are manufactured in the UK and machined from superior quality materials in order that they last longer and in many cases improve the driveability of the car.

We haven't stopped here though. We currently have many projects on the go so watch out for more parts coming soon. We do stock a comprehensive range for all T Series aiming to keep the cars on the road and working as they should. Whether it be mechanical, body or trim we will make every endeavour to help. Our workshops are fully experienced in all MGs but particularly T Series with many total rebuilds to our credit over the past 36+ years of our business. Whether it be a rebuild or just a part or technical advice, contact us.

Ron Gammons was a founder member of the T Register back in 1963 and has owned, raced and loved T Series throughout. Malcolm Gammons cut his racing teeth on the family TC and then built his racing TF. Contact the winners!

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COVER STORY

“HOW NOT TO BUY A TD”

I can only think it was going to the pictures with my Dad that did it. We were watching 'Reach for the Sky' at the ABC Regal in Sidcup. All those dare devil fighter pilots leaping into their wonderful open top MGs. That's what gave me the bug. How romantic, how exciting, how carefree.....how reckless.

Where to start? Roll forward some 50 odd years to one wet miserable April afternoon five years ago. I had nothing better to do than scan the internet, still dreaming T-types. Today it was all those lovely TDs for sale. I was probably telling myself what a clever chap I was not to have one. All those horror stories about patched up cars, rotting wooden frames lurking beneath pristine bodywork - I read them all.

Then it happened! There it was, a nice dark green early TD for £6,000. Six grand!!!! There must be a mistake. It didn't look too bad, lots of photos from all sorts of angles, would they show these if it was a basket case? and with matching numbers too. What's a little dent in the wing going to cost? Not much I reckoned.

A quick call to the importer established that the car was a 1950 RHD export model with a mph speedo and was in a lock-up somewhere in California. It was last registered in 1983 to a Duane B. Thompson of Columbet Avenue, Gilroy, California and suddenly all the relevant papers were winging their way to me by email. Another call and the deal was struck, £8,000 all in, shipping, customs, duty, delivery - the lot. What a snip!

I'd set myself a budget of no more than £20,000 for a really nice car. So would £12,000 get this one back into shape?

Next morning I was straight round to a local restorers, Tim Ayres at New Elms in Semley near Shaftesbury. We both liked what we saw in the photos. Tim made a few calls, did a bit of research and called me the next day. He could not give me a fixed price but he felt that

to allow around £16,000 for the restoration would be a fair estimate.

That was a tad over my budget - but what a prospect! A fascinating project to work on, hours of absorbing research, car clubs to join, meetings to attend and at the end of it, just the car I wanted and exactly how to get it. There are some things that a chap just has to 'yes' to.

Now all I had to do was to break the 'good' news to the missus. And my very understanding wife Jacqui was, well, very understanding. Remarkable.

NOT THE BEST OF STARTS.

The phone rang. It was Tim. "It's here," he said, "it arrived a few moments ago". I jumped in the car and shot round there.

Shock horror. "It's the wrong bloody colour Tim - and what a rust bucket!" My green TD had turned up, orange and a heap. Frantic calls to Kent Automobiles and the driver of the low loader turned round, collected my green TD from another somewhat surprised customer, delivered it to us and picked-up the orange peril. Is this an omen?

A quick once over followed and.....it wasn't too bad. In fact we were pretty impressed. Yes the front O/S wing had a ding, the back bumper was hanging off, the seat squabs were missing, there were two glassless circles of rust that used to be instruments and the chrome work was shot - but it looked pretty square and amazingly free of rust for a 60 plus year old car.



THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN

Once I'd finished congratulating myself on my astute car buying prowess and plotting my new career as a classic car importer, we got down to business. What we needed was a plan. How far did we go, who did what, when, how and with whom. But as always it's vital to get the major priority sorted - what colour was it going to be.

By carefully peeling back layers of the remaining paint on the bulk head we pretty soon established that green wasn't the original colour. Beneath the top layer was red and beneath that was MG Ivory. The trim, or what was left of it, was red as was the original grill colour - so that was the first important decision made.

