



A BUYER'S GUIDE FOR THE SIDESCREEN TRIUMPH TR2, 3 and 3A/B

If you are thinking of buying a classic TR 2, 3 or 3A/B, have a close look at the "About us" section of this web site. You'll find photos and descriptions of the various models, plus information on the unequalled spare parts service offered to Register members. You can also find information on how to become a member of the Register in the "Join/renew" section.

Because of their popularity, sidescreen TRs do not come on the market very frequently. The majority of TRs that do come up for sale have been restored sometime during their lifetime, although the odd unrestored example may still appear.

Normally, the asking price suggested for a TR can be a fairly good indicator of its overall condition, but it should only be taken as a guide, because a thorough inspection should be carried out on any potential purchase before the buyer commits. One of the reasons for this is that the quality of any past restoration work can and does vary greatly. Therefore, it is extremely important that the potential buyer has done some research on the actual model being sought, and knows the price range for an example in pristine condition to that of a scruffy example requiring a complete restoration. It is also necessary to factor in the presence of any desirable options - overdrive, a heater, a hard top, luggage rack etc.

It is important to ensure that any TR sits and looks right on the road, so it is critical to check everything and ensure that the panel fit is sound and paint condition and blemishes match the age and quality of any past restoration work. The chassis should be straight. The TR's chassis is normally considered a strong point although if the vehicle has been involved in an accident any repair work may require closer inspection on a hoist by a qualified mechanic.

If the car is currently roadworthy, it is important to go for a decent drive to make sure that it is well sorted and is the car that you are wanting, as a short drive around-the-block may not be as convincing. A careful check should be made to ensure that all of the weather-proofing equipment, sidescreens and tonneau cover are in reasonable condition and/or match the condition of the vehicle for sale. On any test drive, the hood should be erected over the hood bows and the fit should look neat, as a poor fitting hood and sidescreens does little for the appearance of any sports car.

Many enthusiastic owners when caring for or restoring their TR have built up a history file with photographs and other documentation over the years, and this can be helpful in getting a feel for the car's history. It can also show whether a modern day electronic ignition system, an up-rated starter motor or an alternator may have replaced the original factory item.

Since the early 2000s prices for all popular British sports cars have risen sharply, so ensure that you have adequate funds to cover the asking price and associated costs (transfer fees, stamp duty etc). Also factor in any repairs that you may wish to carry out once in your ownership. The TR has a lot going for it, however it cannot be stressed enough, examine every potential purchase carefully, especially in the following areas :-

ENGINE The sidescreen TR's legendary four cylinder wet-sleeved engine is a very spritely and reliable unit, capable of extremely high mileages, if serviced and looked after. It was developed from the sturdy Standard Vanguard engine and sleeved down to 1991 cc capacity. It was also used in the "Grey" Ferguson Tractor. The oil pressure should be around the 60 – 75 psi mark on starting, about 40-60 psi for normal driving, and drop to around 20 psi when idling. There should be no real mechanical chatter apart from maybe the sounds of the rocker gear. If owned by an enthusiast, the engine bay should be very presentable and clearly show evidence of the routine and regular care given. All of the fluid levels should be checked and appear clean. Equally, the cooling system should be inspected and evidence of the use of an anti-freeze should be present. Overheating can be an issue in TRs and electric fans are now a common addition, or the original four blade fan may have been replaced with a more efficient six blade fan. It is also worth inquiring to see if the valve seats in the head have had hardened inserts installed due to the introduction of unleaded petrol.

GEARBOX All sidescreen TRs basically have the same four speed transmission, with no synchromesh on first gear. The lack of synchronization on first is no handicap. The gear-box is considered a fairly tough unit, and was available with Laycock de Normanville overdrive as a factory option. This operated on top gear only in the TR2, but was offered on second, third and top in both the TR3 and TR3A. Other than minor troubles with the overdrive solenoid, it is not surprising that an overdrive gearbox is the preferred option.

BODY The classic shape of the body panels and their alignment make it fairly easy to spot a very poor example or one suffering from accident damage. The most vulnerable areas for rust on TRs are door sills, the lower sections of the front mudguards along with the boot floor and spare wheel compartment. Floor pans can also be prone to rust so it is important to lift the floor coverings. Generally, the sides of the guards should be "flat" without bulges and checking panels with a magnet to see how much "panel beater filler" is present is a good tip. Profile shapes of all panels is important particularly the front apron panel.

INTERIOR Seat design is the biggest difference between the interiors of the different models. The seat upholstery in the TR2 and TR3 has a vertical pattern, whereas in the 3A it is horizontal. Like all sports cars from that era, a nice TR can be spoilt by a tatty interior and old or stained carpets. Trim kits are available or skilled motor trimmers can assist with the repairs or the fitting of new interiors. The dashboard is one of the best available with a complete range of instruments grouped together in the centre of the vinyl-covered dashboard, with the large black-faced speedometer and a rev counter in front of the driver.

SUSPENSION The front and rear suspensions are sturdy and reliable but problems can arise mainly through poor servicing and lack of the recommended regular greasing. Over the years a number of enthusiastic drivers have fitted more modern shock absorbers and anti-roll bars to improve road-holding . Shock absorbers should be checked for leaks.

BRAKES The TR Lockheed drum and/ or Girling disc brake configurations are considered very effective . The factory uprated the TR2's system very early in production to improve the car's braking to cope with the TR's overall performance. Standard-Triumph is acknowledged as the World's first manufacturer to install front disc brakes on a production car. These were fitted mid-way through the TR3 production in 1956. In Australia, Girling disc brakes first appeared on the TR3A during 1958 (and many have converted their early TR3s during restoration). Many cars have now added a power brake unit which is a good improvement given today's increased traffic flows. The handbrake operates on the rear wheels and the position of the handbrake lever is the same for both left and right-hand drive cars.

STEERING The sidescreen TR steering is considered by some owners as heavy at low speeds because it uses what is commonly known as a cam and lever type steering box. A certain amount of play is normally present despite the steering box being adjustable. Today, most owners have converted to a rack and pinion system for improved handling.

WHEELS A number of the TRs sold in Australia were fitted with factory standard disc wheels with hub-caps, but today the majority will have wire wheels fitted.

When originally imported most TRs had cross-ply tyres. In the main, radial ply tyres would now be fitted and the most common size would be a modern equivalent close to a 165 x 15 tyre. However a problem with the modern tyre is that it may be a tight fit in the spare wheel compartment. Some owners therefore carry a cross-ply tyre as the spare. All tyres should be roadworthy as well as checked for age and should not be older than 10 years for safety reasons. Treads should also be checked for wear patterns as this can indicate wheel alignment and camber issues.

In having a separate spare wheel compartment, the TRs boot space is very generous and easy to access. A considerable amount of luggage can be carried behind the bucket seats and the glove box and both door pockets come in handy for small items.

Finally, if you have the urge to buy a TR roadster, you are more than welcome to join the TR Register Australia. A major benefit of joining is that you can get access to a vast store of knowledge and expertise about all things to do with one of the best things ever to come out of Great Britain !!

While every care has been taken in the preparation of this guide, it remains only a guide, and as with all purchases, the importance of caveat emptor - let the buyer beware - cannot be over-stated.