

# Trident relaunched

The TVR Trident was the childhood dream car of Norman Hawkes. Martin Buckley tells the story of his dream restoration

At the age of 15, Norman Hawkes walked into his local bookshop and bought a copy of *Style Auto*, an Italian magazine on car styling. The year was 1965, the magazine issue seven, one of the early English editions, and within its pages was a feature on the TVR Trident.

Young Norman was bowled over by its eye-popping looks. "It was so clean for the time, with its slab sides, fastback, huge rear window and pop-up lights," recalls Norman, a shipping agent from Hull. "Remember, they were still making Cambridges at the time. I thought the Trident was out of this world. It gave me an awareness of Italian styling that has never left me."

Twenty years later that original copy of *Style Auto* is so well thumbed it has fallen apart at the seams but Norman no longer has



Photography by Chris Mason

**Complete at last after five years the TVR Trident is now ready for its first MoT. It has never been registered**



to dream about the TVR Trident: he now owns one of his own.

"I never dreamed the possibility of actually owning one of these cars would ever arise," says Norman. "At the time I thought the car in the article was the only one, so I bought a Trident Venturer instead – simply because I loved the styling – and did a lot of modifications to make it look as much like the original TVR Trident as possible." (If you didn't read last month's feature, *Trevor's furore*, the Trident was a GRP car using Austin Healey – later TR6 – chassis and a cruder version of the TVR Trident's styling).

Then, flicking through the ads in *CLASSIC AND SPORTSCAR* in February 1986, Norman spotted the car he'd been waiting for all his life: a genuine TVR Trident, albeit a restoration project, and for sale just over the

Pennines in Manchester. By now Norman was well boned-up on his TVR history after reading Peter Filby's book *TVR Success Against the Odds*, and he soon realised that this car was the third Trident coupé built (the fourth was a convertible), which, after appearing at the Paris motor show in 1965, had been shipped over to TVR's Blackpool factory, where it sat gathering dust in a corner.

"It was the right corner, though," reflects Norman, "because it had managed to survive the fire of the early seventies. Unfortunately the engine and original chassis had gone and the suspension had been cannibalised. Although it had been driven a little – I could see marks in the wheelarches where stones had been thrown up – it had never been registered, so it was virtually a new car. There

was a little rust around the sills where it had been sitting on the floor, without its chassis, and the bumpers were rough but otherwise the body was sound".

There was also a little damage to the rear panel, inflicted when the car had been moved about at some time, but Norman was heartened by the fact that the car still had all its original glass.

Buying the Trident gave Norman the incentive to search out the other three cars.

"I knew the number one and number two coupés had been taken to America for the New York show, and the first car was subsequently bought by the American importer. The second car returned to England and was used by Gerry Marshall until he crashed it, after which it was rebuilt with an MGB engine. The convertible was driven by Martin



Above: electrically operated pop-up lights were a novelty in the '60s



Left: Trident as delivered to Norman's house in 1986. Most of the mechanical elements had been pillaged by the factory where the car had stood in a corner for many years. It had fallen into the hands of a couple of Mancunian owners, who didn't realise what they had



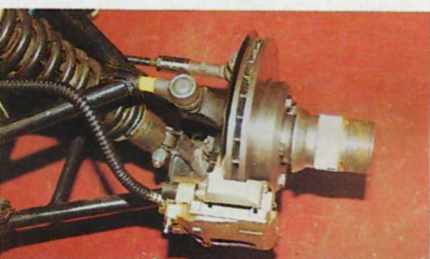
Trident safe in Norman's garage



Vinyl-trimmed interior was complete



Rear suspension uses Jag S-Type parts



Front end uses Ford uprights, discs



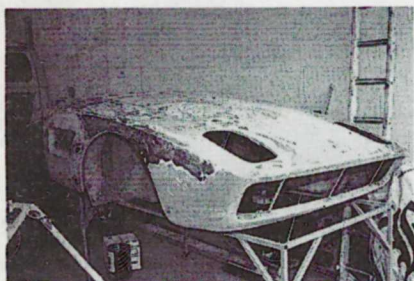
Don Haldenby with Trident chassis



Lilley, head of TVR, for many years, and never left the UK. It surfaced in *Motorsport* in 1972 and is now owned by Neil Lefley."

