

for enthusiasts by enthusiasts

SPITFIRE & GT6

Featuring Spitfire, GT6, Herald, Vitesse and other Triumph-based Cars

M A G A Z I N E

Issue #37



features

- ◆ *French Blue Spit6*
- ◆ *Alex's Dream*
- ◆ *Texas Triumph*
- ◆ *Tech: New Engine Start-Up*
- ◆ *Tech: Overdrive Tips*
- ◆ *Tech: Thrustwashers*



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For those of us in the northern hemisphere, this winter seems to have been a long and rough one so far. Record snow falls and low temps have made spending time outside unbearable. Just recently the Weather Channel stated that there was snow on the ground in 49 of the 50 states. Of course all of Canada was covered too. Only Hawaii was without snow, but sometimes Mauna Loa Volcano in Hawaii even has snow caps. Europe too, has been hit with severe cold and snow, some areas receiving record snow falls.

I posed a question on Facebook and Twitter last month asking if readers drive their Triumphs in the winter, or store them. Over 90% responded that their beloved Triumphs rest during the cold months, with many storing them in a warm garage. The other 10% came from coastal or southern areas that usually stay warm enough to use a Triumph year round. I hope those readers have enjoyed the top-down experiences for the rest of us. We would love to see photos of your winter escapades and adventures via your Triumphs. Please send them in and let us enjoy your adventures with you.



Michel Des Laurier of Laval, QC, Canada sculpted a Spitfire from the snow!

Many of us use this downtime to complete needed repairs and make improvements on our cars while they sit idle. This issue has several good projects that could be done while your Triumph waits patiently for the warm weather to return. How to check and replace the thrust washers, fix that nagging overdrive problem, improve the suspension, and add gas filled struts to assist in the opening of the bonnet, top the list of tech articles you will find inside. If you have found other equally important items to fix, send us some photos and a short explanation covering your repairs and we will include them in the next issue, so others can benefit from your experience.

Before we know it, springtime will arrive and it will be time for the rest of us to drop the tops and head out on the open road in our favorite Triumphs. Will your repairs be completed in time for the first blooms of spring? If not, you'd better get busy!

Until next issue, see you on the road...

Howard

howard@triumphspitfire.com

Thanks to everyone for your photos & stories. Please keep them coming! They will be used in a future issue.

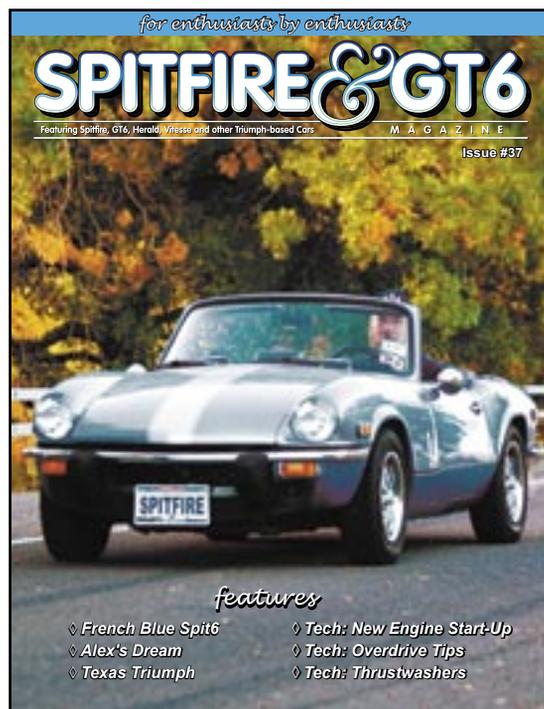
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THE ARTICLES IN
THIS ISSUE
WERE SENT BY:

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ON THE COVER

The cover features Dennis Duke's 1978 Spitfire 1500. He restored this Spitfire to a concours winning condition. Read more starting on page 22.

Send us anything Spitfire or GT6 related!
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Spitfire & GT6 Magazine...

TOM O'MALLEY

Dear Editor,

Many of the old timers will remember Tom O'Malley who was very active on the British Car and Spitfire lists until 2003. His Spitfire wiring diagrams are listed on the Spitfire & GT6 Magazine web site. Tom had a wonderful sense of humor and was an inspiration to other enthusiasts. I had the good fortune to meet him around ten years ago after he invited me to stop by his house in Southbridge, MA on the way to taking my daughter to college in Boston. I was amazed at the quality of work, including welding and painting, he had done on his Spitfire in a Harbor Freight portable garage! I only met Tom once, but he was definitely one of the good guys and one of those people who seemed like a life-long friend when you met him.

I am very sad to say that I just learned that Tom passed away after an illness on March 9, 2008. His obituary can be found at http://www.sansoucyfuneral.com/sitemaker/sites/Sansou1/obit.cgi?user=832_TOMalley102.

I wanted all to know of his passing.
-Larry Griffin

Larry, thanks for your email.

We are sorry to hear of Tom's passing. We never met Tom, but he was very helpful in providing us with his diagrams to share on the web.

It is sad that another skilled Triumph expert has left us. We wish his family well.

Howard~

GT6 BRAKES

Dear Editor,

I have a 73 GT6 Mk 3. I am having problems getting parts, etc. Can you run a story as to what and why there is a difference in the brake system of the 73 GT6 Mk3 and 72 & earlier. Please include brake line

fitting sizes, cylinder sizes, etc.

Thanks, Bill

Bill, I cannot answer your question at this time. I am sure there are several GT6 specialists out there that could provide us with the details on parts and differences.

Hopefully we will have an answer for you in the next issue.

Howard~

SPITFIRE ADVICE

Dear Editor,

My name is Cody Crowley, and I am a sophomore in college and a huge fan of the Triumph Spitfire. A 1962 Spitfire Mk.I was one of the first British cars I ever got a ride in back in 6th grade, as a family friend owned it. I've loved them since. I turn 21 in just under two years (May 2012), and to celebrate the occasion, and since my insurance rates go down, I plan on buying my very own Spitfire. I recently joined the Southern California Triumph Owner's Association, so I guess I'm "in"! I do need some advice, however.

I currently drive a '99 Toyota Camry as a daily driver for school and work, but I would like to replace it with the Spitfire. I know it sounds crazy, but I've talked to many sources (including Richard Lentiello at Hemmings, who owns a Spitfire and GT6 and bought one for his daughter), and most say that it is certainly possible. Several students have classics at my college, including 240Z's, several VW's, and one girl even has a late 70's Peugeot 504! Now if someone can use a Peugeot as a daily driver, a Spitfire should do just fine! Do you think it is possible to use a Triumph Spitfire as a relatively reliable daily driver for school and work, in addition to a weekend car?

Another issue I have is what year and version to purchase. Personally, I'm a fan of the early 1962-1970 models, especially the Mk.III with its bigger motor. The later cars are nice, but I've heard mixed reviews. Some say they are better built and more reliable, others say they're not as reliable (the Mk.IV with emission control problems and the 1500 with its thrust washers, overheating, etc.). Either way, I have enough to purchase the best



example I can find, regardless of the year. Which year/model Spitfire do you recommend?

I've read the new owner's section, yet I'm still not deterred. I bought the Spitfire Haynes manual, plus we have a good British car specialist in our area that's been in business for almost 50 years (Frank Monise Motors in Montclair, CA). Plus, there's the SCTOA to help me along. I'll have them help me inspect and evaluate my potential Spit. I appreciate any advice you can give me. I want to help this hobby survive, since hardly anyone my age cares about old British cars anymore. I'd hate to be another student in a Miata! Thanks for your time!

Sincerely,
Cody Crowley,
El Monte, California

Cody,

Thank you for your email.

First, joining a local Triumph club was a good step, to get local support. As to a Spit being a good daily driver, yes it is very possible. Many readers here will agree. With a few modifications, any good Spitfire can be used as a daily driver.

As to what year/model, if you favor the earlier body style, then a good '68 Mk3 should do the trick. That seems to rank high in the opinion of several Spit/GT6 owners.

Howard~

We have over 365 followers already on Facebook, an increase of 100

since the last issue. Let's keep it growing. We continue to receive "Write the Caption" responses along with Readers Rides photos from there as well.

If you use Facebook or Twitter, you might want to join us. You can find us by visiting the magazine's main webpage and look for the F or T logos.

Howard~

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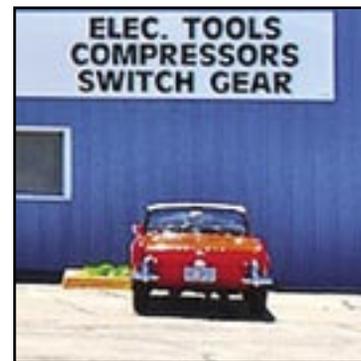
Weird, Wacky & Wonderful!

Wilson Left his Spitfire



Hi, My name is Wilson. I am an antenna ball. For the longest time I got to tag along on Teddy Bob's neat Spitfire. One day he hit a bump and I went flying... but I can't remember where I am now. I have heard that Teddy Bob cried about me leaving, and then replaced me with this really lame Union Jack ball. If you happen to see me snoozing along the roadside in the Cincinnati area, would you please help me get home to my beloved Spitfire, and then Teddy Bob can smile again (and maybe he will ditch that lame ball). Thanks, signed **Wilson**

Spitfire Electric



If you go to www.knappelectric.net you will see a 67 Spitfire in the picture. This is a website for working on electric motors and the Spitfire is mine. I had no idea that they were taking pictures that day.
Submitted by Byron from Nebraska

Spitfire to the Stars



Looking for an upgrade to your home satellite dish? What not add a Spitfire to your dish? A Spitfire LNB. A low-noise block converter (LNB) is the (receiving, or downlink) antenna of what is commonly called the parabolic satellite dish commonly used for satellite TV reception.

We all know of the great electrical systems installed in our Spitfires, so why not try the Spitfire on your satellite dish, and see the world in a whole new way!

0.1dB Spitfire Elite Universal LNB



You write the caption



Photo sent in by Dr. Brent Nickischer. Using his Spitfire to haul home some shrubs from the local nursery.

Last issue and on TriumphSpitfire.com, we asked readers to send us suggestions for a caption for the photo to the left. Listed below are some of the responses.

the captions

LITTLE BITS OF SPITS

Trees gone wild.
 If trees could drive...
 How much fir your car?
 Pining for attention.
 When juvenile trees act out.
 If this is going green, I'm a tree.
 He takes our friend so we will take his car!
 Who said the grass was greener over here?
 I just love a sunday spin with the wind in my branches
 Xmas trees apprehended in rare theft of a Forrest Green Spit.
 It's not British Racing Green, it's Cedar Green!
 I told you this was not Conifer Green.
 Official Triumph Color: Conifer
 Going green.
 Is this really going green or what?
 This biofuel is overrated.
 Best gas mileage of any truck in it's class...
 Sorry man, they didn't sell me the truck bed with this model.
 Who needs a truck when you have a Spitfire.
 Nice truck!
 Stocking up on the Jumbo Size Pine scented air fresheners.
 That's the last time I tell my wife to get a tree air freshener for the car.
 Several of Bushs' relatives out for drive.
 Maybe Bushs' family reunion in progress.
 Look what grows up when the floorpans rust out.
 Custom cedar trim package.
 Who says you cannot carry anything in a Spitfire.
 Leaving the roof down can have undesired consequences in wet areas.
 I see he's got his new bushes!
 They make great planters too!
 Yes, there was some rust in the floor and trunk, why do you ask?
 Over the hills and through the woods to Grandmother's house we go....
 In the VW it's how many people you can fit into it, with the Spitfire it's how many trees.
 See even in a world without humans Triumph still rules.
 What RICH rednecks find when they mow.
 Country bliss.
 How much fir your car?
 Fur Trees a Jolly good fellow.....
 Let's head home, I am bushed.

Next issue...



This photo was sent in by Amy Lafrentz.

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More Weird, Wacky & Wonderful!

John Deere Spitfire

Hi guys, I found a Spitfire for sale in a barn in Northern Alberta seems to be in pretty good shape too.
 Have a good laugh boys
 Regards
 Victor Harnish
 '73 Spit



Ad text:

For Sale 1980 John Deere Spitfire \$1,000.00 Description: I bought this from Original owner 2 yrs ago for my kids, it still has original belt and sparkplugs in it, I replaced the Windshield and registered it as a Alberta Antique. It rides to rough for us. It shined up very nice after sitting 20 yrs in his barn. Bad part is we live in Barrhead, Alberta. Oh well, in last 30 yrs I have gone to BC and brought 6 snowmobiles home, its your turn.
<http://classifieds.castanet.net/showproduct.php/product/861091/cat/85>

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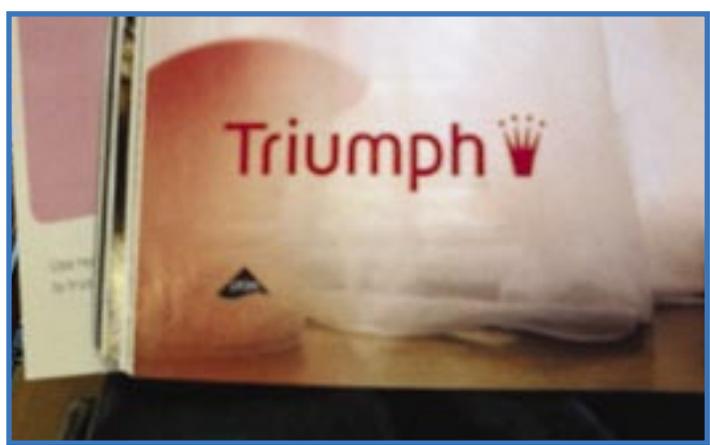
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 • Box of 50
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I found this ad in a Gander Mountain Black Friday flier. Thought readers might like to see this.
 Regards,
 Howard Jefferson, Ohio

Triumph Lingerie

I found this in the latest In Style mag. My S.O. noticed Triumph and showed me the ad. I snapped a pic to send to you all. It looks like British Leyland and Rolex merged and started producing women's underwear. Sorry about the attempted closeup, my camera phone does not benefit from a autofocus or zoom.
 Submitted by MSgt Shannon Oswald USAF



How Long Have You Owned a Car?

