

# TRIALS & TRIBULATIONS

Most classic-car owners find it quite enough of a task to restore their vehicles just once, but Brian Pugh has rebuilt his white TR2 twice. It was under protest, admittedly, but he reckons that he did a much better job the second time round.

Brian, an engineer from Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, bought the car in 1976 for no other reason than, as a student, one of his friends had owned one. 'Absolutely nothing worked when I bought the car,' he comments. 'It was a total non-runner and I ended up trailing it home from Ulverston. The guy selling it was moving house and as the car was immobile it had to go.'

## HISTORY

The original advertisement was rather confusing as it said the vehicle was a 1965 model – TR2s were over nine years out of production by that time. 'I bought it as a hobby, not for concours,' Brian remarks. He likes the interest of having an old sports car while appreciating the TR's sturdy mechanicals and reputation for reliability.

First registered in August 1955 by College Motors of Bristol, the Triumph stayed in Bristol for the first ten years of its life. Brian is the sixth owner, and when he purchased it the TR still had the front spotlights and badge-bar which were optional extras when new. The car had also had an external cooling fan mounted on the outside of the radiator, which prevented the standard grille from fitting into the slot. Not long after he got the TR, Brian was stopped by the police for having the fan exposed. 'I managed to get hold of an old Ford Consul grille,' he remembers, 'and cut that down to fit it into the slot – just to be legal'. Early photographs of Brian's car reveal the front end to look like a cross between a TR2 and a TR3, which had the grille shifted forwards to cover the slot completely.

**If restoring a classic car is the mark of a true enthusiast, then rebuilding the same car a second time after an accident must be the mark of near-obsessive devotion. Zoe Harrison tells the sometimes tragic story of Brian Pugh and his beloved TR2**

Just over 8600 Triumph TR2s were built between August 1953 and October 1955, of which only 2800 were for the home market. The TR2 followed the retrospectively titled TR1 – of which only one Earls Court prototype ever existed. The early cars were immensely popular, combining as they did excellent performance with a low purchase price. The four-cylinder 1991cc engine had Standard Vanguard origins and was tuned to produce 90bhp at 4800rpm. The flexible yet untemperamental qualities of this power unit characterised the TR range right up to the TR5 which appeared in 1965.

Having got his purchase home, Brian set to work putting the car back on the road. Apart from having the crank reground by Brown & Atkinson of The Gill, in Ulverston, there was comparatively little work to do to the engine in order to persuade it to run properly. Brian renewed the clutch, but has left the non-overdrive gearbox untouched to this day. The rear axle has also required no work, although the previous owner had to replace a half-shaft.

'I took a large pair of shears to the wiring harness just behind the doors,' Brian recalls with a grin. 'It had, like all elderly electrics, weathered quite badly.' He constructed a complete new rear harness and spliced it into the remaining front half. Brian's engineering background has evidently proved

very useful during the car's two rebuilds, since he undertook all the necessary mechanical work (and much of everything else) himself.

'One thing I did was join the TR Register almost as soon as I bought the car,' Brian comments. 'They proved invaluable for obtaining spares and tracking down secondhand parts for the car, although I've found that some parts can be taken from other makes of vehicle – the back lights, for example, are interchangeable with those from a Morris Minor and the sidelights are the same as some of the 1950s Rovers.'

## FAIRLY SOUND

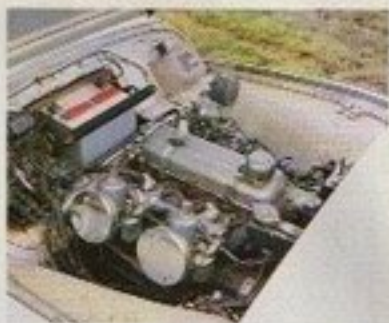
As far as bodywork went, the TR was fairly sound. It had two glassfibre front wings which Brian left in place, but he took the rest of the body back to bare metal with a blowlamp. It was resprayed by a now-defunct firm of vehicle refinishers on the old Candle Works in Barrow, using two-pack enamel Gripfast 60 paint.

The trim is basically original. Brian purchased a new carpet set from Earlwood Motor Products, on Norfolk Street in Liverpool, but the seats and leather needed no more than a good scrub to make them presentable. He also brazed new metal sections into the soft-top side-screens and covered them to match the rest of the hood.