Norman tracked down the second coupé to a doctor called Henry Kelly in Washington DC, who died before Norman had contacted him, and the car came up for sale. It was bought by an American enthusiast called Chuck Lynn, who himself found out about Norman's car through the American TVR club. The two began to correspond and have struck up quite a friendship, communicating by fax at least once a week. It was via Chuck that Norman found the number one coupé, the car that originally fired his interest 25 years ago. It's still living in California, in running condition and apparently £20,000 would buy it...

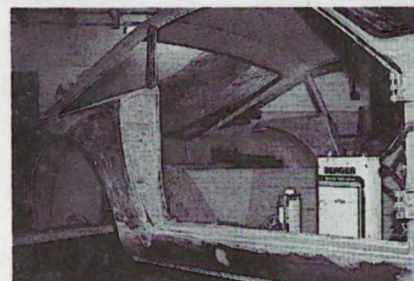
The history of Norman's number three



Removing old paint from bonnet



Filling minor dents in the doors



New sills were then made up



TVR Trident after its first coat of red paint. There was little rust except in the sills where the car had been sitting on the floor in the TVR factory. All the glass was intact

Trident after the fire is hazy, but he does know that TVR sold it off in 1978 to a Manchester man called Worthington who ran a business called Dial-a-Van. He then passed the Trident on to another Mancunian, Ian Stronach. Stronach intended to rebuild the car but, being a pre-war enthusiast, his heart wasn't in it and it was he who eventually placed that fateful ad in *C&S* in early 1986.

Norman struck a deal with Stronach for £2000 and after three visits with a trailer the TVR Trident was safe in his garage, his shed full of components and spares.

"There was a diff," remembers Norman, "dozens of A brackets, seven steering racks – all left-hand drive – coil springs and suspension parts. Everything you could imagine, in fact. But I think I can safely say that none of them ended up being fitted to the car."

Most of the major body and mechanical work was farmed out to a local restorer called DCH, run by Don Haldenby, long-time racing mechanic to Stirling Moss. Norman's brief to DCH was simply to make a usable car out of the Trident, rather than a show winner.

"I said that if it meant modifying the car mechanically, then he should do so – I just wanted it to look original."

The chassis which came with the car when Norman bought it clearly wasn't the one the car left the Fissore factory with. Norman reckons it was a stock Vixen chassis, but as the Trident was actually the first to use the longer wheel-base 7ft 6in TVR Vixen chassis anyway, it was fairly easy to modify.

When first fitted, the chassis fouled the heater box assembly and, because Norman decided to use Jaguar S-type rear suspension (retaining the original diff) and Ford Granada front uprights, the suspension pick-up points also had to be altered. The steering rack and brake calipers were also Ford, which should make the car easy to maintain in the future. The frame was also extended at the back to carry the fuel tank. Otherwise, the chassis was in superb condition and had probably never been used, although to prevent future rust problems it was powder-coated.

The engine, a fully reconditioned Ford 289, was bought from a big Bradford American car specialist, mated to the correct Ford T10 gearbox salvaged from a Mustang.

The body had various bumps and dents and because the sills had rotted out new sections had to be fabricated and fitted. The rear panel was badly dented which required another fabrication job – Trident panels are not available off the shelf. The headlamp-raising mechanism was given a new spur gear and a new motor, but the power window motors responded to being dismantled and freed off and Don managed to keep the original rear lights and the fitments for the front lights, albeit using modern Hella inserts.

Everything that was supposed to be chromed was rechromed – right down to the seat frames, but a new front bumper had to be made up out of 10-gauge aluminium and it looks as though a brand new rear item will be needed too, as the aging steel was thin and holes have since appeared.

Inside, the grey plastic seat-covers just needed a good clean, and Don treated the interior to new carpets – mice had been feeding on the originals – and also rebuilt the seat frames and runners.

The Trident sits on brand new E-type 72-spoke wire wheels as not one of the 11 spare

wheels that came with the car were correct.

"I am over the moon about the way the car has turned out", enthuses Norman. "I can't wait to drive it on the road; Don has set the suspension up just right, so it should handle better than originally. I am already under pressure to sell the car to pay for an extension on the house... but I am determined to do everything I can to make sure I own my TVR Trident for a long time to come... at least until I'm too old to drive it."

Don Haldenby, who restored the Trident, is located at Unit 95, Kelleythorpe Ind Estate, Drifffield, East Yorks, YO25 9DJ. Tel: 0377 241893. Also thanks to owners of Sledmere House, Drifffield, East Yorkshire, for the use of the house as a photo location.



Air vent has practical use with hot V8



Dash just needed electrical work



Tail has a touch of Maserati about it