

# NAYLOR CAR CLUB

would apply. [it has been decided not to implement such a scheme] but to rely on local authorities taking a proportionate approach to enforcement.

Those statements, between them, say that:-

it is the sale of non-compliant product that is regulated, not its use (if you have it, or can get it, you can use it)

The supply of paint for purposes other than road vehicles is not affected by the 2005 regulations (so a supplier may sell you paint for your light aircraft, or railway carriage, provided it is not labelled as also being suitable for four wheeled-road vehicles: once you have bought it...see above); and

a local authority is unlikely to take action against a supplier selling non-compliant paint unless he is blatantly selling large quantities of it for purposes other than vintage vehicles.

This may not be entirely ideal, but must be far better to end-users than the licensing scheme that was proposed in 2007.

## FROM THE ARCHIVE

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**When a replica costs as much as a concours original, it had better be good. Mike McCarthy investigates the Naylor TF 1700 and a genuine MGTF**

Poor little TF! Was ever a car greeted with such an enthusiastic display of apathy when it first appeared? Motoring hacks of the day took to it with spine-chilling yawns, and assiduously and carefully ignored it after giving it the least possible amount of publicity on its announcement. They queued up in droves not to road-test it, with such success that, to the best of our knowledge, no important British magazine - for which read The Autocar and The Motor, as they were then called - ever deigned to lay their hands on one and subject it to the rigours of MIRA. Considering the way that, in those days, they would devote pages of lurid prose to the most obscure sporting machine, this appears to have been an almost deliberate policy. Mind you, they were much too polite to write anything nasty about it, but there are some delightful examples of double-speak (and, as an expert in such things, I can spot one at 100 yards!).

Let me give you a 'for example'. Quoth "The Autocar: 'The M. G. Midget is a car that, probably, has changed less in outward appearance than any other model over the same period of time, and it is this feature that makes the car contrast so sharply with production models of overseas countries such as the United States of America, where the Midget is so popular. By these remarks it is not meant to imply that design has remained static since the first M.G. Midget was produced very many years ago. Oh yeah? What they're actually saying is: 'The design has remained static'. Believe me: take it from an expert. Or how about: 'The overall height is reduced by one and a half inches and this should help to reduce the wind resistance and further to improve the performance of the new TF'. The effect would, in fact, have been about the same as knocking a storey off the Empire State Building.

Mind you, the purists on Autosport were even more toffee-nosed. They said: 'The "TF" is a development of the extremely successful "T" series of open two-seaters, built for the non-competition-minded class of purchaser, which, it must be admitted, forms the bulk of the 'small-capacity sports car user'. (Our italics) They continued in the same, rather superior vein; evidently the designers have made no effort to increase the power-weight ratio by reducing the chassis weight, but have concentrated on the power-unit side for acceleration, and a somewhat lower frontal area than the "TD, for maximum speed'.





But you get the drift. Fortunately for MG the Americans didn't know that the TF was no good, and they took to it in droves, as Road & Track proved when they enthused that 'Here is a car that exemplifies far better than mere words the answer to the question: "What is a sports car?" To drive an MG is sheer pleasure'. Mind you, the doyen of American motoring writers, the acid-penned Tom McCahill, tore into the company when he wrote that 'The new TF is a big disappointment . . . Mrs Casey's dead cat slightly warmed over . . . only out of supreme arrogance would the manufacturers attempt to keep ramming this old teapot down the throat of American buyers'.

So what was the reason for all the scorn, remembering the almost ecstatic acclaim with which the TC and TD had been received? The answer was two-fold, and called the Triumph TR2 and Austin Healey 100. When the TC had been introduced, in 1945, it was current, state-of-the-pre-war-art, machinery. They brought in such modern features as independent front suspension, but was already looking old-fashioned. The TF was, simply, extremely outdated compared to such opponents as the Jowett Jupiter and those mentioned above. Morgans were in the same position, but then Morgan was — and is — Morgan, a suitable case for lack of treatment.