The next parts of the plan were more rational. We agreed that if we are going to do the job it would have to be done properly - no half measures. Stage one therefore was to completely dismantle the car and prepare for full body-off restoration and complete strip down. And while all that was going on I set about researching the mechanical side of the project - and learning, somewhat late in the day, all that I needed to know about TD's.

SORRY, WHAT EXACTLY IS A CHROMOMETRIC SPEEDOMETER?

"What do you mean you can't even begin to look at it my speedo for a year? The car will be finished by then!" Such was my naive optimism at the outset. Did I have a lot to learn!

But these were heady days. Clubs were joined - and their experts to pester; endless books and manuals bought and read; specialists impressed with my total lack of knowledge and endless trips across to Semley to watch Tim and his team slowly reveal the delights and wonderment of pre-war automotive design. Yes, the learning curve went from slight incline to a 1:1 gradient before you could say truckle pin (whatever that is!).

As a lad I'd rebuilt the engine of my Wolseley 1500, single-handedly changed the clutch on my Herald convertible, tuned the SUs on my Mk 2 Spitfire and all those other things you do yourself when you've hardly got two shillings to rub together. But that was close on 50 years ago! Yet it all slowly started to trickle back, well, most of the good bits did.

But the plan was in place and decisions needed to be made. A visit to the excellent T Register Rebuild seminars helped enormously as did the many email conversations with Barrie Jones - the hugely knowledgeable (and mega helpful) author of the indispensable tome 'Barrie's Notes'. Another great read is Jonathan Goddard's 'Practical MG TD'. Work your way through both of those and you're an overnight expert! Invaluable stuff.

The engine was out and off to George Edney of XPAG Engineering for a complete rebuild including boring out to 1375, fully balanced, half-race cam, enlarged valves, gas-flowed unleaded head, solid skirt pistons and new crank oil seals.

Good contacts galore were made at 'MG Live!' These proved invaluable as the crucial 'spend shed loads of money' stage rapidly approached.

The legendary Type 9 replacement 5 speed gearbox kit was ordered from Hi-Gear Engineering, the SUs were off to Tony Hebdon of Sheffield for overhaul (or virtually complete replacement as it turned out). The radiator was being re-cored by NAR Group and the Girling shocks were with Stevson Motors in Birmingham for refurbishing.

The chassis and all the body parts were away being bare metal stripped, and the guys at New Elms were busy overhauling the steering, suspension, running gear, brakes, differential and back axle. My seemingly beyond-all-hope clocks were dropped off to local instrument specialist Adrian Sidwell in the belief that miracles still happen.

Meanwhile, yours truly started what was to become a long and close email relationship with Carl Ord at Moss in Bradford (entrust your parts ordering to no one else!).

SO THEN WE JUST TAKE IT ALL TO BITS AGAIN!

The rebuild was coming along nicely - if a little slowly for my liking. "These things can't be rushed," was Tim's sage-like advice. I didn't argue - well, not much. But soon - after some 18 months - there was news of real progress. Tim was on the phone. "The tub's all assembled and we're just about to fit the wings". He sounded quite relieved.

I rushed down to the see the car re-assembled. It looked a treat. The chassis had come up like new - and the body, in primer, was starting to look like a proper car again. But my excitement was soon dampened. I learned that this was nothing but an illusion as no sooner is the car together than it all had to come apart again - and off to the paint shop.



Most of the ash frame was in pretty good nick and had been retained, but two or three parts were not worth bothering with. The floor was completely shot - and was replaced with one piece of heavy-duty marine ply - a much better job than the rotting 'floor boards'.

The doors were fitted with a diagonal cross member to help prevent sagging - and, for some unaccountable reason, the top of the bulk head was a good half inch or more higher than the trailing edge of the bonnet! Very odd - but some suitable modification soon achieved perfect alignment. This really applied to the whole car where panel fit was remarkably good.

"Real progress then Tim," said I, "we must be almost there?"

"Yes, almost," came back the reply, "another twelve months or so should see it finished."

"TWELVE MONTHS!!!!"

ANY COLOUR AS LONG AS IT'S WHITE

"Pop round and have a look at MG ivory," said Stuart Robbins of Indygo Refinishing. "I'm not sure you'll like it". The disassembled body was now entrusted to paintwork specialist Indygo - also Semley based (handy!). He was right. It might be the correct original colour but was a tad too mustardy for my taste. "Old English White's the colour you want," said Stuart, showing me an alternative example.