Mr. Allen Swift (Springfield , MA.) received this 1928 Rolls-Royce Picadilly P1 Roadster from his father, brand new - as a graduation gift in 1928.

He drove it up until his death last year.... at the age of 102 !!! He was the oldest living owner of a car from new.

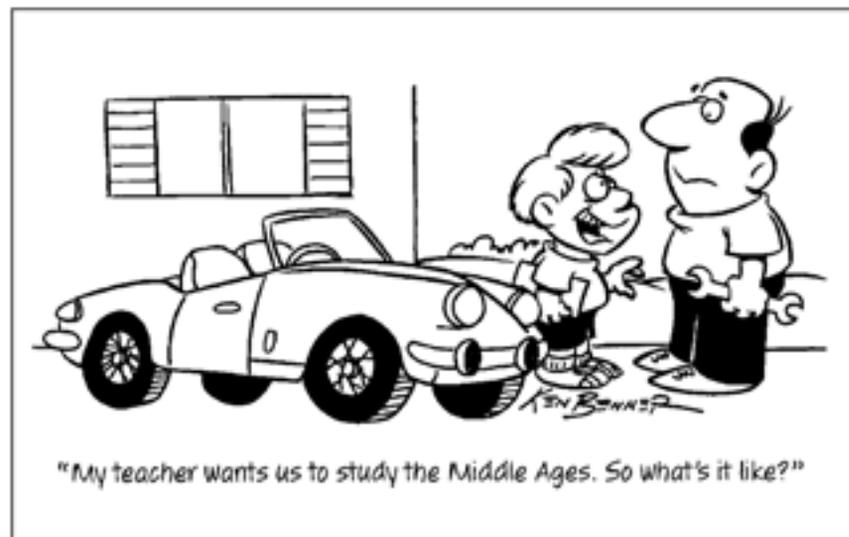
He donated it to a Springfield museum after his death. It has 170,000 miles on it, still runs like a Swiss watch, dead silent at any speed and is in perfect cosmetic condition. (82 years)

That's approximately 2000 miles per year...



Editor's note:

Richard Campi sent in the above story about the record ownership. You might remember Richard is an "owner since new" of his 1975 Spitfire. Rumor has it that Richard is actively working toward beating Mr. Swift for the oldest living owner of a car from new. We wish Richard the best of luck in obtaining the title!



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READER'S RIDES

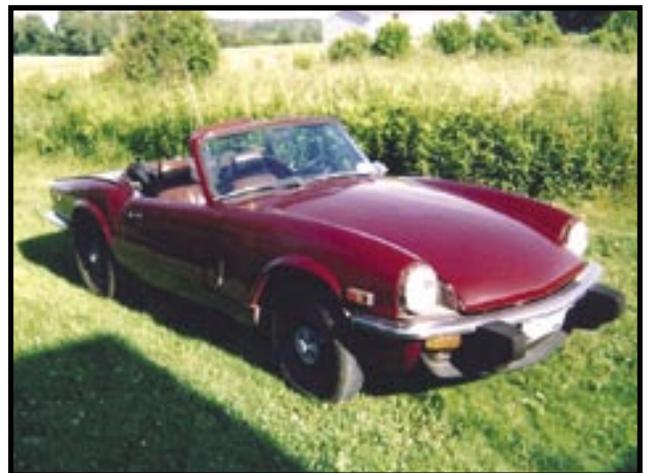


◀▼ 1978 Triumph Spitfire 1500
Owned by Charlie Madigan,
North Carolina



▲ 1979 Spitfire 1500, Strawberry Red Metallic,
Owned by Paul Howell, Michigan

1978 Spitfire 1500▶
Owned by
Nick Jaremka,
New York



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READERS RIDES



◀ 1972 GT6 Mk 3, (with the local Roman Fort in the background), this is my regular drive.
 ▼ 1963 Spitfire Mk1, heavily modified with a LeMans bonnet & a race prep 1300cc engine for Hillclimb & sprint.
 I rebuilt the car in 2001, and am continually upgrading.
 Owned by Peter Kayworth, Portchester, Hampshire, UK

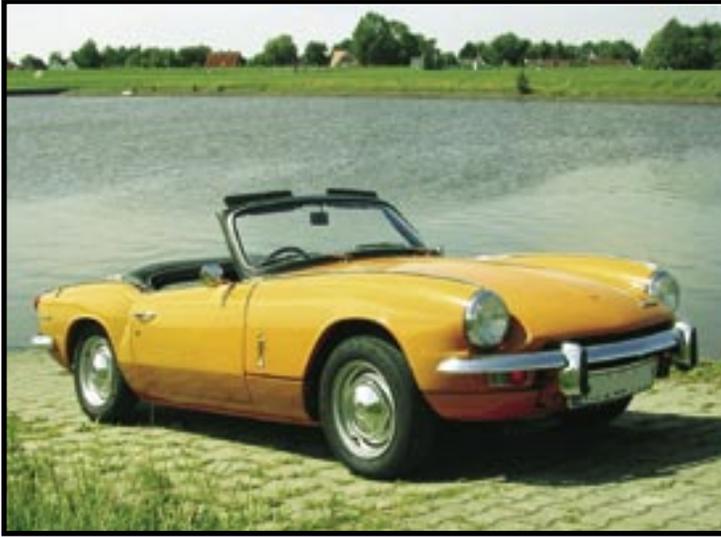


▲ 1965 Spitfire Mk2
 Owned by Marv Robbins,
 Lafayette, Indiana



1973 Spitfire Mk IV ▶
 Owned by Ricardo Prado,
 São Paulo, Brazil

READERS RIDES



▲ 1970 Spitfire MkIII rhd, (54 - Saffron Yellow)
Owned by Bernd Gressler, Germany



◀▲ 1966 Spitfire Mk2 w/Mk3 engine
Owned by Andre Pheiffer, South Africa



▼ 1980 Spitfire 1500 Owned by Terry Coleman, South Carolina ▼





▲ 1969 GT6 Mk1, Owned by John Johnson, Plain City, Ohio ▲

▼ 1971 Spitfire MKIV, Owned by Joe Lynch, Columbus, Ohio ▼

1976 Spitfire 1500

▼ Owned by Steve Glusman, West Chester, Pennsylvania ▼



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French Blue Spit6

by Chris Quinten, Pennsylvania

Helping a friend, I bought my Spitfire which had been sitting for twelve years. In the seventies A&L Motors in Monroeville, PA had Triumph Marque cars & electric cars, etc. I really did want one, so some 25 years later it was finally my time. The paint was tired, the floors & rockers where holey, and the clutch wouldn't disengage. So I figured I'd clean this car up and make it road worthy. Off to the internet which at the time I was not real familiar with. I found Spitfire & GT6 magazine website who had just printed issue #2. So I got issue #3 on, and got back copies of 1 & 2 . I also found Paul Tegler's website about Spit6/CGT6 projects and figured this the best of both worlds. Had to pull the body & gearbox anyway, what's a little more work on a Triumph. Everything's right there compared to these cars today.

Through the years we've gone from 2 liter with 2 Stromberg's, 2 liter with 2 Su's, 2.5 liter with triple Stromberg's. Now to 2 liter injected with the Lucas (TR5) system calibrated & rebuilt by Malcolm Jones (Prestige Injection) along with many internal upgrades and backed that up with a Triumph saloon 28% overdrive J-type overdrive gearbox. Just another change from the Triumph marque parts bin's. Sorry not many pictures of the gearbox change, but only another small change. If you have issue 21 of this magazine you can see my car with the carb changes. My friend and I are moving fine and always rebuilding, got to keep busy during the winter time, not much maintenance on my wife's new electric/hybrid car. I prefer my vintage hybrid 1974 2.0 L PI French Blue Spit6. 🍷



READERS STORY

Alex's Dream

by Alex Desjardins, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Back in high school I remember a few Spitfires around town. I always liked them, but being the mid 80s I was more interested in muscle cars. Along the way I've have a few different muscle cars, Mustangs, Challengers, etc.

One thing I never owned was a sports car. Two years ago after many 1000s of miles on a motorcycle doing various road trips I finally decided enough was enough, and I decided to sell my Harley for a convertible. I was doing research on what I'd like to have. Since I was in the process of selling my last old car, a 56 Studebaker, I decided on a British sports car. Something I could work on and something you don't see every day. I hadn't even thought of Triumph, I started to look for an MG. Well as the story goes, a guy from a neighboring city calls me and asks if I'd be interested in trading my Harley for a Triumph Spitfire. Oh yeah, I remember those from high school. So I call the guy and he sent me down some pictures of the car. Well as soon as I had seen it I knew this was what I was going to be driving, not like it was, but how I could envision it.



I acquired the car in October and the following August it was on the road and ready to go. That August my wife and I drove the car from Lethbridge AB to Spokane Washington, across Montana into Wyoming to Yellowstone, we spent three days in Yellowstone touring the park. When we left Yellowstone we



drove over the Bears Tooth Pass into Billings Montana and back again to Lethbridge AB. Not sure how many miles that is but I know it's a lot. The car ran perfectly and only the ignition switch gave me trouble and I had to put a starter push button in the line. Since the car does not have an O/D yet we travelled about 55 mph or 3300 rpm. It was such a great trip. The following year, which was this past summer, we decided to take the Triumph to Vancouver Island. So we loaded up from Lethbridge and drove to the coast. Then to the island and toured around it for a while. From Nanimo to Tophino, down to Victoria, and back to Nanimo. Then home again to Lethbridge. Again we had a great time with the car. Its ran great with no problems. Not sure what the plans are for this summer but I'm sure it will be great once again. I have purchased a O/D transmission and will be installing it over the winter months.

I guess I should mention what changes and modifications were done to the car. OK I removed the side marker lights, antenna hole, changed the tail lights, and removed the huge over riders front and rear. Other than that nothing more cosmetic. As for the powertrain its still a stock 1500 with 65000 miles on the clock.



When I purchased the car I was fortunate enough to receive a log book documenting everything that has been done to the car since 1979 with 12500 Miles. Every oil change, storage period, etc., a nice find. To ensure that I would not have trouble with my Triumph, many hours were spent on the forums learning all



I can about these wonderful cars. Many thanks goes to everybody on the boards for their wealth of knowledge.

I installed a Pertronix ignition system, a Chevy one wire alternator, Nippenzo starter, Pace Header with Monza exhaust, electric fan, oil pressure/temp dual gauge, bigger radiator, all new bushings, heavy duty front sway bar with 1 inch lowering springs and new shocks. In the rear I also replaced the bushing and installed the HD rear spring, air shocks and rear sway bar. We also redid all the ground points in the wiring system and installed HID lights and driving lights in the grill. Inside the car

a modern stereo was installed, new carpets, weather stripping, and upholstery. I had a small crack in the dash repaired. Finally the rear window needed replacing so we replaced the rear and two side windows with smoked plastic instead of clear.

For the future, I have a set of vintage late 60s mini-lights, a Kent cam, dual SU carbs, and lightening of the flywheel are the projects this winter.

I can't wait till my next road trip and many more to come. Next year I would like to go to a couple of sports car club shows and events. 🍷



READERS STORY

Number 36 GT6

by Steve Smith, Nevada

The car in the pics ran with VARA way back in 90-91 and then was parked for twenty years. It's going to go back on track with VARA in Las Vegas on October 15-17 2010.

I sold the Yellow Peril to Ed Dunn in San Diego California. He lives near Kas Kastner so it should show some attention next time we see it. You'll see there's a lot of pics. I have the originals for ALL of the Yellow car pics but sadly most of the originals of mine have been lost.



The following is a bit of data that came with the car when I brought it home from L.A.

NUMBER 36 GT6

DESCRIPTION

Chassis

1971 Mk III. Built 1989-90 in Dave Dralle's Torrance shop, before he moved to Willow Springs. Body off for chassis preparation including:

Adjustable front & rear suspension (mounting slots)

Adjustable front spring loading (threaded collars)

Aluminum bronze suspension bushings throughout

Re arced rear spring

Eibach front coils

Engine/cockpit halon system

3.27 differential

Cockpit adjustable front/rear brake bias

Quick release steering wheel

Six point roll cage

Pitt pin hood mounts – quick removal

4 Minilite alloy wheels, 4 “other” alloy wheels, 4 steel wheels, all 13” x 6”. Alloy wheels have different front/rear offsets for equal front/rear track.

Engine

Built by Jim Dralle, now Sr. Design Engineer, Holley Performance Products (ex Edelbrock).

.20 over bore, popup pistons

Ported, polished, balanced

11:1 compression ratio

Align bored crank and cam

Race cam – intermediate, not radical

Dynamometer tuned and jetted by AEM

135 HP at rear wheels

Engine is race ready and proven with all of the expensive work done. Cam bearings installed, Vandervell VP2 bearings thruout.

Faults

Right door dented. Minor rust above windshield and right rear fender. 🚗



Texas Triumph

By Dennis Duke, Texas

I was 14 years old in Dallas, Texas in 1967. That's a pretty impressionable age. I guess most of my impressions at 14 years of age came from girls and cars. Girls need to be the subject of another article in another magazine, so we must be talking about cars here. The 60s were full of some pretty wonderful cars--Chevys, Vettes, Mustangs, Barracudas, GTOs--all the hot cars the older guys drove when they got their driver's license. That was still a couple of years away for me.

