

READERS RESTORATIONS

Relating your own tales of heartbreak, skinned knuckles, and ultimate joy



STAR RESTORATION WINS £100
and Castrol goodies

1958 MGA 1500

Steve Giles, Lancashire

Steve is proud to have brought home a piece of British heritage and put it back on the road where it belongs.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PPS



EVERY ISSUE'S Star Restoration earns the owner £100, plus a Castrol Classic Lubrication Pack including Castrol Valvemaster lead replacement additive. For Castrol Classic Oil range details of 65 essential products telephone 01954 231668





LEFT: Steve is delighted with his righthand-drive conversion and says steering is a delight.

BELOW: hours of painstaking work and plenty of money went into this superb engine bay.



PURCHASE PRICE: £4500
TIME SPENT: 16 months
TOTAL COST: £11,500

WHY? I already had a tidy MG TC, but wanted to rebuild a classic MG. My wife was all in favour because she liked the idea of driving in a car fitted with heater and radio, rather than freezing to death in silence in the TC.

WHERE DID YOU GET IT? I bought it sight unseen from America. It had been taken off the road and stored in a barn for 20 years. Although it was solid, it was still in pretty poor condition overall. There was very little that didn't need rebuilding or replacing.

DID YOU FIND ANY NASTIES? The cylinder head in the boot was cracked, but I knew it had been removed and wasn't surprised. Amazingly, the engine wasn't seized despite being headless for all those years. The car also came with something extra in the shape of a nest in the gearbox tunnel. I was worried it might contain a poisonous snake and prodded it with a very long stick. Luckily, nobody was at home.

DID YOU WORK UNDER COVER? Yes, but it took some ingenuity. I have the luxury of a double garage, but half of it was taken up by the TC. So for the body tub, I built a trolley that straddled the chassis. This allowed me to move either body or chassis out of the garage to create more space.

HOW DID YOU GET ON WITH THE BODYWORK? I carried out most of this at a body refinishing evening class at Blackpool's Bispham Fylde College. I had the benefit of excellent tuition on panel stripping, etch priming, lead loading and filling, as well as the right equipment for two-pack painting.

PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD THEN? Not exactly. So much hard slog went into the preparation that I can well understand why many projects are offered for sale with only the rolling chassis completed. The worst part for me, in common with many other MGA restorers, was getting the panel fit right. I'm still not entirely happy with it.

HOW WAS YOUR FIRST DRIVE? Not an unmitigated success. I got 38 miles down the MG before the oil pressure disappeared. I made the mistake of fitting a new oil canister O-ring without removing the original. My pride wouldn't allow me to call for roadside recovery.

DID IT GET BETTER? Oh yes. I've since done 2000 hugely enjoyable miles. I'm not interested in showing the MG, but just enjoy driving it whenever the fancy takes me.

THE RESTORATION



1 MG was shipped from the USA by Californian Classics. Steve didn't see the car, but this photograph persuaded him to part with £4500.



2 Despite spending 20 years without a cylinder head, the engine wasn't seized. But it obviously needed a total rebuild.



3 Mystery nest was thrown in free with the car. Steve had visions of waking a snake, so took it apart very carefully.



4 Home-made trolley looks fragile, but the bracing gave it sufficient strength to support body tub. Rolling chassis could pass underneath.



5 Because he didn't think his painting was up to the job, Steve had the top coat professionally sprayed before fitting a new floom.



6 Not the most successful of starts. First major run (to MGCC Silverstone meeting) ended with a huge oil leak after just 38 miles. ➔

★ WIN £100 ★ WIN £100 ★

Your restoration story could feature in these pages. The good news is if it does, we'll pay you £30, or £100 if it's chosen as our Star Restoration. To publish your story, we must have CLEAR colour photographs (not negatives) of the car. They must include one of the car before restoration, at least one during and one after - with you in it.

Your story should be typed in no more than 400 words. Please send your words and photos to:

Readers Restorations, Practical Classics, Bushfield House, Orton Centre, Peterborough PE2 5UW.