A quick visit to the Mini main dealers in Salisbury soon resolved the colour issue. I'd been admiring the off-white colour of a new Mini on the forecourt. I asked a hovering sales guy what colour it was. "Pepper White," said the salesman, "and we've three in stock, sir," came back the quick alternative close standard sales patter. "No thank you, but I'll take a pot of touch up!" At least he made a sale.

"That's just a fancy marketing name for Old English White," said Stuart. Oh well, we got there in the end.



But what about red ones?

What followed was a revelation. Filling, sanding - more filling, more sanding. Course, medium then fine - on it went week in, week out. The body had been in remarkably good condition apart from the tank, which resembles a sieve, and the side screen bin, which had almost completely rusted away

except for the top lip and about the top 4-5 inches – the rest was gone. That was the only bit of welding needed – remarkable for a (then) 63 year old car.

But nothing was quite good enough for Stuart – more filling, more sanding. But the finished job well let's just say that all those excellent comments about the paint job are always most welcome. Great job, guys.

IS MY NUMBER UP?

"It would have been easier if you'd asked for a photo of the chassis number BEFORE we had completely re-assembled the car!" said a somewhat frustrated Tim. In all the excitement of seeing all this great progress I'd rather overlooked re-registration. Somewhat late in the day, I together with those helpful people at the DVLA, were on the case.

Two rejections later we were almost there. The records of HMRC didn't tie up with the info I'd supplied. Apparently the customs people had used the US licence number from the documentation that came with the vehicle instead of the chassis number – so there was no record of my car ever being re-imported!

Peter Cole of the T Register provided some excellent certified documentation and this, together with my troublesome photos did the trick and on the 6th January 2015 age related 294 UYE was born – and was very welcome. The prospect of driving around with a kit car registration had not been very appealing – to say nothing of the effect this would have on the car's value.

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

"What, this Christmas?!" said Tim when I broke the news to him. "Are you serious? You are..... aren't you?"

I explained that we have a pre-Christmas drinks party every year at home – and all my mates were expecting to see the TD ensconced in my specially converted new garage.

But despite the protestations the guys at New Elms really pulled the stops out. In truth it wasn't quite finished, but no one knew it arrived on a trailer!



En route from New Elms the TD had spent a few months with trimmers SCA Classic Restorations of Wincanton in the most competent hands of Shawn Allen. All the trimming, interior leather and carpets, hood and tonneaus were expertly fitted by Shawn. What was left of the original seats, door trim, frames, etc had long since found their way to the skip – so Shawn really had to start from scratch.



"Do you really intend to cover the dash with that PVC?" asked a somewhat disapproving Shawn when checking through the components I'd supplied. A half-hide of beautifully matched leather later soon resolved the issue. Shawn likes to have things 'right' – and I like that. The owners of those lovely Astons, Bristols and Alvises that kept my little TD company over those weeks probably do too.

SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?

The car was finished. So my long suffering wife Jacqui asked that inevitable question – to which there was no suitable retort. The project had occupied hours, in fact weeks of my time and I'd enjoyed every minute of it.

What I had at the end was exactly what I had set out to achieve, a beautifully restored TD which is everything I wanted.

I'd learnt a lot along the way. The advice to opt for electronic ignition with a dynamo look-alike alternator; fit an MGB anti-roll bar; incorporate the five-speed box, radiator temp gauge, radial tyres and all the other unquestionable knowledge has been invaluable. "Go for torque – that's what this engine needs," George Edney had told me – and he was right.

But it was Tim Ayres at New Elms who said, "We don't cut corners here – either it's right, or don't do it." Every bush and bearing was replaced; every component refurbished; every nut and bolt is stainless steel – everything,

where possible, was as it should be. Admittedly not as original, but the car is an absolute joy to drive, and – to me – looks a treat

Did I keep within my budget? Of course not – does anyone? I could have saved a few thousand and bought someone else's finished car. But would that have been MY car – my TD. Of course not.