The first time I ever noticed a Spitfire was when my next door neighbor drove home his first car. The little red Mk 3 was sitting in his driveway one afternoon when he called my brother and I over to show it off. Amazing! A real sports car and it was economical enough for a 16 year old to purchase.

He opened up the front and tilted it forward, exposing the engine and front suspension. He said you could sit on the tire and change the spark plugs or the oil. The little 4-cylinder engine looked a bit small in a world of V8 hot rods, but the car was about half the size of those big muscle cars so half the engine seemed about right. The sleek lines of the little car embedded themselves in my adolescent memory. Falling in love for the first time at 14 (remember, this is about cars) is something you remember for the rest of your life.

I remember vividly that summer afternoon in Dallas even now, almost 40 years later. Between then and now life happened. My first car was a big Chevy with a V8. It would go fast and burn a gallon of gas every 12 miles. I married young and started raising a family shortly afterward. I've bought practical family cars for myself ever since then. I put a lot of miles on them and always did the work myself. That was just the way life was--practical, economical, maintainable. Well, sometimes not so maintainable.

I found that when car companies wanted to put more passenger room in a car and keep the size the same it was easy to decrease the extra area around the engine. Then the car companies turned the engine sideways and put the front of it right up next to the wheel well. You had to get a wrench on the right bolt with about 3" of space to do something simple like change a belt.

Then it was time to help my children get their first cars. I encouraged them to get what they wanted but try to find something practical and fun. I was helping my son find a car in 1997. I had called in re-

sponse to a newspaper classified ad about a used car and talked to the owner for a while. The owner told me the car would be sitting in his front yard, and I could come over to look at it. If I had any questions, he would be in the back yard working on another car. I was supposed to just look over the fence to find him.

When I looked over the fence, there it was. The little white Spit sat in weeds taller than it was. The top was up to keep the rain out, but the Texas sun had hardened and cracked the yellow plastic windows. The tires were low and mounted on mismatched rims. The driver's door had a different stripe decal on it and did not match the stripe on the rest of the car. The bonnet was dented right in between the big black bumper guards and there was a hole punched up from where someone had left something on top of the carburetor when they lowered the bonnet. It was a real mess!

But I remembered a summer afternoon in Dallas a long time ago and the little red car in my neighbor's driveway. That is what I saw sitting among the weeds. The years of practicality were starting to fade away. The economical family cars had served their purpose. My children drove their own cars then, and I didn't need a place to strap in their child car seats in the back of mine. I was thinking like a 14 year old again, and I wanted it!

I didn't buy a car for my son that day. Instead, I spent \$900 on a dream and got the Spitfire and all the spare parts the owner had been collecting. He had intended it to be a project car for himself, but he got involved in other projects and gave up on this one. Now it was my project.

It actually started up and ran, so we drove it most of the way home. It started running rough, so we decided to attach the tow strap (the first time of many!). We wanted to make sure not to damage the engine in case something was really wrong. The inspection sticker on the windshield was from the last year before



government regulations tightened emissions testing along with the yearly safety inspection. That was probably due to the Weber downdraft carburetor and exhaust header with no catalytic converter. Both were aftermarket modifications that don't appear to be legal for street use anymore, at least not in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Well, I needed to start finding the original equipment parts to put back on the car.

After getting the car home, it was time to start cleaning it up. The carpet came out by the handful and not in the complete pieces that were installed. When I took the seat covers off the foam padding poured out in little tiny pieces that were not glued together anymore. The wood veneer dashboard wasn't glued together anymore either. Everything seemed to be damp and moldy. I often wondered what would crawl out of the piles of foam padding and upholstery.

When I got down to the floorboard I found that rust wasn't too bad but would require some work. I had a friend named Roy who had some bodywork experience, and he was eager to help me with the car. I had never done bodywork before, so it was time to learn. Doing bodywork yourself can be described simply as banging out the dents and smoothing things over with plastic filler. Next you sand it all off and put more on. After that, you put on some more filler and sand it all off. Finally, you put on some more filler and sand it all off. Over and over and over and over.... It was quite a learning experience. After we converted a couple of gallons of plastic filler into dust, it was finally time to paint. Roy did an outstanding job, and the car was really looking good.

There was nothing left of the seats except the frames, and the bottom rails were pretty rusty. Roy had access to some sand blasting chambers. We took the seat frames and the wheel rims to the blasting chambers and took them down to bare metal. I covered up the bare metal with primer to prevent rust in the future. I found a couple of seats at a salvage yard from a later model car that looked pretty good. But when I set them in the car, I couldn't figure out why I couldn't get them into the right position until I looked at the old frames. That was when I found that the car is so narrow that the seat rails are offset, and the seat fits up above the ledge next to the drive shaft hump. I took the salvaged seats apart and moved the seat cushions and covers onto the Spitfire frames and installed them in the car. That looked pretty sharp, so I took them back out and started on the floor.

Using a wire brush and electric drill, I cleaned out the existing rust and then put a layer of fiberglass over the exposed metal. This would make the floor stronger and keep water away from the metal to prevent more rust. That's about as far as I got for a long time.



Putting the emissions controls back in order was looking pretty expensive. I was working on the car in a carport with two sides open and it was really only big enough for one car. We could park the family car next to the Spitfire, if I moved the little car right up next to the wall but that meant moving the other car out and repositioning the Spit every time I wanted to work on it. Rainy days would normally be a great time for working on a project car, but if there was a wind it would blow under the open sides of the car port. Texas summers were unbearable in an open carport, and I froze there in the cold winters. As time passed, the car just sat in the carport. It started looking worse as stored objects would fall on the car. I watched as the number of dents and scratches increased on my finished bodywork and paint job.

Years passed. The little car sat in the carport. People would sometimes ask me what I was going to do with it next. I wasn't real sure. I just knew I didn't want to give up on it. I moved into another house where it sat for another 4 years. I didn't even have the carport anymore. The Spitfire sat in the back yard under a tarp.

In 2004 a couple of things happened that made me want to get back to work on the car with a vengeance. That year I found out that once a car is 25 years old in Texas, it is no longer subject to yearly emissions inspections, and the carburetor and exhaust don't have to be original equipment anymore. I also bought a new house. As I was looking at floor plans for new houses at different builders, one of the plans hit the table, the heavens opened, clouds parted, and a beam of light illuminated THE THREE CAR GARAGE!!! I was done looking at house plans. There were some bedrooms, a kitchen, bathrooms, and A THREE CAR GARAGE!!! Her car, my car, and room to work on the Spitfire whenever I wanted to.

We moved into the house in October 2004. The Spitfire found

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its home in a clean, dry, heatable, coolable indoor garage. Boxes had to be unpacked. Furniture had to be arranged. I ached to get started on the Spitfire again. I was patient for a few more months. Christmas came, and my wife found one of the best gifts I have ever received. The Victoria British catalog had a complete interior kit in it. She saw it, and now it was mine! This was also her way of saying, “Go for it! It is Spitfire time!”

During the years the car spent in the back yard, it made a great home for squirrels. Every nook and cranny was stuffed with dead leaves and nuts. At first I thought a few leaves had blown under the tarp and gotten into a few places in the car. But when I opened the boot it was full to the lid with leaves. Leaves don't just blow in like that. I moved the car to the driveway and started cleaning it up again. I started getting the old engine oil, grease and dirt off of the engine, frame, and everything else under the bonnet. I lost count of how many cans of engine degreaser I used. The first order of business would be to find out what was leaking on the engine and fix it. (Yes, I know it's British!)

It was finally time to get the engine started again. I removed the fuel tank and had it cleaned out and coated. I had replaced the Weber with a Stromberg carb I found on eBay back when I was trying to get the car back into original condition. I had put it on the engine, but I had never seen it run before. I refilled it with fresh gasoline, installed a new battery, checked to make sure there were no leaves or nuts anyplace that needed air and started cranking. A little starting fluid in the throat of the carb and the engine came to life. All went well for a minute or so and then the idle became rough.

I moved the throttle up by hand and the engine revved up but the exhaust began to get darker. Black smoke meant it was running too rich. I stopped the engine and noticed fuel dripping from the throat of the carb. I took off the bottom of the carb and dumped the fuel out of the bowl then checked the float valve. It seemed to work OK, but I had a new one from a kit, so I replaced it anyway. I put it back together and started the en-

gine up with the same results as before. It seemed that the fuel pressure was too high and a little research revealed that the replacement fuel pumps required a spacer between them and the engine block to reduce the distance that the pump lever would move and thereby reduce the fuel pressure to the carburetor. My fuel pump did not have a spacer, but it did appear to be a replacement pump with the curved rather than straight lever arm. I built a spacer out of masonite and coated it with silicone gasket material out of a tube. That seemed to be the ticket and I finally got the car to run consistently. I also added a fuel pressure regulator as extra insurance. I can't ever remember being as nervous as I was when I watched fuel drip out of the carburetor throat and sizzle, while it evaporated on the hot exhaust.

I started on the oil leak after that. It turned out to be a relatively minor problem. Because of the visibility of the engine, it was simple to clean off the engine, start up the car, and watch for a while until I saw oil dripping from the bottom. I followed the trail to the front seal at the timing chain cover. It turned out to be very easy to remove the radiator, hoses, and fan and replace the seal. The only problem I had was in locating a 1 3/4 inch socket wrench to fit the nut on the front of the engine. I think the whole job took about 2 hours, total. Try that with one of today's cars with the engine stuck in sideways!

Next I started on the electrical system. You've heard all the Lucas jokes? They're all true. The '78 spit had the 3 fuse system mounted to the firewall with a cover to protect it from moisture. I don't know how long mine had been missing the cover, but the fuse clips were corroded beyond use. The clips could not be cleaned and bent together enough to hold new fuses. It was time for a fresh start. I bought the CenTech mini fuse panel from Victoria British and went to work, almost. There is a little problem with the new fuse block. The marked fuse holders don't exactly match the way the circuits are laid out in the car's wiring harness. The new fuse block has circuits divided into three groups:

1. **Battery (always hot);**
2. **Ignition (hot when the key is in the “on” position);**
3. **Accessory (when the key is in the accessory position).**

The Spitfire has the “battery” group with brown wires going into the fuse block and purple wires coming out. Also, an “Ignition” circuit group with white wires going into the fuse block and green wires coming out, but there is no “accessory” group.

The third group is switched on by the light switch in both the park and main beam positions. A red wire with green stripe goes to the fuse and red wires come from the fuse. It takes a little reworking of the circuit labels on the new fuse block, but it can be done. After connecting all the circuits through the new fuse block remove the fuse and put an ammeter in its place. Measure the current flowing through the ammeter and then install a new fuse in place of the ammeter. Use a fuse a little higher than the measured current for the best protection.





Also, when choosing a fuse size, remember that electric motors (the heater and windshield wiper) use a bit more current when they first start up. The color coded wiring diagram at www.triumphspitfire.com/images/wiring/78diagram.jpg is very helpful in understanding what I'm talking about.

I also had to rework the taillights a little bit to get them working. The lamp holders are made from metal parts that are pressed together and conduct electricity through the mechanical contact. I took a grinder and cleaned up the edges of these parts and soldered them together. They work like a charm after that. The aftermarket radio I installed had its own fuses in the wiring harness provided with one fused wire going to the battery connection for memory and another wire going to the switched on group for power when the car is running. Now it was time to take another look at the body and paint.

Years of storage and neglect had taken a toll on the paint job we had applied a few years earlier. It also seems that some heavy objects stored near the car had fallen against the body and left some dents and dings. So much for the do-it-yourself paint job. It was time for professional help.

I started visiting local body shops and getting estimates for the job. I also took a look at examples of their work while I was there. Luckily the shop with the lowest estimate also had a great looking '57 Chevy, '72 Corvette, and '69 Cougar that were proof of what they could do. (I started feeling like a 14 year old again.)

I stripped off everything that didn't need to be painted except for the taillights and drove the car to the shop and left it with

them. Then it was time to wait. Part of the deal with the low estimate was that a fast turnaround time was not promised. The body shop makes most of its revenue from repairing cars for insurance companies. They work on these cars first to get them out fast in order to keep getting repeat business from the insurance companies. A special project like a restoration gets worked on when they have the spare time between wrecks. This is also not the time to get impatient and rush.

I kept dropping by to visit my little car and check on the progress. During each visit I would tell them to take their time and do it right, all the while thinking, "Hurry up, hurry up!" But after about 4 months it was time to pick up the baby from the hospital.

It was well worth the wait. I know there are purists out there who are very concerned about originality and restoration to factory specifications, but this project was all about making the car be exactly like I wanted it to be. The original color was Leyland White but I opted for a light blue metallic color with a silver racing stripe covered by a modern clear coat for protection against fading. If you live in the vicinity of Fort Worth, Texas, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the guys at Read's Auto Collision for your restoration project, if you have the patience to let them work it into their schedule.

My wife was a huge help by polishing all the chrome parts with fine steel wool to remove the grime and then finished with a chrome polish paste. The front bumper had to be rechromed but it turned out really well. As we bolted on the chrome parts I was amazed at the change in appearance of the car. These days

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you don't see a lot of chrome on cars anymore. I think that is quite a loss!

If you start counting from the time I first drove the Spitfire home to the time it was all back together looking good, the project had taken 9 years. Now it was time to find out what other people might think of it. I was getting quite a few looks from other drivers when I drove around the neighborhood. There is something very right feeling about driving a car from that era to the local drive in restaurant for a milk shake. The little Spit turns heads all the way, and people will frequently call out complements in traffic.