The problem was that the TF was neither one thing nor the other. A sloping radiator, faired-in headlights and a tilted petrol tank did not a new car make. The TF was a classic case of a face-lift, literally. It took "*in toto*" the TD's cruciform chassis, wishbone and coil front suspension, live rear axle on semi-elliptics, and 1250cc engine. Modifications included an increase in power by adopting the Mk II version of the TD power unit, which gave a whopping 57.5bhp, compared to the standard unit's 54.5bhp, and altered gearing. The major change was to the body: the scuttle was lowered slightly, and the grille laid back and lowered a vast three and a half inches which meant that the bonnet now sloped downwards. Headlights were now faired into the wings instead of being separate, and the tank and spare wheel were angled even further. The effect, actually, was to give a strong family look yet something different.

When Road & Track did test a TF, the performance figures were, umm, ahh, pathetic, or, as they said, 'Well below the 1954 Detroit norm and you have to shift

gears'. Golly gosh: shift gears! Flat out it staggered to 80mph, and took a month of Sundays - well, 18.9secs to reach 60mph. It was not what you could call, by any stretch of the imagination, a quick car.

So much for the good news - but was there anything about the TF that anyone liked? The answer was a most decided yes: its road manners. It may have been blown off by the local grocer's delivery van in a straight line, but it would out-scrabble any Yank mobile in the corners, of which there are a few on the coasts of America. As Road & Track in their usual succinct style put it, 'To drive an MG like an old maid is sacrilege ... Because an MG responds to skilful driving, its owner takes pride in improving his driving, yet because of its impeccable handling qualities, the MG is far less prone to get into trouble, is in fact far safer than any other car of the family type'.

One thing that didn't seem to put people off as much as it might be supposed was the 'old-fashioned' styling. Sure, by the mid-fifties all enveloping bodywork was the norm, but in the UK there were still plenty of pre-war cars around, and the same could be said about America.

One fairly common complaint about the TF was that the engine was still only a 1250, whereas the Midgette introduced at the same time as the TF had the new 1500. What the TF needed by general consent was more power, and in late 1954 a 1500TF appeared. This wasn't the BMC B-series as used in the Midgette but a bigger-bore XPAG as used in the T-series. The 1466cc unit gave some 63bhp at 5000rpm, a useful but not wild increase in output, and, as Road & Track found, an equally useful boost to the performance - top speed went up to 85mph, and some three seconds were knocked off the 0-60mph time which came down to 16.3secs. It still wasn't the quickest thing on four wheels, but it was in there fighting.

The TF was not a vast seller, 6200 of the 1250 version being made, and a mere 3400 of the 1500s. The most astonishing thing about it, really, is that it ever happened at all. Back in 1951 Syd Enever, MG's designer, came up with a new chassis (what in modern parlance would be called a perimeter frame) and clothed it with a sleek body shape. It was shown to the power-that-be at the time, namely Sir Leonard Lord, as a potential new MG, and was dismissed out of hand! Lord had just signed a contract with Donald Healey to make the Austin-Healey 100, and decided that two new sports cars in the BMC fold was one too many. Nothing changes, does it? All Lord would allow was a facelift on the TD - hence the TF. Alas, sales slumped drastically in 1953, so the Enever low-line car was resurrected for 1955 - and the immortal MGA was



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*In action, the TF isn't all that different to the Naylor, though the steering is lower geared and heavier. Alan Danks' TF is in superb condition thanks to a ground-up restoration*



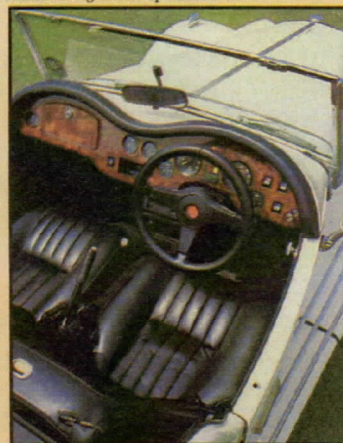
*MG octagon appears everywhere on TF*



*TF's very fifties cockpit has octagonal dials*



*Naylor script doesn't pretend to copy MG's*



*The more modern cockpit of the Naylor*



*The Naylor rolls less and the steering is much more direct, but it subjectively isn't that much quicker than the TF. Note the gap around the smaller front wheels and high-backed seats*





born. But that is another story ... The TF, then, became very much a stop-gap car.