And anyway, what else would I have done with myself over the previous three and a half years?! Carried on flicking through those classic car ads? Now that would be a dangerous thing to do.....wouldn't it?

John WiggOctober 2015



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THE 2015 T REGISTER AUTUMN TOUR 11TH TO 14TH SEPTEMBER to the SOUTH COTSWOLDS

The 2015 Autumn Tour was based near Wotton under Edge half way between Gloucester and Bristol and a stone's throw from the M5. The dates were September 11th to September 13 and the venue was the Tortworth Court Four Pillars Hotel, a magnificent Cotswolds grade 2 listed Victorian mansion offering all the grandeur of an elegant house with character alongside the modern facilities of a four star hotel.



In spite of her own personal loss early in the year Gill Hayward bravely soldiered on and organised us in the true fashion that we have come to expect on these occasions. The package delivered to all upon arrival contained carefully planned routes and information booklets and brochures to enable individual choices as to how to while away the days.

Saturday

A bright sunny morning but it rained heavy in the night so a lot of drying out of covers and hoods. Not so far today as many had travelled a fair distance on Friday, first heading east along single tracks, then a first stop at Newark Park with its hunting lodge built in 1550 as a retreat for sport and entertainment but a succession of owners over the centuries have now transformed and extended this to become an elegant and comfortable home now under the management of the National Trust

Shortly after a diversion for some who had elected to take to the skies and had booked a glider experience, up, up into the clouds and no engine!!

Then further east as far as Tetbury and then north to Nailsworth a lively artistic town in a wooded valley with numerous small interesting shops and eating establishments and subject to a series of manoeuvres and backtracking around roundabouts by T Types much to the amusement of the local populace.



“that be Wales over there”

Up to and across Minchinhampton common, maybe an ice cream at Winstones, seeking out the views west before onto Stroud and a winding twisting uphill climb as far as Gloucester before turning South and heading back to the hotel following the east bank of the river Severn and adjacent canals, past close by to The Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust

Just time for a wash and brush up and it was soon approaching 6.30 and time for the reception and drinks before the gala dinner. But first we are promised entertainment, and accordingly we were entertained.... by ‘The Stroud Styx.’ There is a history in these parts of Morris dancing and other such ritualistic cavorting in strange disguise and garb to pipes, fife and drum. This lot were no exception and danced whirled and twirled for over half an hour to a continual rhythm and the much bashing of styx.



That all over and into the splendid atrium of the orangery for the gala dinner followed by a few well chosen words and of course the obligatory ode from the President Mr. Michael Lugg.

Soon, order was called and the announcement of the awards proceeded in the customary manner. The Montague Burton, a silver cup awarded for exploits in a 'T' or an exemplary rebuild project, this year awarded to Simon Evans for his superbly created replica of the George Phillips special based on a TC which raced in the 60's.

Having only recently retired from the post of historian and DVLA representative after 17 years service, Roy Miller was deservedly presented with the Malcolm Hogg Trophy.



Finally the Secretary's Award annually presented at the whim and discretion of the Secretary, which shall be autonomous, went to your editor John Ward supposedly for his continued scribbling and prose on your behalf.

Sunday

A somewhat damp and overcast start but it was not raining so hoods down and away we go again. Through Wootton under Edge and northwards to Dursley with fantastic views westwards over the Severn Valley before turning east with twisting roads to Chalford and Birdlip sitting on The Ermin Way a roman road from Gloucester to Cirencester (Corinium) where it enjoined with the Fosse Way all the way to Lincoln.

An abrupt turnabout south and down toward Cirencester before cutting across to Tetbury, another of those celebrated market towns that made their mark and wealth based upon the wool trade in the Middle Ages. Tetbury has become the adopted home of HRH Prince Charles, his Highgrove Estate is within walking distance and the church spire can be seen from his front door across the fields.

A long rambling run heading west now passing close by Badminton, home of the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort and to Thornbury with its castle built by Edward Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham but who was then accused of treason by Henry VIII who had him beheaded and confiscated it, as he did!

Then the final stop and time for tea at Berkeley Castle on the banks of the River Severn, one of the Norman March castles built to keep out the Welsh and still in the possession of the same family who built it in the early days of the 11th century.

