

# 15 Problems due to lack of use

– just like their owners, MGFs/TFs need exercise!



The MGF and TF, like all cars, can develop problems if they are not run regularly. This chapter deals with some of the common issues, and how to identify them when looking at a potential purchase.

## Seized components

The handbrake may be stuck if it has been left on. The problem usually lies with the rear callipers, and it's often more common for them to not work at all. The sliders for the brake callipers can corrode and seize, resulting in imbalanced brakes (the steering may veer to one side upon braking).

The clutch arm on the manual gearbox can seize, resulting in an inability to select gears. The solution is expensive and time-consuming, requiring the gearbox to be removed (allow 6-8 hours). Similarly, the clutch's friction plate may become stuck to the flywheel because of corrosion – this can sometimes be resolved by starting the car in gear with your foot off the clutch pedal.

The alloy road wheels can stick against the hubs, but are usually easy to free off with a large block of wood and a hammer. The brake discs are also known to seize onto the mating surface of the hub, and will require a puller to remove them (most people use a large hammer, but this can damage the bearings). Once removed, clean the mating surface on the hub.

The alternator's 8mm adjuster bolt for the auxiliary drivebelt can seize and snap if it's not regularly lubricated. If the auxiliary belt squeals when the engine is running, adjusting the tension may not be as straightforward as you would expect. Instead, remove the engine cover (the alternator is on the exhaust manifold side of the engine) and undo the alternator's mounting bolts. Lift it out and spray penetrating fluid over the adjuster bolt.



**This 8mm bolt on the alternator adjusts the tension on the drivebelt, but is often seized and will snap if turned.**

## Fluids

The steel coolant pipes underneath the car will corrode, and eventually leak coolant. Early MGF radiators seem to last three years, whereas later aluminium items are longer-lasting. If there's no coolant in the system, don't imagine that a top-up will solve the problem. The coolant will have leaked out of somewhere and, if the engine runs out of coolant when running, it will overheat.

MG Rover recommends OAT long-life anti-freeze for all K-series engines. This anti-freeze, which is a bright orange/pink colour, offers enhanced cooling qualities, a four-year change cycle, and, if it leaks, leaves a bright stain even when dry.

Driveshaft oil seals can leak (look out for a red fluid). An offside leak can contaminate the clutch. New seals should be fitted, but make sure you have the



Head gasket failure is a common problem on the MGF and TF, but uprated parts are available, and most garages can complete the work required.

TF crash panel ●50  
High level brakelight ●40  
16in multi or 11-spoke Anniversary alloy wheel ●75



A used TF front bumper costs between ●175 and ●300.



Leather seats, door cards, and other trim can be removed from a scrap car and fitted into another MGF or TF.

# 7 Fifteen minute evaluation

– walk away or stay?



## Paperwork

HPI and MoT checks (outlined in chapter five) should be conducted before you inspect an MGF or TF. The first thing to do when you arrive to view the car is actually to check the paperwork relating to it. Start with the registration certificate, making sure the owner's name and address are the same as those of the seller. You will be able to see on the front of the certificate the number of former keepers and whether it has been recorded with accident damage (this should have been detected with the HPI check, of course). Look inside the registration certificate for the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and make sure that this matches that on the car. The VIN tag is displayed below the windscreen, on the top of the dashboard (left side of the car), and there's a separate VIN plate underneath the bonnet, attached to the bodywork.



**The most obvious VIN plate is found behind the base of the windscreen on the left side of the MGF and TF.**

## Exterior checks

Examine the sides of the car, looking for rippled panels and differences in paintwork indicating resprays and accident damage. Check the panel gaps to see if any parts have been replaced. Look at the paintwork from different angles to help spot scratches, different shades of paint, and dents. The MGF/TF's panels are flimsy, so dents are common.

## Hidden damage

Open the bonnet and look at the inner wings and chassis legs for signs of damage. If they are creased, the car has probably been involved in an accident, and, whilst the exterior may look straight, the subframe, suspension and wheels may not be. Ask more questions and be prepared to leave at this point, especially if the car is being advertised as being in good condition. Similarly, look inside the boot (remove the moulded carpet) for signs of crash damage.



**Open the boot, remove the moulded carpet, and look for signs of crash damage.**

## Keys and alarms

The alarm and immobiliser can become

# 9 Serious evaluation

– 60 minutes for years of enjoyment



Score each section using the boxes as follows: 4 = excellent; 3 = good; 2 = average; 1 = poor. The totting up procedure is detailed at the end of the chapter. Be realistic in your marking!

The points outlined in chapters seven and eight now need to be explored further, plus there are additional areas of the MGF/TF that should be inspected. This chapter covers an in-depth inspection of an MGF or TF, outlining where to look, what to look for, and how any problems should be fixed (plus approximate costs involved).

## Safe inspection

Don't take any risks when inspecting an MGF/TF. When checking underneath the car, make sure it's well supported on axle stands. Never work underneath a car that's supported only on a jack. Make sure the wheels on the ground are chocked to prevent the car moving (even if the handbrake is on and first gear selected).

## Rust

The MGF/TF hasn't become as much of a rot box as its predecessors, including the MGB and Midget, but there are many areas to inspect for corrosion. Most of the rot spots are cosmetic – around wheelarches, the side air ducts, and where the bumpers meet the bodywork. Water and dirt can easily get into the sills via the front wheelarches, where the liner provides inadequate protection; so look for dirt around the liner. Check that the sills aren't rusty, and look for the drain holes – thin holes at the front and rear where the seams meet. Poke a small screwdriver into them to check they aren't blocked.

Suspension components, including the front subframe and front lower arms, can corrode, and, whilst lower arms are available new for around ●75, front subframes are not (budget for around ●90 for a secondhand subframe).

Other components that can corrode include the exhaust system, particularly where the catalytic converter is fitted.

4 3 2 1



**Rust-covered fittings for the exhaust's catalytic converter can shear, and may require drilling out.**



**Dirt gets trapped inside the rear of the front wheelarch, and escapes into the sill, resulting in corrosion.**

## Crash repairs 4 3 2 1

Minor front-end damage (the sort that

**If the central locking repeatedly clicks when the doors are locked/unlocked, one of the solenoids is due for renewal. Do it before it fails, otherwise the door won't open!**

the door locks can fail (it starts to click repeatedly when locking/unlocking the doors), leaving a door unopenable.

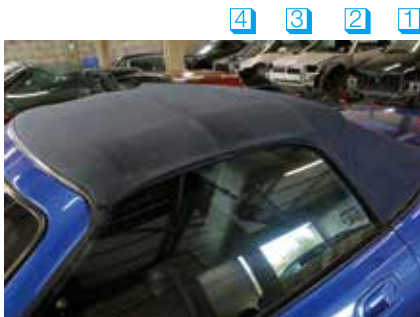
The windscreen wipers are operated by a single motor, via two link bars that are attached by ball joints. The ball joints can wear and the mechanism has to be renewed (available from most specialists for around ●50 and the job takes around two hours to complete).



### Collectible points

Limited edition models will demand a higher price, but only if they're in original condition or fitted with the correct parts. See chapter four for further details on which parts were fitted to specific models.

**If you're buying a limited edition model, make sure it is fitted with the correct parts, especially if it has a high price tag.**



4 3 2 1

### Test drive

If the MGF/TF is road legal, a test drive is essential to ascertaining whether there are any problems (make sure you have insurance – see chapter five for details on short-term policies). Take your time when test driving, making sure the gear

4 3 2 1



**Providing the MGF/TF is roadworthy, a test drive is essential to check the suspension, brakes, clutch, gearbox and engine.**