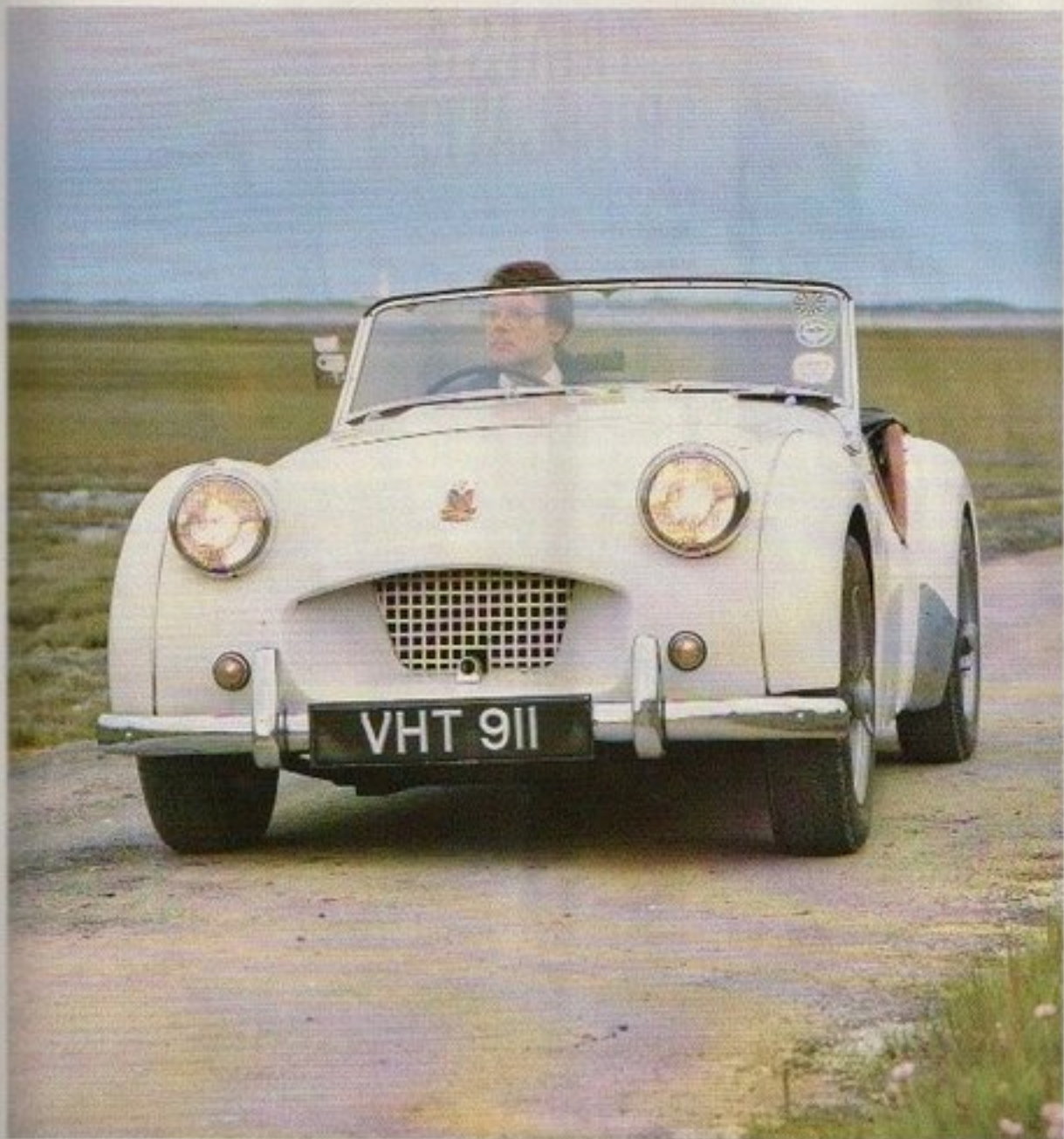
The TR2 remained in this reasonably tidy state until 1980, when disaster struck in the unlikely but horrible form of a Vauxhall Viva. 'It happened going over a single-track bridge near Meathorpe which had a blind corner at either end,' Brian recalls. 'Vauxhall and Triumph met head-on in the middle with rather nasty results.'

The TR is, of course, of that era before seatbelts, and both Brian and his then girlfriend, who was a passenger, ended up in Lancaster Royal Infirmary. His girlfriend, in particular,





*TR wouldn't win concours, but is solid, sound and reliable transport for owner Brian Pugh. Engine renewed piecemeal over the years. Despite car's age parts generally easy to find*







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*Second rebuild offered chance to restore radiator grille to original spec, glassfibre front wings to steel. Windscreen came from autojumble, wire wheels from Peerless car Pugh once owned. TR and owner have now become familiar sight around Barrow-in-Furness and local car-club rallies*







suffered from a broken nose after hitting the windscreen. 'It's a very good advert for laminated glass that it only broke her nose,' Brian comments. 'The screen itself stayed in one piece instead of shattering, which would have done her far more serious injury.'