Monday

All over for another year, after breakfast a reluctance to leave, the weather had turned to rain, lots of it, not a good prospect for a long drive home. Some of us who went to visit the Highgrove Estate were presented in the entrance verandah to our guide in a complete riding wetsuit and wellies, apparently they go out in all weather and we did!

Many thanks to Gill for a super time and assisted by her son Charles making this a weekend to remember

See you all in Dorset next year.

John W

And so on to next year.....2016

Stoneleigh International MG Spares Day

Sometime in late February (date still to be announced) there will be the annual MG gathering at the MG International Spares Day at the Stoneleigh Agricultural Showground near Warwick. Your T Register committee already has plans to be there with the Register Stand manned by committee members, an opportunity to meet and chat and buy and sell those coveted original bits to complete maintenance or rebuild projects.

The 2016 T Register Rebuild Seminars (now for its 36th year in existence)

Once again we will be holding this event at the Heritage Motor Centre at Gaydon Warwicks CV35 0BJ just off the M40 at junction 12.

The date for your diaries is **Saturday 19th March 2016** and already we know the preliminary programme will include brakes, the back axle and diffs, camshafts, lubricants and others to be confirmed. The full programme, details, costs and booking form will be in the January edition of T Register's Notes in "Safety Fast"...not to be missed.

2016 T Register April Tour to Normandy,
Bill and Sally Silcock are planning a visit to Normandy in April next year.

The date is **4th to 8th April 2016** (four nights). This is early we know, but we got a very good deal and spring should be well under way in Normandy. The location is; – la Ferme de la Rançonnière, route de Creully, 14480 Crepon, France. Prices are for a double / twin - 150€ per room per night half board (dinner, bed and breakfast) and single 105€ per room per night half board.

An important note:

We have an option on 10 double/twin rooms until **1st December 2015**, and we need at least this number of participants to take advantage of the above prices.

The hotel is in an old farmstead, with plenty of parking space on site, there are no lifts, but there are ground-floor rooms: the dining room and bar are on the ground floor too. There is more information on their website: <http://www.ranconniere.fr/?lang=en> – this is the English-language version.

The nearest ferry is Portsmouth – Caen (about 30 km from Crépon). Other possible ferry routes are via le Havre or Cherbourg (both about 110 - 120 km) or Calais (about 375 km).

The hotel has asked for a deposit of one night's payment per room booked, payable on 1st December, so please be prepared to confirm your booking and pay this deposit by 30 November at the latest.

Contact Bill & Sally **now** on treg.sec@virginmedia.com or 01525750468

Silverstone Live 2016

Silverstone Live is now provisionally booked as the 4th & 5th of June 2016

The 2016 T Party

The T Register T Party is likely to be at the end of July having proved to be a great success, dates later when known.

The 2016 Autumn Tour

The Autumn Tour this year is to Dorset and the Jurassic coast based near Sherborne at the George Albert Hotel on the 2nd to 5th September.

You will have seen in the July edition Alan Wakefield's story of the acquisition of his TD, well there is more!.....

"My Life and T-Times" Part 2

In the July edition of TRN, I described how I got back into T-Type ownership and a brief history of my 1953 TD - CSV 875 (stable-named "MaTiIDa" in the early days; how sad is that?) acquired in September 2005. As the tenth anniversary of my ownership approaches, interestingly longer than that of any of the previous four UK owners since 1988, I thought I might share a few of the experiences of owning and maintaining the vehicle together with a few of the "tweaks and tricks" I have learned and carried out plus few of the other things that make up an enjoyable ten years but not without the occasional bouts of frustration and angst)

When I got the car, the bodywork and mechanicals were in pretty good order. 34 years in the hot, dry Texas climate meant that the woodwork and metalwork were in sound and original condition but the hood, 1/2-tonneau and side screens were well faded from their original beige.

There was 81022 miles indicated on the clock, however the paperwork with the vehicle showed 69,877 indicated miles when re-registered and given an MOT in the UK in August 1988. It must have been "round the clock" at least once during its USA sojourn! Initial detective work to verify vehicle originality indicated that the ex-factory body colour would have been Autumn Red, with red trim/upholstery.