Now it was time for a real test. British Auto Specialists in Fort Worth holds an open house every year in September. They always have a great turn out of Jaguars, Triumphs, Austin Healeys, Rolls-Royces, Bentleys and MGs. You would never expect Cowtown to have so many English made automobiles, but there are some really wonderful examples to look at every year.

I was driving the car around the week before the show and noticed that the engine was running a little bit rough. Was it time to pull off the rocker cover and set the valves? When I did check the valve lash, they were right on the money. I checked the spark plugs, which weren't burned and were a nice tan color. Two days before the show, I got stranded beside the road. The car wouldn't run at all unless I pulled off the hoses from the carburetor that connect to the PCV and charcoal canister.

I made a quick trip over to British Auto Specialists on the day before the show. I found the owner, Jeff Sloan, mopping the floor and the whole crew cleaning up the place in preparation for the open house. Jeff did take the time to listen to my carburetor symptoms and recommend a carb overhaul and unclogging the charcoal canister. I bought a carb kit from him and went back home.

It turned out to be the right advice. The car was running again after installation of the kit and cleaning up the carburetor and loosening up the charcoal in the canister. It even holds oil in the damper now that I replaced the o-ring on the needle valve assembly.

I will admit I was a bit nervous. Would my somewhat modified car that was all do-it-yourself except for the bodywork get cheers or jeers as it sat amongst the others? Would experts line up to tell me what I did wrong?

Not to worry, folks! The little Spit sat beautifully between an Austin Healy and a TR6. A beautiful group of cars were present for the open house. Little Blue received nothing but complements that day. Other enthusiasts enjoyed talking over every little detail of restoration, British car quirks, Lucas jokes, and carburetor tuning. You can see the cars that were present at this year's open house at www.britauto.net.

Fall in Texas means perfect top-down driving weather. The air has turned cool and the colorful leaves on trees by the country roads provide a great backdrop for the little car while I cruise along and remember the hot summer afternoon so long ago when I first saw a Spitfire. Life is good! ☺

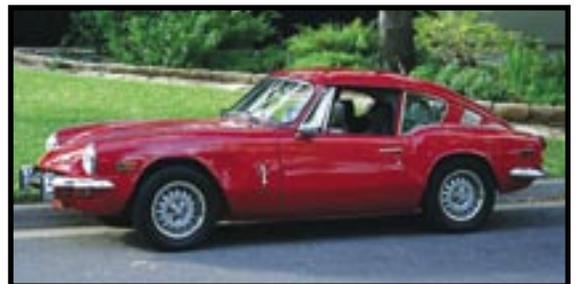


Dennis is an active member of the Red River Triumph Club
www.redrivertriumphclub.org

Be sure to check out Dennis' video about restoring his 78 Spitfire.
www.redrivertriumphclub.org/photogallery/video/Priceless.wmv



▲ 71 Spitfire MkIV
◀ 78 Spitfire 1500 Dennis' car collection
▼ 70 GT6+



A Simple Solution to an Occasional Problem

by Karl J. Schmitt, Missouri

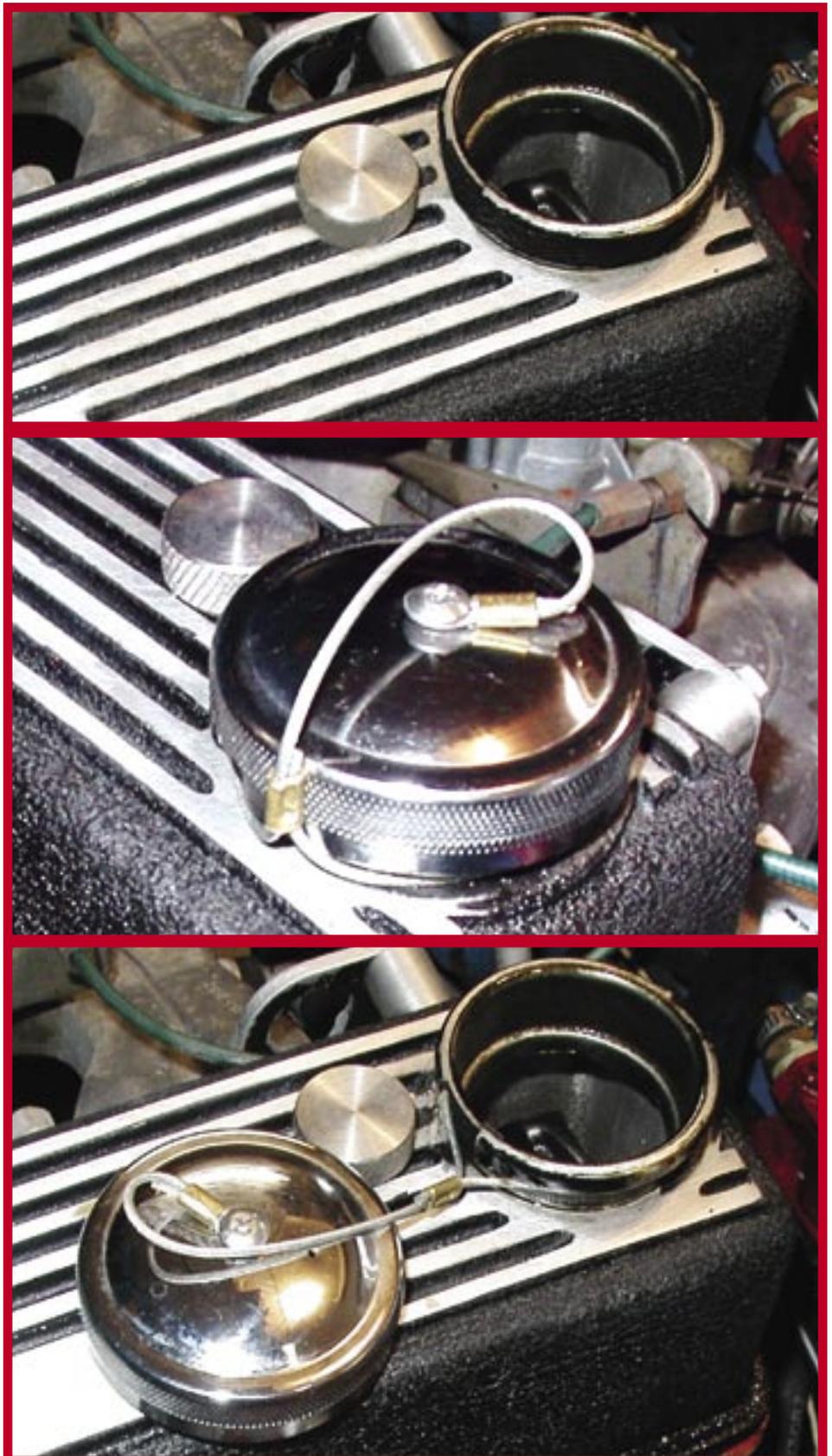
After a rather long drive this summer I returned home with my 1980 Spitfire sans cap on my cast aluminum rocker box cover. A bit later I called The Roadster Factory, from whom I purchased the cover some 25 years ago, and sure enough they had a spare cap in stock, but it would cost me about forty bucks to get it. Ouch!

Determined not to let this happen again I made a simple lanyard with loops on both ends from a short length of thin braided cable. The large loop was sized to just barely fit over the flange on the oil filler neck. The small loop was sized for a #10 bolt. The loop ends were secured by crimping in place with a short length of 1/8" diameter copper tubing using electricians "stake on" crimping pliers.

From the cap I removed the inner baffle, and drilled the center of the cap for a #10 bolt. Then, with suitable washers and a nut, I fastened the wire via the small loop to the outside of the cap, and peened the end of the bolt, on the inside of the cap to secure the nut. I then re-installed the baffle, slipped the large loop over the nozzle neck and installed the cap. Project complete! 🌀



Karl is a proud member of the
Saint Louis Triumph Owners Association
www.sltoa.org



Bonnet Struts

Reprinted from issue 17

First, a bit of history is in order here. I spent quite a bit of time doing all the calculations for these struts. Many of the manufacture's websites out there have plenty of info on how to select the proper strut for your needs. What a Pain! I must have spent at least 20 hours calculating and drawing and calculating againyada yada yada....

I sent info and measurements to a company in Germany, one in Indonesia, and one in India. None of the engineers seemed to want to deal with the design requirements for some reason. Maybe they didn't want to be responsible for the supplied info. Anyway... here it is in 'short' form.



These four photos show the bonnet being opened. At this point the bonnet required roughly 45-55 lbs. pounds to lift the trailing edge.



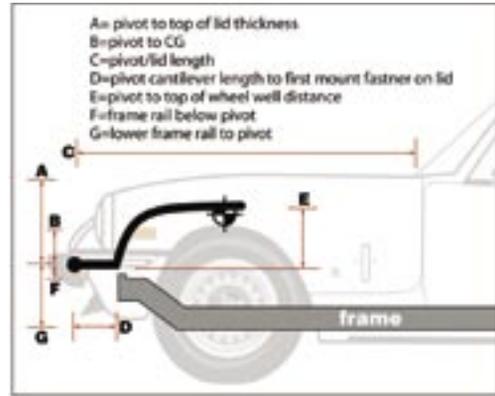
Initial effort to open the bonnet is greatest from it's initial closed position to about this point (roughly 10-20 degrees) Best 'guess-timate' is roughly 35-45 lbs. at this point



By this point (just short of 45 degrees) the effort starts to reduce, as the CG of the bonnet is now 'up and over' the offset pivot point of the bonnet. The bonnet in hand weight is roughly 20lbs



By this point the bonnet weight (in your hand trying to move it only 5-10 lbs. You can see the OEM stay rod supporting the bonnet in it's open position. Max open position possible with prop rod removed would be about 100 degrees. In this position, at rest (roughly 80 degrees open). The bonnet CG is probably 6-8" behind the pivot point.



- A = 12"
- B = 6-8"
- C = 58"
- D = ~5"
- E = ~9"
- F = 2"
- G = 8-10"?
- CG to pivot = 24-26"

The drawing (above) is an attempt to define the dimensions of the bonnet compared to it's pivot point. The pivots themselves are actually buried up inside the black rubber 'guards' in front of the chrome bumper. There is a support frame inside the bonnet that has the pivots attached. This 'rail' assembly, bolts to the top side of the fender wells.

The dimensions are as follows:

- A - Thickness of the bonnet from the pivot point to the top of the bonnet
- B - Pivot point below the Center of Gravity of the bonnet
- C - Total lid length from pivot to windshield trailing edge
- D - Pivot point to the leading edge of the main chassis structure (frame rail)
- E - Pivot point to top of wheel arch inner surface (strut mount area o/c lengths)
- F - Pivot point distance above highest chassis rail
- G - Pivot point to bottom most point of chassis (strut open closed lengths)



This shot shows the bonnet support frame (round tube) Remember... this tube 'hooks' and the pivot is inside the black rubber bumper in front of the chrome grill.



Another shot of the tube and the 'hook' and how it goes up inside the rubber overrider of the front bumper assembly.



The frame rail extends back about 6" from the pivot before curving down to the lower suspension members. It's about 16" from the pivot point of the bonnet assembly to the sway bar mount (right below the vertical aluminum strip in the center of the photo). The sway bar is the black bar that pops out from under the frame and disappears backward behind the wheel.



Another shot showing the 'box' that hoses the pivot tube (drivers side of the car) The inner fender well wall is almost perfectly in line with the outer most edge of the pivot box. The angle of the OEM stay rod (bonnet support rod) may give you an idea of the relative positions.



Looking across the engine compartment at the passenger side support pivot and the inner surface of the inner fender well.



Another shot of the OEM support rod.

I guess I'm looking at mounting the springs on the frame rails or right next to the pivot box, and to the bonnet pivot tubes just ahead of the wheel well. This would keep the units vertical as required to keep the seals oiled properly.

Two variations on function, I assume would be based as much on mount position as gas spring power.

I'm assumed the types of struts to try were 'type 2' or 'type 7' configurations, per the suppliers web pages.

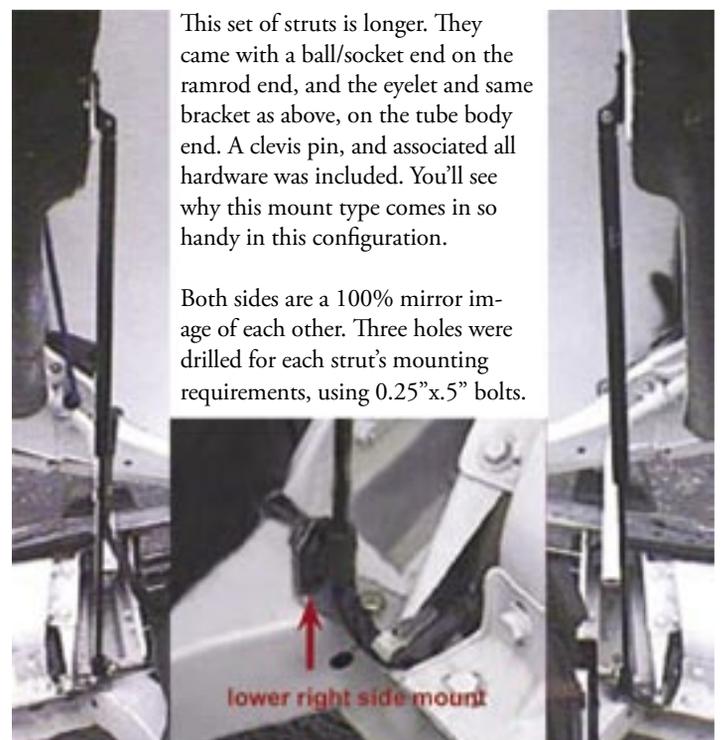
Variation #1 - Zero initial effort to open the bonnet ... almost to the point of the bonnet opening itself when both catches (chrome handles on the sides of the bonnet) have been released. I assume this would entail the springs being strong enough to keep the bonnet up without any other supports.

