

# LIVING WITH A TC

BY THE T REGISTER PRESIDENT

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**Born and bred** on the Isle of Wight, I became passionately interested in motorsport, and with three school chums was a regular attendee at the Goodwood Easter Monday race meetings in the early 50s where Ascari, Hawthorn, Moss, Fangio et al were regular participants. Not surprising then that I yearned for a sports car, particularly as one of my school friends was presented with a brand new TR2 by his father when he left school. Thus my background as a petrolhead was set, and so when I graduated in '59 and got a job as a trainee civil engineer in Scunthorpe building steelworks, I found myself desperately in need of transport to get to and from work and to visit home in the Island where my parents and my fiancée's family lived. A perusal of the cars for sale columns of the local newspaper revealed a 1947 MG TC for sale locally. Needless to say I jumped at the chance and a deal was hastily struck, notwithstanding the fact that on the test run I did notice the rather erratic steering and the lack of effective brakes! It was, in reality, a

wreck, as they all were in those days, having had many owners (it was on a continuation log book), a broken spring, leaking oil from the engine, oil in the rear brake drums, a tattered hood, etc; however I loved her, christened her 'Bridget' and embarked on a steep learning curve on how to make her into a reasonably reliable drive. The fact that I was able not only to use the car daily for work but also for trips from Scunthorpe to the Isle of Wight, as well as holidays, was testament to how successful I had become in fixing the inevitable and not infrequent breakdowns at the roadside, and to the rugged nature of the car. Holidays were taken in North Devon (Morte Bay, Woolacombe), long before the surfers discovered this wonderful unspoiled beach), the Malvern Hills, and in 1961, honeymoon in Newlyn, all of which were preceded by a journey from Scunthorpe to the Island, some 250 miles, long before the advent of motorways and major city



bypasses. Christmas 1961 found us on the Island due to return to Scunthorpe, but the snow prevented us getting to the ferry until the following day, when we set off in icy conditions. With ice forming on the windscreen, we managed to get to Banbury, where we made an overnight stop and completed the journey the following day. We were able to make good progress thanks to the TC's narrow tyres cutting through the snow where more modern cars were skating and sliding all over the place. At this time, I changed jobs, joining a firm of contractors in Epsom, so we had to move south with all our worldly goods whilst the big freeze continued. We found temporary accommodation whilst looking for somewhere to rent, eventually ending up in a basement flat in South Norwood. During none of this time was the car garaged so it was beginning to deteriorate, and the rust bug was eating away at the bodywork. However, shortly after starting my new job, building a culvert for the River Wandle under the Trojan works on Purley Way, I was provided with a company car so the TC could be retired, but still not garaged. After completing several contracts I again changed jobs, joining Shell Mex and BP in Southampton, again with the benefit of a company car. At this stage I took the TC to the Island, where it was garaged at my parents' house and was available to us as we spent most weekends there. I was then moved to Oxford, so

the TC came with us and was garaged at our new house and used to explore the surrounding countryside.

Unfortunately there was an electrical short and the loom burnt out. So I put her in the garage whilst deciding what to do. My immediate thought was just to get her back on the road, but once started I realised that she was in a pretty parlous condition. Hence began a total last nut and bolt restoration. This was in the days before the easy availability of spares we enjoy today, with Jerry Brown and Ron Gammons just starting up in a small shop behind Roes Maltings, so much of the work consisted of repairing existing or making new from scratch. I had to carve new pieces of timber where there was rot, notably the large near side bottom timber.

Ten years and two house moves later she emerged in all her pristine glory, and I immediately signed up for the London Inverness London Endurance Run on the last weekend in June 1986. This event was organised by Dave Saunders, who had been my inspiration through his regular writing for the T Register. It was an amazing trip, commemorating that made by the editor of Motor Sport in 1946 in a then new TC.



There were nine T Types making the trip and lifelong friendships were established, confirming that MG is, indeed, the marque of friendship. I well remember when I had Henry Stone, one of MG's racing mechanics, as passenger and I was trying, and just succeeding, to keep ahead of the ex Pat Moss TF1500 rally car driven enthusiastically by Robert MacGillivray. Henry thanked me for the exciting ride and christened me 'le pilot fou'! He said he had been waiting to hear the clank as the crankshaft broke! The car went remarkably well, the only problem being a couple of flat tyres because I had not replaced the inner tubes, which were well over ten years old and beginning to perish!

It was on this trip that I became firm friends with Ian and Rosemary Lloyd, Marion (and subsequently Peter) Best and Simon and Joyce Gibbard). As a result, the eight of us decided that it would be nice to meet up and have a few days away in the

Cotswolds, which we did for a couple of years before others joined us, and thus the T Register Autumn Tours were born. Since then, the TC has participated in almost every one, as well as the later continental Spring Tours. It was on one of the Ardennes trips that the most extraordinary breakdown occurred. I was driving, with Sally Silcock as passenger and Bill following, when there was a strong smell of petrol and the car started running roughly. We were in the middle of nowhere in Belgium, but luckily there was a minor road off to the right, where we found a layby opposite a large, dilapidated barn. An inspection revealed that I had lost a banjo bolt from one of my carburettors. Whilst debating what to do, a rather scruffy local appeared from the barn to see what the problem was. He spoke no English, but after a cursory glance he said "banjo bolt", and disappeared back into the barn, to emerge a few minutes later with a large tin full of banjo bolts! Sadly none of them fitted. But just then a Belgian cyclist arrived and came to have a look. He did speak English and after a few minutes uttered the immortal words, "I have a TC







which is not yet registered so you can borrow my banjo bolt!" Bill whisked him off to his home, removed the item, returned and fitted it to my car, and hey presto we were back in business! What were the chances of that happening, I wonder.

The only Tours the TC has missed were in 2000 when my wife was dying, and the last few when I have had to resort to the MGB, which thankfully Sheila, my lovely partner, can drive, as driving the TC any distance is now too much of a struggle with my heart problems. The last major trip in the TC was to the Ardennes in 2022. Since then, MG trips have been taken in the MGB with Sheila doing most of the driving, so I do still experience the joys of MG motoring.

I have enjoyed nearly 66 years with my TC, which has provided me with so much pleasure (and occasional frustration) and introduced me to so many friends, but with great regret I now realise that anno domini and a dicky heart means that I must draw a veil over this chapter of my life, and it's time to hand my beloved TC to a new owner who will enjoy and cherish her as much as I have.

Salve Bridget