Now come forward 30 years or so. That unloved, unwanted TF is the darling of the T-series. Why the complete about face?

### Classic series

For a start, hindsight has mellowed the immediacy of the fifties, and the TF is seen as the last, and probably the best, of a classic series. The TF's reputation has been blended in with that of the TC and TD. Visually it is the most stylish of the trio, the sloping radiator and flaired-in headlamps giving it a smooth charm, quite distinct from the early perpendicularity of the TCs and TDs. Although no ball of fire, it was also the quickest on the road. Above all, though, the TF was the last of what many believe to be the true MG.

After going through the traditional slump in popularity in the sixties, the T-series cars started becoming collectors' items in the seventies. This was good news for Naylor Brothers up in Bradford, who specialised in these machines.

I grew to know Alastair Naylor quite well over the years. He was God's gift to a motoring journalist: quotable, reliable, ever-helpful, and enthusiastic. Visits to his emporium were fascinating, with wrecks piled up at one end and beautiful, gleaming cars pouring out (pouring being a relative term you understand!) from the other.

It was one of these trips that Alastair called me over to a corner of one of his workshops and showed me what was, apparently, a TF part-way through restoration. It turned out to be more than that. Alastair was considering going into production with a replica of the TF. It made sense: he had stockpiles of panels and assorted TF bits and probably could have, had he so wished, built a brand-new and original TF, the engine being something of a problem of course. Why not, he reasoned, take those parts which were available, add new items where appropriate, and reintroduce the TF?

He and I have one thing in common: a dislike of

lookalikes which owe nothing to their derivation. Glass fibre-bodied Beetle-engined Bugattis are, to my mind, abhorrent. On the other hand there is a type of replica which I find appealing, generally because they are good cars. This is fairly vital: I learnt long ago never to judge a car by appearances alone. In addition, some of these replicas tried to emulate the original as close as was possible. Thus a new type emerged - the Lynx and Deetype D-types, for example, and GP's Porsche Spyder. I believe such cars to be valid entities on their own, and to be judged as such.

Alastair didn't care for the kit-car scene, or its image, so he took what can only be called an ultra-brave step: he would go into production with the car. This meant going through all the hassles which Ford, Austin-Rover, or any other manufacturer, have to go through. Examples would have to be thrown at concrete blocks, and meet all type-approval laws. It would cost, literally, a fortune, but it meant that the Naylor would be a recognised car in its own right.

Fortunately Alastair has a good working relationship with BL, as it was then, so the choice of components wasn't too difficult. The engine selection boiled down to BL's O-series, a 1700cc, 77bhp 'four' with a belt driven overhead camshaft as appeared in the Ital. It had at least one major advantage, apart from availability: it fitted under the bonnet space of a TF without any disfiguring bulges. Gearbox and live rear axle, too, came from BL. The chassis is as near as possible a faithful copy of the original, but suspension is all Naylor-derived (Alastair is a demon racer in MGCC circles). Like the TF there are wishbones and coils at the front, but there are combined coil spring/shock absorbers in the place of the TF's combined upper wishbone/shock absorbers. At the rear, the TF's vaguely-located live rear axle on leaf springs has been replaced by another live axle, but this one is sprung on coils and located by five links. Brakes are disc at the front, drums at the rear, there is rack and pinion steering, and tyres are 165 x 14 radials. Body panels are, on the whole, interchangeable with those of the TF. Mechanics apart, the major variations from original occur from the need to meet rules and regulations. Thus the handles are flush-fitting, there are seat belts, and the steering wheel isn't wood rimmed, and so on. The staggering thing about the Naylor, in fact, is how close to the original Alastair has kept it.