Variation #2 - minimal effort to lift... assist mode... with the camlock config to lock it in the upright position (seems much safer to me).

This was the end of the information I sent to the manufacturers of the struts. In return I received no help. So I set out to test various struts myself.

The first round of testing I'm using a set of Stabilus units SACHS Stabilus LIFT-O-MAT package label part numbers reads SGSG230003* above the barcode and 92134* SACHS NORTH AMERICA below it. This 'kit' (one strut per kit) has an eyelet on the end of the ramrod and a ball/socket on the tube body end. The kit also contained a small metal bracket with a clevis pin as the mount on for the ramrod end. They are 25" 'eye-to-eye' initial compression is 40 lbs. At full compression (8-10" stroke) the pressure rises to around 65 lbs. This system easily held the bonnet open, but added very little in the way of initial opening weight reduction.

The second round of testing I'm using a different set of Stabilus units. SACHS Stabilus LIFT-O-MAT package label part numbers reads SG123002* above the barcode and 92020* SACHS NORTH AMERICA below it. The Sachs catalog lists these as replacements for the Subaru DI and GL wagon tailgates. They are 28.5" 'eye-to-eye' extended, (17" compressed) with an initial compression force of around 45 lbs. At full compression (10-11" stroke) the pressure rises to around 70 lbs.



This set of struts is longer. They came with a ball/socket end on the ramrod end, and the eyelet and same bracket as above, on the tube body end. A clevis pin, and associated all hardware was included. You'll see why this mount type comes in so handy in this configuration.

Both sides are a 100% mirror image of each other. Three holes were drilled for each strut's mounting requirements, using 0.25"x.5" bolts.

lower right side mount

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The lower mounts are small 90° metal brackets to mount the end of the stay rod. A simple 3/16" steel strap bent at 90° with two holes drilled to fit. It's fitted tight against the box to keep it from shifting. Just make sure you're far enough out from the main frame rail to get a nut on the bolt before you drill the mount hole in the top rail.

This end style arrangement made it easy to mount, as no extra plates are required to support the strut at the fender well metalwork. There are two holes already in the fender work. The 'lower' of the two holes in the strut mount goes in the lower hole in the fender. The second hole can then be drilled to fit.



This is quite literally the balance point of the bonnet now. It's not trying to float open, and not trying to fall closed. There is about a 10 degree 'dead zone' here.



The Bonnet, when fully up, actually needed about 5-10 lbs. of push to start it closing. If you 'lift by the lever' (a major no-no.... but we all do it....) the effort is only 10 lbs. Plus there is a lot less twist to the bonnet rising when only lifting from one side.



No stay rod is needed here. From the 'dead zone' you can let go of the bonnet and it will open the rest of the way and cushion stop itself.

THIS IS NOT TRUE OF LETTING IT CLOSE ON ITS OWN!) It will still drop loudly!

Setup #2 has been working very much to my liking...so I'm going to stop here.

I've had many people tell me the 123002 units are rare and now hard to find. I found that to be true myself when I went to add the gas springs to my 1973 GT6 MKIII. So on my third attempt, I have found the 126003 units work well too. They are about 1.5" longer so the upper mount point had to be changed. They are also just a bit stronger (5-15 lbs), yet still do not over power the bonnet. On the Spit with the 123002 units, the struts were perfectly vertical. With the 126003 units, they are about 10 degrees off vertical. Picking the right upper mount point is simply a matter of opening the bonnet to where you want it, and seeing where the top end of the strut meets a flat surface of the inner wheel well. The 126003 units are ball and socket at both ends. So I used large fender washers on both sides of the upper ball 'post' so it wouldn't bend and pull out of the sheet metal fender well. On the GT6 I did weld 'tabs' on as the lower brackets rather than bolt on an 'L' bracket like the Spitfire.

You may also need to hunt down a set of matching nuts (metric) for the ball socket posts as they don't come with nuts. I'm assuming on the 'stock' setup, these ball posts would have screwed into a captive nut somewhere on the vehicle.

A brief index of manufacturers:

Pravi Auto Swing PVT Ltd.

Stabilus (In Germany)

Associated Spring Raymond

AVM Inc. - terminology explained

ArvinMeritor - Brackets and mounts

Hahn Gassprings

Izerwaren Inc.

Ace Controls International

Kaller

If you having trouble finding SACHS Part # SG123002. It is available in the www.RockAuto.com catalog for \$17.21. SG126003 is also available for \$18.42. Hit the "Part Number Search" tab at the top of the catalog to find these lift supports. (Current prices as of January 2011). ☺





New Engine Start-Up

by Ted Schumacher, TSI

The following is the start-up/break-in procedure for a newly rebuilt Triumph engine.

- 1. Make sure engine is set at #1 piston TDC on compression.
- 2. Install all bolt-on systems. Make sure all connections are solid, grounds are cleaned and battery is charged fully.
- 3. Fill with oil – 4 qts. – 30 weight. You need to use oil with zinc (ZDDP).
- 4. Run up oil pressure with a tool mounted in a drill. Check for leaks. This step only works with Triumph engines or Midget 1500 engines.
- 5. Fill radiator with water only – NO antifreeze.
- 6. Run up oil pressure again.
- 7. Practice dropping in the distributor so the rotor points at #1 plug wire when installed correctly. Make sure the wires to the coil are installed correctly. Make sure the plug wires are going to the correct cylinders. Be sure to check the low tension lead (cloth covered wire) that goes to the points. Make sure points are good and gapped correctly -- .015”.
- 8. Run up oil pressure again.
- 9. Give everything a final check. Run up oil pressure again. Fill the carb float bowl with fuel. You can use a squirt can filled with gas and remove the line going to the carb(s) and squirt fuel into the lines. If the fuel pump has a primer lever, use this as well but first use the squirt can of gas. Be sure to engage the choke. Immediately drop in the distributor. Tighten distributor clamp enough to hold distributor in place but still allow it to be turned by hand with a little effort. Have someone start the car with the key switch while you are ready to slightly turn the distributor. The engine should be running within 5 revolutions. If it doesn't start and run quickly, stop and check all above items.
- 10. Once the engine is running, set the idle at 2000 rpm for 20-25 minutes. At the end of the time, shut down, check all connections, retorque the head and reset the valves. Change oil and filter and restart. You should now run the engine for about 1½ hours, then change oil and filter again.
- 11. Drive the car for 500 miles. DO NOT lug the engine and keep the revs in the 2500 – 3500 range.
- 12. Change oil and filter at 500 miles. You can now move the rev range up by 500 rpm. Change oil and filter at 1000 miles.
- 13. Be sure to use oil with adequate ZDDP for each above oil change, and for regular use.



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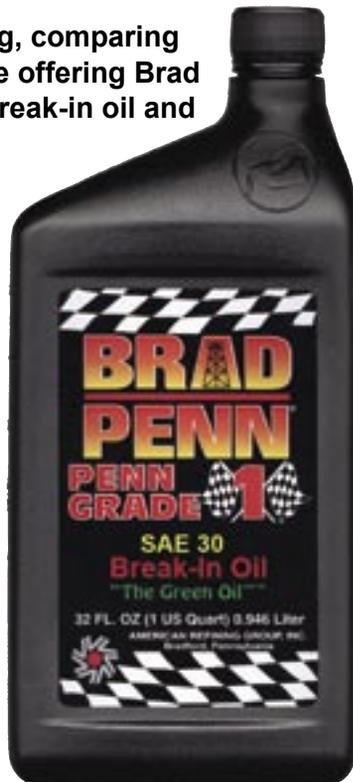
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**Be sure to reference this ad.
Oil prices good for 30 days from mailing date.**

This procedure has been updated. With the advent of no ZDDP oil, we went to Brad Penn oil for the needed amount of scuff protection. 🌀

Suspension Rebuild

by Edward J Morgan, California



One of the things I most wanted to do to my Spitfire during my rebuild was to recondition my suspension. I have a 1965 Spitfire MKII, which was in poor condition when I purchased it in 2008, with the intent of doing a complete rebuild on the car, simply for fun. I always loved the way a clean, well maintained suspension looked on a car, and I wanted something that would look great, when you opened the bonnet on the Spitfire, something that would catch the eye. In planning it out, I determined I would need to powder coat the components, use urethane bushings, higher rated springs, change out the brake rotors, and an upgraded shocks. I decided to keep the suspension true to the vehicle, and not to do a big brake kit, or use adjustable shocks. I did however, want a higher performing system, and after taking a look at back issues of *Spitfire & GT6 Magazine*, researching information from several aftermarket parts folks, and reading several articles on the internet, I determined the best way to approach my suspension was to do a simple road driver upgrade, as I do not intend to race the car; however, I would like some spirited driving on back roads, and to improve handling over the stock condition. As a consequence, I ordered the following parts:

Up rated coil springs, 330 lbs/in, which will lower the front end about 1 inch (Victoria British LTD). Note this also will require me to lower the back of the vehicle to ensure front to rear balance, via an aluminum lowering block for the rear spring (Chequerd Flag Racing). The up rated springs will help with bump steer, and improve cornering over stock.

Gas-Adjust shocks (Amazon). As I do not intend to auto-cross or race the vehicle, I determined adjustable shocks were simply not a requirement. The gas-adjust will provide the appropriate increase in dampening. One of the concerns I had about adjustable shocks was as I lowered the front by about 1 in, placing adjustable shocks on the Spitfire could result in



lowering the car too much. As a consequence, for a simple road car, the gas-adjust made more sense, and would again improve handling.

Drilled and slotted rotors and new up rated pads (Spitbits). I chose these rotors as I wanted improved braking, without upgrading to a GT6 or a big brake kit. I again determined from research that the Spitfire front brakes are ample for most mild performance driving, and upgrading to drilled and slotted rotors would provide ample stopping power for the vehicle.

Urethane bushings also seemed like a simple upgrade, and after purchasing a kit from Spitbits, I was happily surprised at how easy they went on my suspension components. One thing





to remember about urethane bushings is they need to be lubricated. You can purchase many silicone lubrication products for bushings; however, most folks who race, simply use anti-seize lubricant on the bushings. The anti-seize sticks to the bushings well, and will not wear off. I have had no squeaking using this product, and it is easily available at auto parts stores. The urethane bushings will take the spongy feeling out of the vehicle, and provide for better performance of the components.

I also purchased new ball joints, a trunion seal kit, a wheel hub bearing kit, and grease caps for the Spitfire.

My final purchase was to powder coat the upper and lower arms, the springs, and to paint the vertical link a similar color.

I found the rebuild to be fairly simple, with the aid of a Triumph Spitfire workshop manual (e-bay), and the various catalogs, such as Victoria British, which have ample break downs of the suspension assemblies.

As you can see from the photos, my suspension prior to rebuild was pretty crusty, with many years of grease and dirt. I had to use a little persuasion via my rubber mallet in order to break loose some of the parts. I also purchased a ball joint separator (harbor freight), which made an easy job of disconnecting the joints from the hub, and the sway bar.

Everything went back on easily and tightly. One thing to remember, when you powder coat parts, you will end up with at least 1/8 inch of build on the components when installed which will result in very tight fits on all parts. With my application, a little silicon spray allowed me to squeak all the parts together, without having to remove any powder coating.

I think the results speak for themselves. The difference between the old crusty suspension and the new, rebuilt suspension are night and day. It will take me a while to completely rebuild the Spitfire, but I certainly enjoy the results! 🍷



Overdrive Not Driving?

Common problems and some DIY cures.

The first important matter to determine is if you have a D type or J type overdrive fitted, the two types are different and suffer different faults, originally D type overdrives were fitted to all Vitesse and GT6, the Spitfire was changed for 1974 and was fitted up to chassis number FH60000, if in doubt have a look. A D type has the solenoid on the right hand side, a J type on the left.

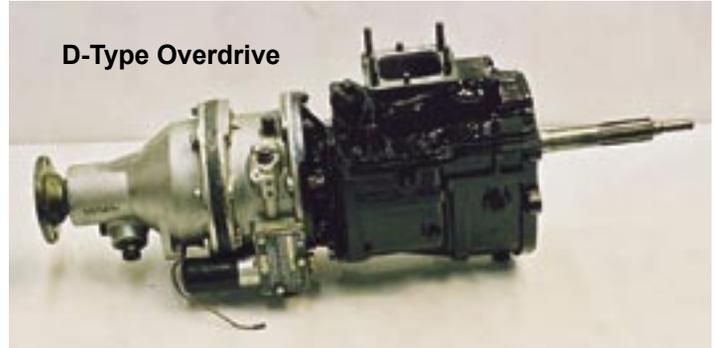
THE D TYPE OVERDRIVE

Before you do anything check the overdrive is not stuck in or coming in automatically as it gives the impression of not working. (The car will also 'slip' in reverse). This can be very bad solenoid adjustment or more usually a bit of stuff in the operating valve. Remove valve as per workshop manual and clean it. Check for black hairy bits as per 5 below.

