The Cover Story - The Triumph Spitfire Mk2



The Triumph Spitfire Mk2, FDD 314C, was the first sports car I owned. I bought her in 1966 when I was 23 when I was into my first job after university. The car was one year old, and with its original base price of £550, I paid £365 to a garage near Stroud. A garage which is still there today and which is now a Vauxhall agency.

Before that I had owned a Triumph Herald, so this was a natural progression for me. The Herald had done me proud and I remember taking it on a road trip with a chum in 1966 to the Costa Brava and watching that famous match in a taberna in Tossa de Mar. Two tone paintwork, I remember - but not much more.

Yes, 1966; the age of proper music. The space race was well underway though Neil Armstrong had yet to take that giant leap for mankind, but I was intoxicated by all that technology and wanted a sniff at it myself. I was now in the defence industry and working on stuff that flew and learning to use the early computers to make it all happen and I was loving it. And the Spitfire was all part of that creative age and that exciting feeling - and Gen Z don't know what they're missing.

By today's standards, the Spitfire had no real performance; with its 1147cc engine and a few performance tweaks it gave 67 bhp at the sort of revs you would never ever do and gave 0 to 50 in 10 seconds. Nonetheless, a great poser's car for a 23 year old. However, the 9:1 compression ratio came with its problems. It blew several gaskets over the years and gave me plenty of practice in stripping down a head. Most notably, I had sold it and arranged for the buyer to pick it up the next day when she decided to blow yet another gasket. However, by that time I had learnt to carry a spare for emergencies and was able to do the change in 3 hours and to pass the car on to a new 23 year old poser.

As well as a spare gasket, a lump hammer appeared to be another important piece of the kit. At one stage I must have engaged with a pot hole and ended up with a bent steering shaft so the hammer had to be used for a bit of realignment. I also had an unfortunate encounter with the rear end of another car when we both came to an unexpected stop half way round a roundabout. Anyone who understands the bonnet

hinge arrangements for the Triumphs of that era will understand how a shunt can affect the fidelity of the bonnet closure. So off to the middle of a remote wooded area with the lump hammer to thump away at the support tubes for more realignment.

I had the Spitfire for several years and over that time I met the girl who was to become my wife, we married, set up home and our first was born. At which point I realised that it was all a bit unsuitable for my new more stable lifestyle as a family man. So it was with great regret that I parted with my precious car. But I remained loyal to the Triumph line and found another two tone Herald with enough space to mount a baby seat - and then another.

I loved that Spitfire, she was just part of me, my constant companion, my coming of age and, as I drew the cover picture for today, I remembered every line, joint and crease - it all came back through 59 years.

In all, 37,409 Mk 2's were originally produced, of which 161 still remain in the UK, but sadly, no trace of FDD 314C is amongst them.

… Martin Horton



Many of the early Spitfire adverts featured the car alongside its legendary WW2 namesake.

However, in a break from that line of thought, this advert from 1966/7 came from a period before 'woke' had been invented. So, what better than a pretty girl in a bikini and why not feature Joyce Hoffman, the world champion surfer who dominated the women's scene. The Leyland Motor Corporation (no more Standard-Triumph) was happy to feature her in a Spitfire Mk2 ad and she certainly made a good-looking car look even better. As Joyce said "It's so me".