

5 Before you view

– be well informed



View the car at the owner's house, which is where it should be registered. Check all the numbers and paperwork, as a big percentage of old cars have something dodgy in their history.



When buying, offer to pay for a professional inspection or MOT (UK). That gets the car up on a ramp so you can take a proper look underneath.

To avoid a wasted journey and the disappointment of finding that the car does not match your expectations, be clear about what questions you want to ask before you pick up the telephone. Some of these points might appear basic, but when you're excited about the prospect of buying your new car, it's amazing how some of the most obvious things slip the mind. Also check the TSSC ads and eBay for current values.

Something else to consider, though, is that going to inspect crappy cars that are not as described is very useful and cumulative experience. If you've seen a few rusty and worthless wrecks, you are picking up a lot of practical knowledge about where Spitfires rust. You can also leave your number and an offer of ●x50, and pick up a useful spares car in a month or two when the owner fails to sell it.

Where is the car?

You may not find a Triumph close to you, as there may only be a few for sale in a particular country or state in any one month. Look at any within reach, even if they seem unsuitable, in order to learn more.

Dealer or private sale?

Not many dealers regularly handle Triumph sports cars, although you might find something in the dealers who advertise in Triumph magazines such as *Triumph World*, *Practical Classics*, *Classic Car* and *Classic Monthly*.

A private owner should have all the history, so don't be afraid to ask detailed questions. A dealer may have more limited knowledge of a car's history, but should have some documentation. A dealer may offer a warranty/guarantee (ask for a printed copy) and finance.

Insurance

Check with your existing insurer before setting out, as your current policy might not cover you to drive the car if you do buy it.

How you can pay?

A cheque/check will take several days to clear and the seller may prefer to sell to a cash buyer. A fat wad of cash is very tempting to a seller. A banker's draft (a cheque issued by a bank) is theoretically as good as cash: invite the seller to accompany you to your bank when collecting it, to reassure them it's a real one. There are fake banker's drafts about, so while it's safer to pay with one than to carry cash, it's less safe to accept one as payment.

Buying at auction?

If the intention is to buy at auction, see chapter 10 for further advice. Sports Triumphs tend not to come up at mainstream car auctions very often.

Professional vehicle check (mechanical examination)

For production cars, there are often marque/model specialists who will undertake professional examination of a vehicle on your behalf. The owners' clubs are key and free – the owners know the cars inside out and are happy to help out prospective new club members. Taking a car for an MOT as part of your test drive is also well worthwhile. If the owner refuses, don't buy the car.

AA 0800 056 8040 / www.theaa.com / vehicle-inspection
(motoring organisation with vehicle inspectors)

RAC 0330 159 0720 / www.rac.co.uk / buying-a-car / vehicle-inspections
(motoring organisation with vehicle inspectors)



A nice GT6, with a Le Mans fibreglass bonnet? No, it's a Spitfire conversion kit. Could be worth more than a GT6, but you need to know what you're buying. Join a club, get some advice.

Take it for an inspection

Most countries have some sort of a tech inspection system, and it's mostly state-run and good value compared to a private inspection. For Brits, the MOT test is excellent value for anybody buying any car. ●x55 gets you a good mechanical going-over, up on a ramp where you can usually, unofficially, join the examiner under the car and get a good look at everything. It's a rare treat for an MOT tester to get to look at something interesting rather than his daily diet of baggy BMWs, and for his expertise to be valued and respected, so a classic Triumph will get his full attention.

The UK's MOT test covers the body and vehicle structure, steering, suspension, brakes, emissions, windscreen, wipers/washers, lighting, door/bonnet/boot operation, seatbelts, seat mountings, mirrors, horn, exhaust system condition and noise level, fuel system, tyres, wheels and registration plates.

While MOT testers' expertise is variable, any serious problems are likely to be spotted, together with worn or damaged suspension components, uneven brakes, fluid leaks, damage to tyres and wheels on the insides, insecure brake or fuel lines and many other things that you might have missed during your own inspection.