A lot of overdrive faults come from an electrical fault. What should happen is the operating switch should operate a relay which then activates the solenoid by pulling a plunger back. This plunger then operates a set of points in the back of the solenoid so that the initial 30 amps necessary for pulling the plunger is reduced to a couple of amps to hold it. If the points fail to open then the 30 amps leads to smoking wiring, and often a burnt out solenoid. Checking its operation is simply a matter of running the car with tunnel cover and solenoid side plate removed (the one that says Laycock de Normanville overdrive etc. in blue or black printing), and engaging the switch (remember the car needs to be in 3rd or 4th) and check the plunger pulls the arm back so that the hole in it lines up with the hole in the case (check with 1/8 drill). Waggle the gearstick about to make sure the cut-off switch at the front end of the gearchange is working properly. Running 12 volts straight to the solenoid will show if any fault is electrical or not.

So after ascertaining the solenoid is functioning correctly and the arm is pulled back the required amount, the overdrive can then either: 1 - do nothing, 2 - come in but not hold when trying to accelerate, 3 - make funny noises or vibrations, 4 - work correctly when cold but not hot or 5 - possibly even work correctly all the time.

If everything appears to be OK then all you can really check is the filter, this is located on the LHS under an oblong plate and can be removed and the filter and magnetic cardboard rings cleaned. Lots of grey slime is normal, small black hairy particles are not and show that the clutch or sliding member is breaking up, at some point the overdrive will start to slip and the clutch will need replacing, no special tools are required for this and with care the overdrive can be removed

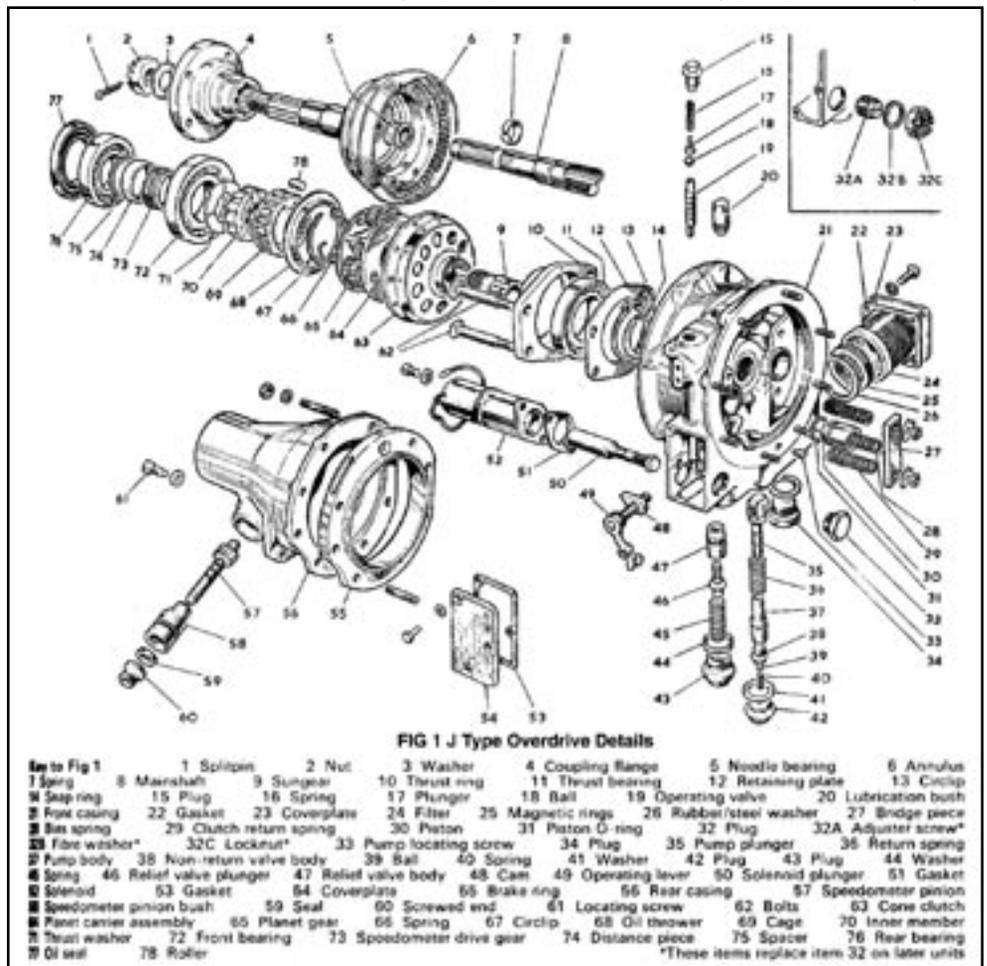


D-Type Overdrive

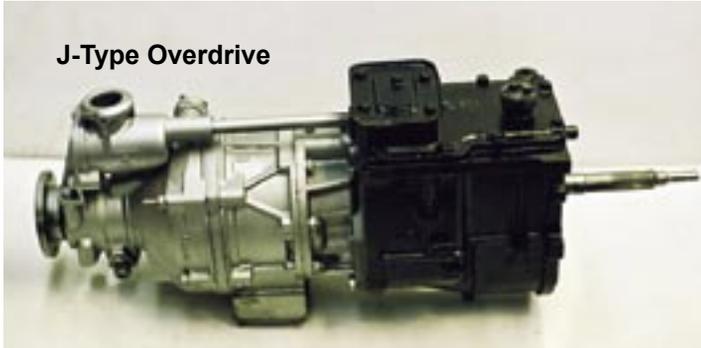
on its own from the car.

If you happen to have a 0 to 1000 PSI (that's pounds per square inch) pressure gauge and can screw it into the testing point (the plug that hold the operating valve in) then the running pressure can be checked. Excessively low pressure can be upped by putting shims (washers) into the bottom of the right hand bottom plug, a bit awkward in the car, and don't lose any of the other bits that fall out. Pressure above 400 PSI is adequate. The higher the pressure the quicker the unit will work but the more strain on the clutch lining.

1. Nothing happens - see if there is any operating pressure at all by running the car with the operating valve plug loose, oil should ooze out (even without the overdrive engaged). If no oil the unit will have to be removed as the fault could be worn or missing pump cam, stuck/damaged pump (most likely), missing pump ball bearing. If



J-Type Overdrive



there is pressure then it may be possible to get the unit working by checking the relief valve as this could have stuck open. In a car that has stood for a long time the clutch can stick, drive the car, operate the overdrive and whack the brake ring to try and free it.

2. Comes in, but won't hold properly. The most likely cause is a worn clutch, (refer black hairy bits). It can be low pressure due to wear or a worn cam but this is rare. The adapter plate could be at fault, (yes really). The four studs that can be seen when the unit is removed move forwards when the unit is operated, sometimes the adapter plate is not deep enough to allow this to happen (and it can occur as a clutch wears). Drill big relieving holes in the adapter plate, there will be marks where the studs have been hitting.

3. Making funny noises or vibrates etc. Its knackered and will probably need a rebuild. If a unit has been recently stripped and is working apart from vibrating, the planet gear assembly has been fitted incorrectly (refer to a workshop manual).

4. Works fine cold, but not hot (may slip or not hold properly). Causes and solutions as per 2. As a temporary measure the pressure can be raised by fitting a 7/16 flat washer into the relief valve plug, don't overdo it without a pressure gauge.

Other do's and don'ts: Hit the plugs with a hammer before trying to loosen them. It is not necessary to remove the drain plug (LH underneath). When removing the overdrive always leave the adapter plate on the gearbox. Never use gear oil additives, (they can contaminate the clutch) Change the gear oil at least every 50000 miles, it is working very hard.

Expensive (often synthetic) gear oils are well worth it, lower viscosity oils can be used in very cold climates. And finally, there is no easy way to get at the bottom solenoid screw.

THE J TYPE OVERDRIVE

The J type overdrive was standardized on all Triumphs from 1974 so that this section covers Spitfire from FH60000, all Dolomites, later 2000/2500, late TR6 and Stag. These overdrives have also been retro fitted to many earlier cars, and can be distinguished by the solenoid on the LHS (all D type and A type have the solenoid on the RHS). I will not attempt to cover all the minor variations in specification as there are also units fitted which originally came from Volvos, Ford Transits and Sherpa vans, just to deal with common problems and what to do about them.

In the Triumph range the units fitted to single rail gearboxes (Dolomite and Spitfire with reverse by 3rd gear) have a different rear housing fitted so that the gearchange can be bolted on the top, apart from this all other units can be interchanged (but pay attention to different rear flanges and speedo drive ratios) if the operating pressure is set cor-

rectly. (The more torque an engine produces the higher the operating pressure required).

Oil leaks - before attempting to trace a leak make sure that the gearbox/overdrive unit has a breather somewhere that is clear. Blocked or missing breathers cause oil to be forced out. If an overdrive fails to operate the first thing to check is the electrical circuit, most cars do not have a relay fitted (it isn't necessary with the low power consumption of the solenoid) but as a lot of solenoids make very little noise when engaging a circuit test is often required. (Note that Sprint/2000/2500/ Stag have a separate switch on the gearchange for overdrive 3rd and overdrive 4th, all other cars have one cut-off switch).

The units themselves are fairly reliable (the filtration system is excellent) and it is the solenoid which causes most of the problems. If there is power to the solenoid and the overdrive either won't engage, engages cold and not hot, or won't disengage then the solenoid is very likely the culprit. To remove and replace this a 1 inch spanner is required but it must be no more than 3 mm thick. The original solenoids have the outer metal case held in position with four small roll pins, if the case is very loose (which can cause incorrect operation) then it is possible to tighten it up with care and it may work again.

The only other DIY option is to remove a tiny internal circlip and withdraw the operating piston, there are then two external and two internal O rings to replace if you can get hold of them - if you don't fancy doing all this (and there is about a 30% chance of it working properly again after fiddling with) then replacement is the only option. New solenoids are around £75, but the outer case is swaged on and does not come loose.

All J type solenoids are interchangeable. Later Dolomite and Spitfire overdrives (after 1978) have a badly made centre to the one way bearing and from around 30000 miles can give the impression of clutch slip, quick getaways from the lights can lead to an embarrassing lack of forward motion. This problem and in reality all other faults mean the unit has to be removed from the car. Although it just about possible to remove the sump and gain access to the fine filter (RHS), pump ball bearing (centre) and relief valve (LHS) it is very unlikely that anything can be gained by doing so. (Very occasionally the relief valve may stick which means the unit can't work). The whole assembly is not too bad to work on and as long as all bits are put back in the right order and the right way round (without too many left over) then it should work again. The one way bearing is awkward to refit, a piston ring compressor can be used if all else fails.

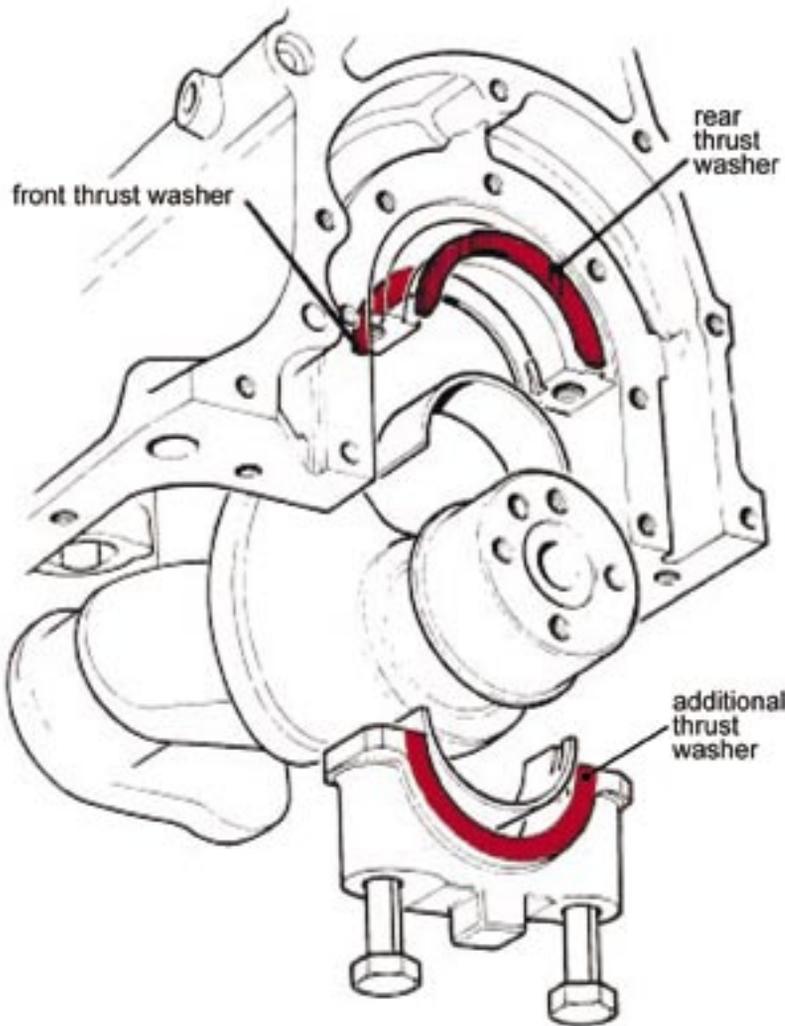
If you really have the inclination and a 0 - 1000 PSI pressure gauge and a fitment to screw into the test point (the plug just under the front of the solenoid) then the operating pressure can be tested, around 350 PSI for a 1500 engine going up to say 550 PSI for a Stag. Altering the pressure requires fiddling with the relief valve (two types fitted) and is beyond the scope of this article.

Noisy bearings can be replaced by competent amateurs. Other failures, rare but often fatal, are probably best left to professionals. Note for information there are two different ratios of J type fitted, with 2.5 cars having a 28% ratio and all others 25%, (the first two figures of the plate on the RHS of the front case is the ratio). In addition some later Volvo units are 27%.