The TR was dragged into a nearby field with the Vauxhall to clear the road. The Viva driver was still on crutches after crashing his motorbike the week before, Brian remembers. 'It obviously wasn't his lucky time with vehicles! It did not appear to be the TR's lucky time either, since the whole of the front end was virtually demolished, although the radiator fortunately took much of the impact away from the engine.

## PERSUADED

'I was ready to scrap the car', admits Brian, 'but I was persuaded not to by various friends, and started looking at yet another rebuild'. The TR's tremendous torque almost got Brian into trouble with the police, who were suspicious about his speed at the time of the accident – the car had been found in top gear. 'As I told them then,' he says, 'you can put it into top at about 15mph and it will just keep pulling like a tractor'. Hardly surprising, considering that the same Standard Vanguard engine was adapted to power Ferguson tractors in order to finance the development of the company's cars.

Brian has now replaced virtually every part of the engine. 'I think there's only the cam left!' He bought second-hand crank shells and an oil pump from TR Improvements, North Woodford, but had the liners honed and acquired timing gears locally. He managed to pick up a new water pump from a garage in Milnthorpe which had once been Triumph agents and were selling off all their old stock, where he paid about a fiver for it. Another load of spares came from Ivesgl Service Station, north of Penrith, who were closing down and clearing out parts that had been on their shelves for years.

Burlen Fuel Systems, whose adver-

tisement Brian found in the TR Register newsletter, provided a kit of seals for rebuilding and reconditioning the twin SU carburettors. The engine also required a new rocker shaft and a few new valves. Brake parts, such as seals and a master cylinder, came locally from Partco and EK Brakes – here again, the slave cylinders proved to be the same as on a Morris 1000.

The steering column had also been damaged and Brian replaced it with a secondhand one from the Northern TR Centre. The front suspension, shock absorbers, ball-joints and new bushes again came from TR Improvements.

## SECONDHAND REPLACEMENTS

The force of the impact with the Viva had bent the TR2's chassis. Brian sent the car to NW Body Repairs on Hollygate Road in Dalton-in-Furness – now known as Furness Body Repairs – and set about finding new or secondhand replacement body panels for the car.

'I decided to return the glasstyre front wings to steel as original,' Brian comments. To this end, he bought two new steel outer wings from Cox and Buckles in Richmond, Surrey. One inner wing came from the TR Shop in Chiswick, but the front panel, bonnet and bumper were all secondhand. 'I managed to get hold of a reasonable windscreen from an autojumble at the International TR Day at Dorington.' The bonnet badge had been damaged in the crash but, rather than try to find another, Brian repaired the original.

Since the firm who did the first respray was no longer in business, Brian sent the car to Moorlands Service Station at Kirkby-in-Furness to be painted again. 'It seemed like a good opportunity to shift the radiator fan and put the front grille back in the right place, too,' Brian adds. 'I mounted the fan behind the radiator and made a new grille by making a pattern out of wallpaper, drilling all the holes in it and then filing them square.' He later managed to acquire a proper grille, but his home-made effort looked the part.

Since then, the TR has led a relatively trouble-free existence. The only major problem Brian has experienced has been through water leaks from the windscreen. 'Eventually I cut down a bicycle inner-tube and fitted that round the edge of the screen, trimming away the excess with a razor blade,' Brian remarks. 'Not very scientific, but it seems to have cured the problem.'

'About three years ago the car acquired the set of wire wheels which I had originally got hold of on a Poorless,' he says. He had the wheels shot-blasted and dipped by Specialist Automobile Services of Slack Street, Macclesfield. The only drawback is that Brian now has to carry an ordinary rim as a spare, since the spoked wheel will not fit into the carrier. 'It makes getting a puncture and having to change a tyre quite a major operation,' he admits. He also bought a hard-top for the TR2, which came from Birmingham, through a classified advertisement in a national magazine.

## ENJOYMENT

Although he doesn't run the car on an everyday basis, Brian gets a good deal of enjoyment out of driving the car. 'It is both something old and a bit different,' he comments, 'and fast enough to keep up with today's traffic. It will do over 100mph – off the road, of course,' he adds, keeping a straight face.

It is quite a sight watching Brian climb into his vehicle, since he must be over six foot six. He is a familiar sight round Barrow and at local Lakeland Historic Car Club and TR Register meetings – usually with the top down, but he does not pretend to be a fanatic about the car. 'I'm not sure that, if it came to it, I would want to tackle rebuilding the TR for a third time,' he concedes. 'I'm sure there are a few Porsche owners who would pay for the number plate!' he adds with another grin. 'But then, I was convinced I wouldn't take on rebuilding the car a second time, so I dare say it would be third time lucky!'

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