The current exterior bodywork, although with a fine near equivalent red shade is not quite Autumn Red. The "give-away" is the (original) colour still on the radiator grille and the under bonnet scuttle pressing. Subsequent work sometime later also revealed traces of original red leather and trim beneath the seat cushions and the door card panels. The engine/gearbox externals were also painted a red shade (MG Red?) rather than the more correct TD maroon, which was

indicative of various earlier re-builds, but the engine number plates and casting marks etc. are all as per original.

Another factor was that the rocker clearance plate on the rocker box (pressed steel version, but painted silver!) was showing 0.015" and not the 0.012" expected for a "late" TD ("W" - Wolseley block) cammed engine or even 0.019" for an earlier spec. XPAG replacement camshaft. Subsequent detective work in 2008, having measured the camshaft timing "in situ", seemed to confirm the deduction that an AEG122 camshaft, an earlier factory option "1/2 Race" or "Fast Road" cam had been fitted in the USA which the factory spec. for that cam gave 0.015" instead of 0.019". As an alternative setting and for quietness I currently run with 0.015 - 0.016" clearance and it seems to perform pretty well without too much "XPAG clatter"

Paperwork provided with the car indicated that the head had been converted to unleaded in 2003 when the head was probably skimmed (again), it measures 74.2mm thickness, indicating an approx. 8.6:1 compression ratio if the bores are standard, which is unlikely so it is probably nearer 8.9). A compression test a couple of years ago indicated an average 147 psi per cylinder, with a 'spread' of 140-150psi.

Being a bit of an anorak about the technical and mechanical aspects of the car I have kept a service, repairs, maintenance and modifications log book since September 2005, so we could now be here all night but I'll just outline the main things I have done since.

1. Early T- thing Troubles

In the early days, I was quite frequently experiencing the now familiar and traditional "fits of the vapours" with the engine stalling for no apparent reason (this was said to be one of the consequences of running on modern unleaded fuels) and then re-starting again quite happily after a short "cooling off" period.

I made a number of changes and add-ons, such as fitting a heat shield, putting insulating spacers between the carbs and manifold and fitting an electric fan.

I then coated and lagged the manifolds and the fuel piping together with the coolant and overflow catch tank etc as well as flushing out the block and radiator.

I modified the timing and re-tuned the carbs (many times) and also changed the points, rotor arms and the condensers in the distributor a number of times and later fitted a replica "Lucas" Sports coil (3.0 ohm resistance) and replaced the oil bath air filters with modified Spridget pancake versions.

Anyway, for about 18 months now I seem to have cracked it and we now run OK in all weathers on (preferred) BP Ultimate with a dash of Castrol Valvemaster additive. Whether all or any of the above changes is really responsible for overcoming the vaporisation problems is anyone's guess; but if in doubt, try fixing everything!

One other "episode", which was written up in May 2006 TTT, was the unwitting and erroneous mixing of silicone and mineral brake fluids when carrying out a routine service and top ups! A definite no-no, which required the braking system to be cleaned out (methylated spirits) and all rubbers replaced etc. But I still don't know how you can tell which type of fluid is in the system just by looking in the master cylinder!

2. Modifications and Maintenance 2006-09

During this period, I had the carbs totally refurbished (by Burlens) and fitted them with the Grose ball-type needle valve replacements. The distributor was rebuilt and re-curved by 'The Distributor Doctor' and a "modern" waxstat thermostat unit replaced the original with a 75 deg. stat which is lower than usual modern car variants.

The rocker shaft and arms, pushrods, cam followers have been progressively replaced to establish a better, more consistent "valve operating" geometry. Some of the current pattern replacement items such as rocker arms have very poor geometry and dimensions, such that it is impossible to replicate correctly the rocker ratios for valve lift and timing etc. If at all possible "original"

MG rockers - identified with cast in part numbers are preferred especially if they have correctly "re-ground" faces and rocker bushes are easily obtainable and replaceable. The cam followers were also modified with extra oil grooves to improve cam lobe lubrication.