A genuine TF, to compare to the Naylor, almost fell into our laps: at the C&S concourse, held as part of



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the British Motoring Festival, one of the entrants was Alan Danks with his TF.

Alan bought his TF about four years ago. It was, in his own words, in remarkable condition for its age, having had a 'tidy-up' around 1967, after which it had been stored for 11 years. In spite of this, Alan set about a ground-up restoration, and the result has to be seen to be believed. The only work he didn't do himself was the trim and the paintwork which a cousin of his completed. The finish really is quite fantastic, so much so that you wonder whether any MG ever left the factory looking so good.

If it is staggering how close Alastair has kept the Naylor to the original, even more staggering is how close road behaviour of the two cars is: almost eerie, in fact. For example, take the performance. Since the Naylor uses modern components, you might expect it to be a little like a Caterham Seven, all sound and fury. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact Naylor claim a top speed of 93.8mph, and a 0-60mph time of 11.8secs. Those figures are a lot quicker than those of a TF, but the Naylor still isn't a great ball of fire. According to Alan the TF cruises comfortably at 70mph: on our outward journey we had kept to the same speed! It even sounds like a TF, though more subdued.

On the road, the major difference is in the steering: that of the Naylor is light and very direct, that of the TF low-g geared and, in spite of the bigger steering wheel, heavier at low speed. In fact Alan thought the Naylor's too light, comparing it to that of his XJS having lived with the Naylor I wouldn't agree. You soon get used to it, and it is truly delightful on twist cross-country roads. Climbing from the Naylor into the TF, the first impression is that the steering of the latter is more cumbersome, but all things are relative and, even judged by today's standards, the TF's steering is excellent. Surprisingly, too, without indulging in full-bore slides, the handling of the two was similar, the TF rolling a little more, but otherwise following the same path under the same conditions as the Naylor. Brakes were another item that compares favourably.

Possibly the one area of greatest similarity, though was the ride. It was almost identical in the two cars both suffering from assorted creaks and groans and rattles from the wooden-framed bodywork over the same bumps! If this sounds as if the ride of the Naylor is poor, it isn't: in fact both the Naylor and TF have surprisingly good bump absorption, even

judged by; today's standards. It's just that when you do drive over undulations it sets up shock waves throughout both cars that has them trembling and shaking like the Ed-at-large with a severe case of the DTs ...

## Spacious cockpit

The biggest differences come in the driving position and cockpit. The seats on the Naylor are more curvaceous and comfortable, with good side and lumbar support: those of the TF are uncompromisingly square. Alan reckons about 150 miles in his TF in one stretch is enough: I reckon about the same in the Naylor would be enough too, so it's all square in that department. However, for some reason the cockpit of the TF looks and feels more spacious - there's certainly more foot room in the older car.

The controls of the Naylor are, of course thoroughly modern, as are the instruments. The change is slick and precise, though the synchro baulked slightly on quick changes from first to second. Strangely enough, quick changes from first to second in the TF also caused baulking! With the TF you had to swap cogs fairly slowly and deliberately though with the Naylor you could just shove the lever through. The Naylor's instruments are modern and boring: the TF's are interesting and unreadable down the centre of the dashboard! The Naylor's pedals are modern ordinary, the TF's odd, especially the accelerator which is a little rotary button on the end of an arm.

Both cars are at their best on sweeping country roads, open to the wind, flicking through curves with the minimum of effort and the maximum of fun. Of course a bog-standard rep's delight 1.3 Escort loaded to the gunwales with pre-packed Tupperware samples would see both off in either a straight line or around corners, but then it wouldn't be half the fun, and no way would it turn the heads in the way both the sport cars do.

The one thing that struck both Alan and myself was how close the Naylor is to the TF. Not just in looks but in character as well. Now there's something; replica or facsimile that doesn't just look right but is right. What's more, the Naylor costs near enough £14,500: Alan's MG is insured for £15,000. What was it that Bernard Miles used to say about Mackeson? It looks good, tastes good, and by golly it does you good: Exactly the same slogan could be used about a TF or a Naylor. Exactly ...

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