If the car passes the test, that's good news and the price should be unaffected – surely the seller expected it to be roadworthy in the first place?

If it fails, the seller is at a psychological disadvantage and has no good reason for not adjusting the price downwards to reflect the cost of the repairs. An extra bonus of going through a government test as part of examining a car is that the garage's computer may well flag up anything dodgy in the car's registration, which, ideally, you need to know before rather than after you've bought the car.



Taking the car for an MOT in the UK is a cheap way of getting it up on a ramp and thoroughly inspected, particularly if you add a tenner and ask for a careful inspection. A failure drops your offer.

14 Paint problems

– bad complexion, including dimples, pimples and bubbles



Paint faults are generally due to poor paint preparation: the prep is 90 per cent of a good finish. Some of the following issues will appear as you paint a car, some can be used to knock down the price before you buy one.

It's still possible to spray paint a car at home with a small compressor and a gun, although you ideally need to track down oil-based paint to get toughness and gloss.

Don't attempt a two-pack paint finish at home – it contains cyanide and is as dangerous as you'd imagine.



The respray here is peeling because of bad prep work. The gloss layers are not adhering to the lower layers.

Peeling

Often a problem with metallic and two-pack paintwork, when the sealing clearcoat lacquer becomes damaged and begins to peel off. Poorly applied paint may also peel. The remedy is to strip it off and start again. You don't necessarily need to take it back to bare metal, as the existing primer and base colour coats are a good base for new paint, particularly if it's the same colour.



Orange peel

This appears as an uneven paint surface, and looks like the tiny dimples on orange skins. It's caused by the failure of atomized paint droplets to blend when they hit the surface. If the paint's thick enough, you can sometimes rub orange peel down to a good finish with rubbing compound or extremely fine grades of wet and dry paper used with plenty of water. Knock the cost of a repaint off your offer anyway.

16 The Community

– key people, organisations and companies in the Spitfire and GT6 world



The Triumph Sports Six Club is an excellent introduction to the UK Triumph scene (www.tssc.org.uk). You can either join the forum free by entering a name and password, or you can join the club properly, pay your ●x44 UK/●x50 worldwide dues and receive the club magazine. In the free forums you'll find some revealing chat, most of it constructive. The club has marque registers for the different sorts of Triumphs, and special tools that can be rented or borrowed. There are area meetings full of people with useful skills and chummy prices on spares. You, in turn, will find yourself helping to hunt down Triumphs for future new members and trading back and forth with your own stash of spares. Beer, tea, support and camaraderie are all involved.

CarClubsWorldwide lists 25 Triumph clubs worldwide, so there is definitely one within reach wherever you are. It's always worth joining your local club as there will be somebody who can weld, somebody who can disentangle underdash tagliatelle and make lights work, somebody who can excommunicate evil spirits, and lots of others who can be relied upon to drink your beer and idle around in your garage supervising and offering useful and amusing comments and suggestions. It's not good clean fun, but it is good fun.

Going to Le Mans, or anywhere else for that matter, in a Triumph with a crowd of other Triumph drivers is thoroughly recommended. I used to organise a Le Mans camping trip for *Kitcar* magazine, which was excellent fun and attracted a good crowd: there are many Le Mans trips you can join. Classic Le Mans is probably more suitable for Triumph enthusiasts, although the main Le Mans race must be attended once for bucket list reasons. It just needs to be done, doesn't it?

Trackday action is also strongly recommended, partly because it's enormous fun, and partly for safety reasons: if you've pushed your car hard enough to spin it, or nearly spin it, a few times on the track, you'll know when you're near the limit on the road as well. An insider tip is not to rush to get to a track day early – the queue to get on the track will thin out dramatically after lunch as everybody else gets tired and some of their cars break. Also, take spare brake pads: if you're giving your



This harmless-looking GT6 is actually powered by a five-litre American V8, and uses a Jaguar XJ6 rear end. It is a lot of fun, and was also an unexpectedly pleasant and civilised car to drive.