2008 was the year of suspension and drive train overhaul and rebuilding, including the Girling shockers and upgrading the axle to 4.55 ratio from its original 5.125 (In retrospect I think the car with an approx. Stage 1A tune would take 4.3.). The shockers were professionally rebuilt and I had some professional help with setting up the "new" CWP (actually a good condition set from a ZA Magnette axle). With the front shockers off it was expedient to replace all the bushes both rubber and metal in the front suspension assembly.

Brakes are always an issue on T-Types, so there was to be a progressive refurbishment and replacement of all the braking components and cylinders, piping and hoses. Also I did a number of modifications to the rear lighting/indicator set up, and other sundry electrical works like re-setting the regulator and cut out unit.

3. On-Going Improvements. 2010 - 2015

2010 was an interesting year, in that I took advantage of the rolling road testing facility available to members at MG Live at Silverstone; 57 bhp peak plus a good flattish torque curve indicated that the Stage 1A equivalent tune and all the other tweaks, were working reasonably well.

In 2011 the main item was replacing the steering rack; and sorting out the radiator and its mounting bracket (they can corrode and it's hard to spot in situ.). The dynamo, starter motor and silencer also needed some refurbishment and/or replacement and I overhauled the prop shaft with new U/Js (sealed for life type to avoid the regular greasing chore) and had it re-balanced professionally.

Since 2012, it has been mainly routine maintenance, servicing and tuning but had to replace the carburettor floats with "Stay Up" versions from Burlen (the original brass floats had finally started to leak and sink!); a couple of core plugs (the usual difficult to access ones!) needed replacing, and an adjustable clutch operating rod was fitted.

I fitted a new box-pleated centre zip full tonneau and made some repairs to the hood (incl. webbing straps) and installed press-stub fixing of the rear side screens to the hood valence (stops them flapping around when motoring fast with the hood up). The wheels have been re-balanced a couple of times and the steering tracking reset. Tyre wear on the 165x15 radials has been very little and even over more than 20,000 miles - must be my sedate driving!

My average annual mileage is now about 2000, on long runs I get up to 35 mpg on my "preferred" mixture and about 30 on short and wintertime runs. The oil filter (spin on type conversion) changed once a year, and engine oil twice with regular checks and changes for gearbox and rear axle fluids. I also check and usually renew brake fluid once a year.

Despite all of the fiddling about with carb. tuning and ignition timing in the early days, I am now back to using the standard ES carb. needles (in standard H2 1.25" carbs) and running with normal points distributor ignition (no electronics for me) set at 5 deg. BTDC static timing. I have messed about with different plug types, but find that the recommended NGK BP6E seem to be OK, I have recently tried "three -electrode" modern equivalents, but there seems to be no great difference.

So what is next?

Sitting in the garage for several years past has been a new wiring harness and I have just rebuilt two TD type gearboxes, so I have vague plans to do some more replacement work over the coming winter period. Also probably it is time for a head-off decoke clean up and valve regrind, but at the moment we seem to be going fairly well (fatal

words!) and compressions are quite good and so I might even just resist that temptation!

Oil consumption apart from the traditional bell housing incontinence (no lip seal conversion fitted at rear mains) is about 300 mpp which is sort of acceptable I feel, considering that I do tend to press on along good main roads, cruising at 55/60mph with around 3800/4000 rpm on the clock. Oil pressure is a steady 60psi hot and still 20psi on tick over so I feel that the bottom end is still OK. The engine temperature rarely varies now from the indicated 75 deg.C. (Checking the accuracy of the gauge with a digital cooking thermometer is an easy exercise). Also sitting on the shelf is a brand new, fully programmable electronic CSI distributor but since I have been running trouble free on the traditional points and condenser ignition I have so far resisted the temptation to change things.

What have I learnt over the past ten years? Well, latterly I've managed to curb and control my original bad habit of "if it ain't broke, fix it anyway", and become more attuned to " if it ain't broke, then leave it alone". Honest gov! I haven't even reset the timing, checked the points and rocker gaps, or tweaked the carbs in the past month!

Maybe not for everyone but I have also been an avid collector/purchaser of all known and available books, parts manuals, workshop manuals , handbooks and original publication reprints etc in connection with T-types and with all other similarly related vehicles.

So, not much more to say, really. Just hope both I and the car can keep going for a few more years yet.

Alan Wakefield October 2015

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October 2015

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