

## 3 Living with an MG TF or TD

– will you get along together?



Once upon a time, T-types were just old sports cars, and students would run them on a shoestring. Not any more.

There are still a few stalwarts who use their cars all year round, in all sorts of weather, but the majority of TF and TD owners have a modern car for everyday use, and reserve their classic MG purely for social and pleasure purposes.

These cars are cheap to run, easy to maintain, and simple to fix when things go wrong. There's a thriving club scene, and many organized activities, including 'Natter and Noggins,' race meetings, weekend tours, gymkhanas, concours d'Elegance, and rebuild seminars.



**The Silverstone race meeting in 2010: T-types as far as the eye can see.**

Within the MG Car Club, the T Register has its own website, [www.tregister.org](http://www.tregister.org), and publishes a well-respected magazine every two months (*Totally T-Type*). Owners are friendly and approachable, and online advice is just a mouse-click away.

Depending on where you live, security could be a concern. Doors aren't lockable, and there's no provision for a steering column lock, so it's essential that these cars are kept in a locked garage overnight.

### Lighting

The standard lighting is poor, but can be improved. At the front, there are weak headlamps and tiny sidelights: the rear has two tiny red tail lights – so there's a high risk of being rear-ended at night. If turn indicators are fitted, they'll be white at the front and red at the rear, which other drivers will find confusing. If you're more concerned with safety than with originality, you should fit halogen bulbs at the front, and separate yellow turn indicators front and rear.

### Performance

In standard tune these cars are relatively slow, even compared to a modern

expensive to rectify. If there's a major fault in the engine, gearbox, or rear axle, then the value of the vehicle may be reduced by as much as 25 to 50 per cent. Non-original engines are often found, and these are best avoided. Chassis don't usually corrode, so view any signs of chassis damage or repair work with suspicion.

### Completeness & originality

Parts such as original seats, hood frames, sidescreen frames, and dashboard instruments can be difficult to source.

If you're buying a dismantled vehicle, ensure everything is included: sourcing original replacement parts is both expensive and very time consuming.

For example, a genuine TF1500 should still have the original 1466cc XPEG engine, not a 1250cc replacement. A genuine TD Mark II should still have the original shock absorbers, and the chassis should have the correct brackets.



The distinctive brackets can be clearly seen, but the **Andrex shock absorbers** are missing.

### History

See Chapter 11 – Paperwork.



A TD fitted with non-original cycle wings, clearly showing the early type of TD shock absorber.

Door locks should be in excellent condition, with an unmarked chrome cover. When correctly fitted, each door should shut with a gentle click, and shouldn't require slamming.

The bonnet (hood) should fit perfectly against the body, and against the radiator shell. At the rear, the TF had a shaped valance beneath the spare wheel. This should have a uniform gap along the rear bumper, and alongside the rear wings: this is difficult to achieve.

### Exterior trim

4 3 2 1

The radiator shell was chromium-plated brass. These are difficult to source, so check for good chrome and absence of damage. Repairs are very expensive.



This rare TD Mark II has a good radiator shell and the correct front bumper and over-riders. You can also see the alloy metal strips on the running boards, with rubber inserts.



The distinctive Mark II badge, fitted to the front of the bonnet.

## Windscreen

4 3 2 1

The windscreen used flat laminated 6mm glass, so replacements are not expensive. The frame is chromium-plated brass – expensive to repair and replacements are hard to find. The TF windscreen frame slopes slightly more than that of a TD, so if a TF windscreen looks wrong, the plinths are probably from a TD.

## Lights

4 3 2 1

The TD should have 8in headlamps with chromed shells, mounted on cast iron wing brackets. The lights and the brackets are rare and expensive. The TF used regular 7in headlamps, which are easily sourced.

The front sidelights are standard, readily available Lucas 1130 units. They should have a small red dot on top – these are becoming more difficult to find. The rear lamps are also readily available.



Early TDs had oblong plastic rear sidelights.



Later TDs (and all TFs) had circular glass sidelights.

## Wheels & tyres

4 3 2 1

All TDs left the factory with 15in steel wheels. A few very early TDs didn't have holes in the wheels, which resulted in the brakes overheating. The TF had the same pierced wheels, but wire wheels were available as an option, and many TDs were retro-fitted with these.

If the car has wire wheels, check the tyre size to ensure that the wheels haven't been replaced with smaller 14in units. With steel wheels, check that every wheel has five studs. The MGA had four-stud wheels: if these are fitted you may also find MGA front hubs, an MGA rear axle, larger MGA drum brakes, and possibly MGA disc brakes. These improve performance but reduce the value of an otherwise original vehicle.

## Road wheel condition

4 3 2 1

Steel wheels should be painted a dull metallic silver. Look for dents in the rim. Wire wheels were also painted, although chromed wheels and spokes are now popular.

## 13 Do you really want to restore?

– it'll take longer and cost more than you think



Unless you're an expert and you ignore the man-hours that you've invested, it's impossible to buy a TD or TF in poor condition, restore it to excellent condition, and then sell it for a profit. Restoration is a slow, painstaking process, so a professional restoration will always cost more than the value of the finished car.



Therefore, my advice to you is this: buy the best car that you can afford. In the long run this will always be the most cost-effective option.

Remember, these cars were hand-made on a production line by skilled craftsmen, using techniques that they learned as apprentices. Many of the materials that they used would not be permitted today. Cellulose paint has been banned for some years, along with the use of lead for re-shaping body panels. There are still a few experts out there who can tackle such tasks, but they're hard to find and their work is justifiably expensive.

**A TF (above) and TD, both recently for sale. The TF's asking price was £10,500.**