Use good oil in the gearbox/overdrive, it is worth the extra (particularly synthetics) as it is working very hard and changing it every 50000 miles is well worth the effort. 🌀

Dropped a Washer?

Reprint from issue #5



The greatest problem with thrust washers in the 1500cc engine is probably the fear of replacing or repairing them! I had known mine were worn, but until they finally fell out, I was afraid to dig into the motor.

This article explains how to replace the thrust washers and also explains how to make a full circular rear thrust washer. It assumes the work is done with the engine still in the vehicle. All normal precautions for working under a car should be observed.

WHAT ARE THRUST WASHERS?

In case you are wondering, the thrust washers are two semi-circular metal pieces that fit over the crankshaft on either side of the upper half of the rear main crankshaft bearing. They are held up into a groove in the block by the bearing cap, and cannot be seen with the rear bearing cap in place - unless of course they are lying in the bottom of the oil pan! While they are doing their job, they ride against flanges on the crankshaft preventing it from moving forward or backward more than the specified amount. (Figure 1)

The problem is that every time you press the clutch pedal, you push the clutch plate, flywheel and crankshaft forward against the rear thrust washer. Starting the motor with the clutch depressed, or sitting at a stop light with the car in gear and the clutch pedal pushed in causes even greater wear. Eventually the rear washer wears thin. (Figure 2.) When it is thin

enough, it slips past the rear bearing cap and drops out of place. Once it is out, the crankshaft can move further forward and the front thrust washer will follow the first into the oil pan. (Figure 3)

Without the rear thrust washer in place, the flange on the crankshaft starts to wear against the bearing cap because it is thicker than the part of the block above it. This may be accidental, or a design feature of Triumph motors so the crankshaft flange can wear into the bearing cap before it wears into the block. Bearing caps are easier to fix than a block.

Pinning the normal rear thrust washer in place is quite common on engine rebuilds. This prevents it from falling out, even when it becomes excessively worn. However, it is imperative that the motor be completely disassembled to allow drilling and pinning. It also requires disassembly to install a new one. There are different degrees of thrust washer failures. Service manuals quote crankshaft endfloat at .006" to .014" (i.e. 6 to 14 thousandths of an inch), so it could be said that anything greater than 14 thou is failure.

REMOVAL

After removing the oil pan and rear main bearing cap, and discovering that the thrust washers are worn but still in place, pry the crankshaft fully forward, then use a small pointed tool or stiff wire to push up on one end of the front washer. It will be easier to remove the front one first because the front flange face of the crankshaft gets less wear. The washer will rotate around the crankshaft and drop out on the floor. Push or pry the crankshaft fully back, and push out the rear washer.

Check the crankshaft flanges for wear. If there is wear, it will be on the rear flange. If it is still smooth with no bits of thrust washer metal seared onto it, all is well.

Slip a new thrust washer into the rear position. Push the crankshaft forward and slip a new washer in the forward position. Washers come in 3 sizes - standard thickness, .005" oversize and .015" oversize (i.e. thicker). Pick a combination of these to allow the crankshaft the specified endfloat. The three washer thicknesses give you six possible combinations of thickness. (It doesn't matter which thickness goes front or rear.)

Checking this endfloat can be done in two ways. The simplest is to push the crankshaft fully forward, and use feeler gauges to determine the space between the front washer and the crankshaft flange. Make sure the washers are up where they will be when the bearing cap is replaced.

The second method involves using a dial gauge clamped to the motor block. With the crankshaft pushed fully back (or forward) set the dial gauge against a bearing journal or counterweight and zero the dial. Push the crankshaft fully the other way and read the gauge – it should be between the 6 and 14 thousandths of an inch. If it is, the hard work is done.

If your thrust washers were worn to the point that they ended up in the oil pan, you may still be lucky. If the crankshaft has worn into the bearing cap, but has not scored the flange itself, the motor may be repairable. If it has worn deeply into the cap, and just started to wear into the block above the crankshaft, but again has not scored the flange, this too may be repairable. If however, it has worn deeply into the block where the thrust washer should sit, or has burnt or scored the flange of the crank - not easily repairable. Although I understand anything is repairable with enough money.

REBUILDING THE BEARING CAP

This section assumes you have access to a small milling machine or drill press. A lathe would also help.

Remove the bearing shell and inspect the bearing cap. One side, the front, should be flat with original machining marks visible. The rear side may have a lip of metal with original machining marks, just outside the worn area. From this original metal you can determine how much the crankshaft wore into the bearing cap, and how much to rebuild it.

To do this I used a lathe and small milling machine (a drill press may work). Also have on hand a piece of plastic or plywood about 3/4" thick and about 3" square, new thrust washer sets (various oversizes would be best), small brass countersunk machine screws, a tap to match the screw threads, small drill bits, and feeler gauges. (I tried using Plastigage, however I found that I could not force the crankshaft hard enough against the thrust washers to squash the

Plastigage - even using a foot long pry bar!)

First I marked the center of the plastic square and drilled a hole through the center. The size is not important, but needs to be large enough to hold the Lexan in the lathe and later on the milling (or drill press) table, 5/16" should do. I could have used plywood or almost any material, but happened to have Lexan handy. It machines well, and is soft enough not to mark the bearing cap.

The Lexan square is mounted between lock washers on a bolt in the lathe chuck and turned down until it is round and fits perfectly in the semicircular bearing cap. Remove it from the lathe and bolt it down onto the milling table.

Then I laid the bearing cap on the milling table and brought it against the Lexan circle. Directly under the milling bit, position the bearing cap so that when it is rotated by hand around the Lexan circle the bit will mill out the worn area, flat and square. I used a fluted end mill 6mm diameter in the milling chuck. Set the bit to remove several thousandths of an inch with each pass around the bearing cap.

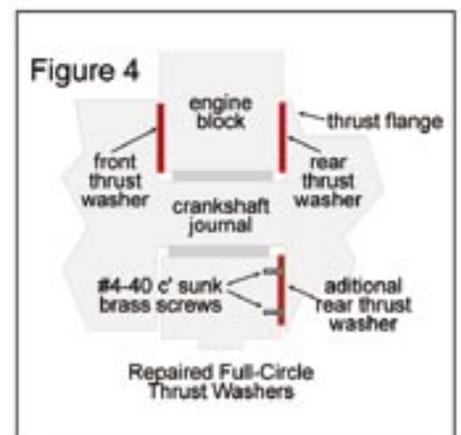
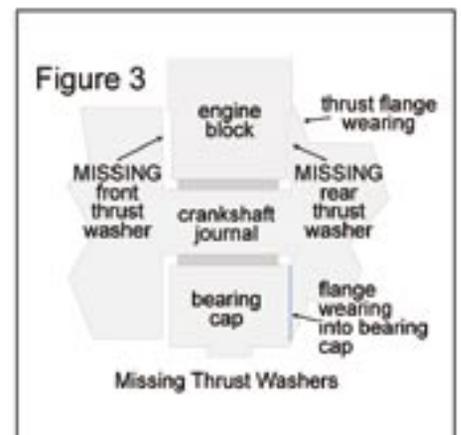
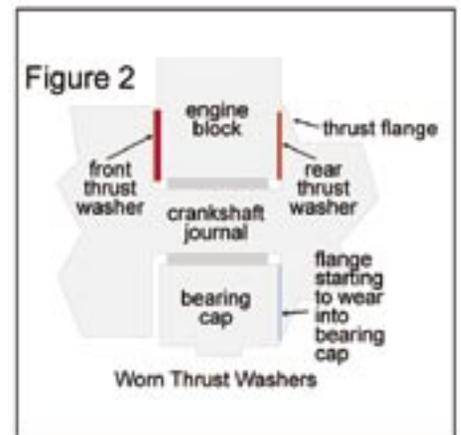
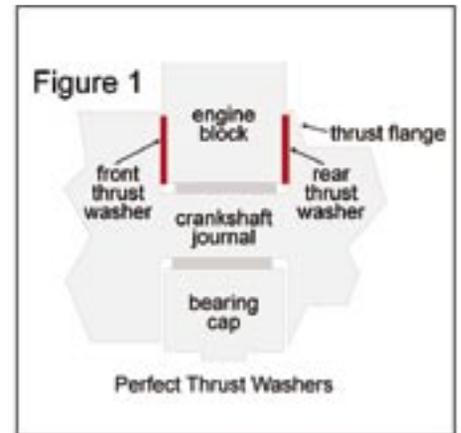
By holding the bearing cap firmly by hand against the Lexan circle and down against the milling table, and by taking only small amounts of steel off with each pass the result will be smooth and accurate. The milling bit cannot bite deeper into the bearing cap but will push it away from the Lexan circle preventing damage to the cap. The advantage of using this technique over bolting the bearing cap to a rotatable milling table, is that it can be removed and replaced after each trial in the motor without a lot of precise realigning.

Adjust the position of the bearing cap (and Lexan circle) so the milling bit makes a recess in the cap exactly equal to the size of a new thrust washer. Do not mill the recess any deeper than necessary to clean up the wear. The recess can be milled deeper later if necessary.

In the meantime, leave the milling machine setup untouched, you will need to use it again.

A BIT OF THEORY

Triumph motors are fitted with only a semicircular thrust washer. Most other motors are fitted with a full circle thrust washer. And, since a fully circular thrust



SPIT TECH



washer would have less pressure per square inch on it, it would wear more slowly than a semicircular one. Therefore we can machine the bearing cap recess to the exact depth to allow a new thrust washer sitting in there to be in the same plane as the washer recessed in the block above it. This depth cannot be determined mathematically, so must be decided by trial and error.

TRIAL AND ERROR

Now comes the trial and error and the feeler gauges. (A dial gauge would work easier.) Fit the upper rear washer and push the crankshaft fully forward. Measure the space between crankshaft flange and the block where the front washer would go. You may need to use a steel block plus feeler gauge. Make note of the measurement. Remove the upper rear washer. Lay a new lower washer into the bearing cap, then fit the bearing cap, with its new thrust washer into the block. Tighten the bolts snug, but not torqued. Check the gap left for the front thrust washer again. If the two measurements are identical (not likely!) you are almost ready to reassemble the engine.

If not, you have two possibilities. If the measurement with the upper washer in place was greater than when the lower one was in, try thicker upper washers or thinner lower washers until the measurements are equal. If this is not possible with the washer sets available, try milling the bearing cap more, (see A. below) or grinding the lower washer (see B. below).

If the upper washer gives less clearance, try thinner upper washers, and thicker lower washers. Again, if this is not possible with the washer sets available, try grinding the upper washer (see A. below), or shim the recess in the bearing cap (see C. below).

A. To mill only a few thousandths of an inch off the bearing cap, cut a hole the size

of the Lexan circle out of a piece of paper and place it on the milling table. Putting the bearing cap on top of the paper will raise the bearing cap a few thousandths of an inch. Mill off the extra metal, lay the washer in the cap and try it in the motor again.

B. To make a thrust washer thinner, grind it. Lay a piece of wet and dry emery paper on a hard flat surface. Lay the thrust washer HARD, flat side down on the emery (the grooved, soft side is the thrust side - do not grind this side.) Rub the thrust washer in various patterns around on the emery to get even grinding. Check the washer thickness regularly by using a micrometer on at least three places.

C. To increase the effective thickness of the bottom thrust washer, place a shim between it and the bearing cap. Cut shims out of shim metal - hard brass or steel. They will be drilled and held firmly between the thrust washer and bearing cap. They are not subjected to wear.

As I said this is the trial and error part. It may take several tries to get the end float correct or even close. If there is a difference of a few thousandths between the top and bottom washers, I wouldn't worry. When one wears down by that amount, then the thrust will be taken by both washers and the wear rate will slow down. Mine have been in a year and show no signs of bad wear yet.

When the clearances are to your satisfaction, lay the new thrust washer in the recess milled in the end cap and mark it in 3 places. Remember the grooved side of the new washer will be out, away from the bearing cap. Don't go by parts manuals and catalogues that show them with the oil grooves against the block! One hole will be near each end, say 3/8" from the tip, and a third will be equally spaced between the first two. It seemed logical to use a known

measurement so that when a new thrust washer is to be installed again, it can be drilled precisely from these measurements to fit the holes we will make in the bearing cap. Clamp the washer to the bearing cap so the tips of the washer are flush with the top edges of the cap. Center punch at each mark and drill a tiny pilot hole. Use a centre drill to prevent the bit wandering as will happen with a standard long drill bit.

Making sure the thrust washer does not move; drill the holes through the washer into the bearing cap. Remove the washer and tap the drilled holes to match the machine screws. I used #4-40. On the washer, countersink each hole enough so that the head of the screw is recessed in the washer. In this way, when the washer wears, the screw head will not wear off. You may also have to file the head of the screw down some. Also, by using brass screws, if the washer should wear down, the brass will not harm the crankshaft flange. The final setup should look like Figure 4.

BEARING CAP REPLACEMENT

For the final refitting of the bearing cap, apply thread lock compound to the screws and assemble the cap and washer for the final time. Fit the main bearing shell into the bearing cap, noting that it goes in the correct way around. Oil the bearing shell and all three thrust washers. Install the bearing cap into the motor as before.

Fit the bearing cap bolts and torque them to the required number - Haynes says 40 ft/lbs. Apply gasket compound to the now clean oil pan and fit a new gasket. Compound the other side of the gasket and refit the pan to the motor.

Add motor oil and start 'er up. Remember - transmission in neutral and foot off the clutch pedal for longer thrust washer life! 🍀

VDCA's Season Finale' at Roebing Road Raceway

by Bob Spruck, MotorMouth/south

Once again, the anticipation of the last race (and party!) of the season for our southern and eastern vintage racing brothers and sisters ran high with the traditional VDCA Vintage Races and Oyster Roast and Pig Picking at Roebing Road Raceway near Savannah, Georgia on December 10th through 12th. The aforementioned anticipation was challenged by the positive reality of a great racing event and party but also by the negative reality of a rather wet, windy, cold, and generally uncomfortable weekend. The fact that we can still call the weekend a success and that we were glad we came can be attributed to the very positive attitudes of the organizers, the racers, the workers, and the crewmembers. Although the lap times were considerably slower than usual for just about everybody, the racing, the excitement, the competition, and the satisfaction were all still there.

Friday saw two half hour practice sessions for each of the five Race Groups as well as four sessions for the BMW CCA who shared the track as they have for many years. The highlight of the day was the Happy Hour Bracket Challenge Classic. Doug Meis, VDCA's Technical Director, makes the rules for this fun event, but they never seem to stabilize from year to year or even lap to lap. Theoretically, four car teams pick a target lap time for each member. The number of seconds' difference in the actual time for each lap and the stated target for each lap, both faster or slower, earns a point for each second. Sounds simple, but when you have to compare every car's actual time to its target time, then aggregate it for the four cars on the team, and then multiply it by one second, it gets complicated. Complicated, at least for poor Doug so he adds some non-quantitative inputs to come up with the winning Team. Only he knows the formula and forgets it from year to year, so it is different, unfair, creative, but most especially, fun each time. In addition, this is the only race in VDCA's schedule for which a trophy is given. What an incentive that is! Well – maybe not, once you see the “trophy”! Anyway, competition runs high and creativity runs even higher, not only on the part of Doug but also in team strategy. Doug is particularly aware of a team picking its slowest

member's target time and then following that member around the track to insure actuals close to targets. Took a while to figure that one out and ban it.

Race Group 1, for small bore production cars, saw 26 cars practicing on Friday but only about half made the feature race on Sunday. Perhaps a little more attrition than usual and a lot more discretion due to the wet conditions attributed to the fall-out. Five Spitfires registered, went through tech inspection, and made the Friday practice sessions. They were Rob Stewart's 1967 blue with white mustache 1296cc F-Production car, Tim Slater's silver 1965 1147cc G Production Sebring Replica, Fred Danovitz and his 1962 1296cc FP red, red, red racer, Marl Craig and his 1972 1296cc FP Group 44 replica, and Johnny Johnson in his green 1964 1296cc FP car.

Rob Stewart was strong all weekend in his Spitfire, posting fantastic lap times in the 1:24 range on Friday and led all the way from pole to checker on Sunday, despite being 15 seconds slower in the wet. Maybe he forgot to bring his rain tires? After a bit of first lap passing, Tim Slater in the smaller displacement GP Spit stayed ahead of Larry Smith's Midget and dogged Rob 'til the end. He even posted a quicker best lap time than Rob. Tim is originally from England so he may have some innate skills driving in the wet.

The Sunday morning one-hour Enduro was also run in the wet, but not as wet as it was to be later on in the day. Once again Tim Slater showed his driving skills, starting dead last on the grid, passing everybody by the second lap and staying in first (except for his mandatory pit stop) until the end. He bested such cars as a Porsche 911 and 912, Mercedes 230SL, Club Ford, and Ginetta. Great weekend, Tim!

December on the Atlantic Coast of Georgia is the time for the change of seasons and can bring either a beautiful clear and sunny fall weekend or show the dreariness and changeable weather of an early winter. This time we had winter. But there was still some good racing for most and good times for all. Good job, VDCA! Can't wait 'til next year. Road Atlanta in February! 🍷



▲ ▼ Tim Slater's 1965 Triumph Spitfire Sebring replica



▲ Mark Craig's 1972 Triumph Spitfire Group 44 replica



▲ Rob Stewart's 1967 Triumph Spitfire

British Car Fayre, Norcross, Georgia

by Bob Spruck, MotorMouthSouth

A new attendance record was set on Saturday, September 11th at the eleventh annual British Car Fayre in Norcross, GA just north of Atlanta. About 140 British cars of all types plus dozens of motorcycles attended the show in the quaint little downtown area. Perfect top-down weather helped considerably to draw out the open air enthusiasts in their roadsters, convertibles, and DHCs. In fact a new record high temperature of 96 degrees was set.

Norcross Village is an unusual but perfect place for a moderate sized show. The single main drag (South Peachtree St) is a broad, tree lined block with shops on one side and an active rail line and historic train station (now converted to a nice restaurant) on the other. Two side streets had to be closed off this year to accommodate the additional cars that appeared. The show is sponsored by the British-American Business Group and the Taste of Britain shop. Rainbow Village was the recipient of the proceeds this year. Radio station True Oldies 106.7 played some great tunes all day and kept everybody's spirits up.

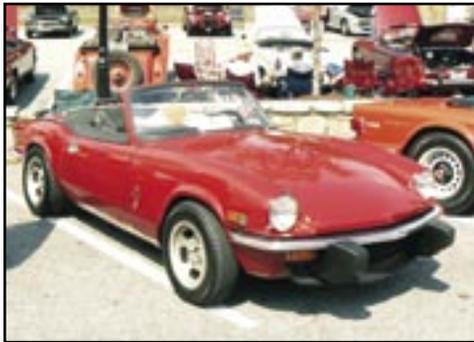
A nice mix of contemporary cars and older cars was present. One could easily see the progress from 1940s Triumphs and Rileys to 1960s Austin Healeys and MGs and the current Jaguar, Lotus, and Rolls Royce models. There also may be a message in the fact that the oldest car there, Dan Suskin's 1913 Roll Royce Silver Ghost was voted Best in Show despite a number of near hundred year newer Lotus Exiges and Elises and Jaguars on the premises. Because of the perfect weather, the venue, the Saturday ambiance of Norcross Village, and people's proclivity for strolling with the kids and/or the dogs, there was an inordinate number of spectators to add to the fun. It is so much more fun to tell your old tales to new people than to repeat them to old friends who have heard them all before. Bob Spruck's 1967 MG Midget vintage race car fresh from its last race the

weekend before in Savannah, attracted a lot of questions from people who weren't even aware that these cars are still be raced and that vintage race cars can only be prepared as they would have been in their year of manufacture. Of course, the straight pipe, unmuffled exhaust of the high output 1275cc race engine caught everybody's attention during his entrance, search for a parking place, and exit.

The pride of every owner in his car was evident in the preparation, bright shine, period accouterments, and eagerness to discuss the finding, restoration, use, and history of their car. The interest in these things was exemplified by many as they strolled the broad exhibition areas from the simplest, most basic '60s Bugeye or Mini to the most expensive new Jaguar or Lotus. Many of the spectators were members or otherwise affiliated with the British-American Business Group and possessed genuine British accents, right here in the Deep South. Many of them had stories to tell to the American owners of the British cars about British owners of British cars back in Britain. Stories and tales went both ways.

There wasn't a whole lot of Spitfires at the show but those that were there were pretty nice. Brent Owens' Herald was one of the most unusual. Seldom seen at most shows, the car attracted a lot of attention due to the slick mods, both visible and not visible, that were made to make the car more fun on the street. This car epitomized the definition of "sleeper"!

So, the British Car Fayre has quite a few unique characteristics compared to your average British Car Show. They make the day very interesting and enjoyable and keep the Angophiles coming back every year to see the beautiful cars, hear the interesting stories about these mostly daily drivers, and lap up the atmosphere, food, and music. ☺



▲ A nice '75, unknown owner



▲ Arthur Hayes' 1975 Spitfire 1500



▲ Brent Owens' 1969 Herald Hot Rod



▲ David Burke's 1965 Spitfire MkII



▲ South Peachtree St, Norcross, GA



▲ South Peachtree St, Norcross, GA

Colorado English Motoring Conclave

September 18 & 19, 2010; Oak Park, Arvada, Colorado, by Johnny Chapman



Our weekend started out with a car show on Saturday. I took Annabelle and Gabriel (four and three years old) to a Mazda meet on Colfax Avenue in Lakewood where we saw our first British car of the weekend. It turned out that the TR-3 was owned by a member (Tom) of the RMTC! We all admired the Triumph and its lovable canine passenger. Sunday morning began with

donuts, milk and coffee. The kids and I set out for our drive from Highlands Ranch to Arvada in our Mazda. Our '65 Spitfire wasn't quite ready for the big British bash. After squeezing into a small parking space on 64th Place down by Miller Street, we had a relatively short walk to the park. We headed straight for the Triumphs, but couldn't help but take a few glances at the Jaguars on our way. I pinned on my RMTC tag, and off we went Gabriel was eager to check out all of the cars up close while Annabelle attempted to "push on" after a nasty knee-scraping fall along the walk. I was amazed by the size of the crowd already admiring the British beauties.

We sauntered up and down the rows of Triumphs. It was good to note the many examples and conditions of similar models. I won't feel too out of place when we bring ours along next year. Annabelle practiced her photographer skills with her tiny digital camera. It would have been interesting to see how she did if new batteries would have been installed. We also stopped by to chat with the folks at the RMTC and Sports Car Craftsmen tents. It's always beneficial to meet up with people face-to-face. We arranged to have our bumper and overriders examined by Paul, and were invited for sandwiches and drinks by the club crew!

After a little break under the shade of RMTC cover, we ventured into the land of Austin Healey and MG. We felt a little out of sorts, but were very careful not to let on that we were "from away." Gabriel noticed what appeared to be a "mouth" on a few British models. I was sure this remark would get us the boot.

Onward we trekked to the MG realm, where we encountered much open space betwixt the lines of autos. It was an inviting place for a picnic had we brought a basket along. In fact, we did see some very tempting picnic baskets strapped to boot racks. The MG owners were very accommodating in the way their cars were aligned in such a perfect photogenic arch. We capped off our timeless journey with a front row vantage point of the motorcade of apparent winners. (There were no winners in our minds, only examples of unconditionally loved cars and motorcycles.) We overheard some people to comment on something called an EX-186. It looked as though it were straight from a land of the lost autos. We concluded our day by watching a few of our favorite Triumphs drive by and ogling a few motor bikes on our stroll back to the car.

A perfect Sunday for Dad and the kids came to a happy conclusion. Another generation of British car lovers is born. ☺



Jeckyll Island

*Jeckyll Island, Georgia, October, 2010,
by Dennis Duke, Texas*



I thought you might like a couple of pictures of my 1971 Spitfire. At Jeckyll Island in Georgia I won the Modified Touring Class Concours d'Elegance at the National Vintage Triumph Register Convention. The car is an emerald green metallic color with a gold rally stripe in the middle. It scored 392.5 out of a possible 400 points in concours judging. 🏆



MG's on the Rocks

*Rocks State Park, Maryland September 25 2010,
by Gino Gentile, Pennsylvania*



I managed to get first place at the 31st Annual "MG's on the Rocks" Car Show Rocks State Park, MD on September 25th 2010. Looking to take best in show against the other 1st place winners in 2011 show. I think this was the second time in their history that a Spitfire managed to take 1st place in class, the first time was the 30th Annual show and he was a member of the MG Club. I was very excited to be at the show and did not expect to even place, I always go for the fun of driving and being with my friends. 🏆



What were they thinking ???

AND FINALLY

We have all seen them, those conversions that make you ask: "**WHAT WERE THEY THINKING ???**" This page is dedicated to those slightly different conversions, the ones you either love or hate. If you have seen them at a show, or for sale on the web, send them in to us, and we will include them in WWTT???

Spitfire 350



This must be a popular conversion to either admire, and look at in disbelief. We mentioned this car back in issue 26 WWTT, and now not one, but two readers sent in comments about how this car deserves mention again on this page. First to write us was MSgt Shannon Oswald, USAF, followed by Chris Boxberger of Kansas.

Shannon wrote, "*I was surfing the British V8 online magazine this morning looking for inspiration and feasibility for upgrading the engine in my 78 Spitfire when I came across this shining example of function over form. The creator of this mashup of a 74 Triumph Spitfire and a 94 Corvette must have a really fast car now but at what cost, and I don't mean cash. When he finished the chassis and mounted the body, well the pictures speak for themselves.*"

It is a 1974 Spitfire body, with a 1978 Spitfire dash. 1994 Chevy 350 engine, Borg Warner T-56 6 speed transmission (from a 1995 Camaro), and a custom built frame with Corvette suspension. The wheels & tires are 1985 Corvette "Fan Blade" wheels (front 16x8.5, rear 16x9.5). Sumitomo HTR-Z tires (front 245/45/16, rear 255/50/16). Completed July 1996 and driven 36,000 miles, as of 2010. The owner says, "*The ride is super smooth and cornering is excellent. The acceleration and braking are fantastic and very controllable.*"



Have you spotted a Spitfire, GT6, or other British conversion that you feel is worthy of some public scrutiny? If so, send your submissions to the magazine at: Spitfire & GT6 Magazine, PO Box 30806, Knoxville, TN, USA, 37930 or by email to: editor@triumphspitfire.com

**So what do you think?
Keep it or Sweep it??**

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CARS FOR SALE



FOR SALE: 1979 Spitfire 1500

I am second owner of my Spitfire since I bought it in 1984. I kept her garaged, and in excellent mechanical condition - runs well. I am selling her only because of my advanced age and I would like her to get a new owner who would provide the TLC I gave her. Beside the new Weber carburator, everything is original. \$7000
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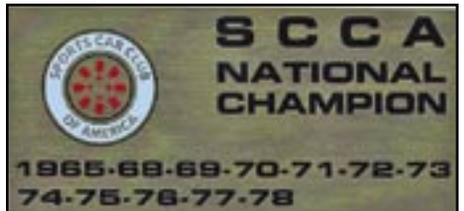
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