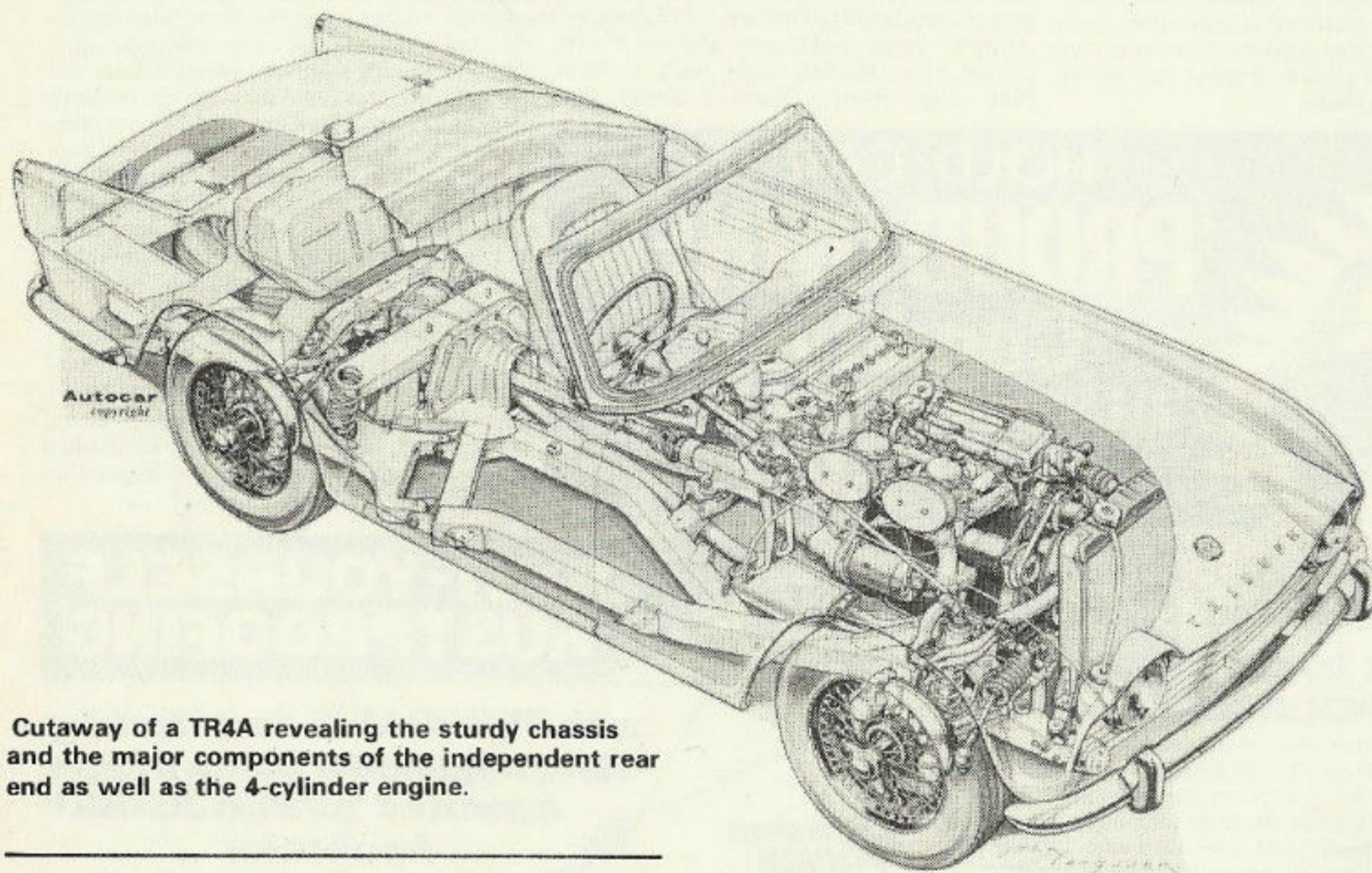


Triumph TR 4A, 5 & 6



Cutaway of a TR4A revealing the sturdy chassis and the major components of the independent rear end as well as the 4-cylinder engine.

Post-1965 TRs lost the simplicity of the early models. Jeremy Coulter investigates and helps you buy a good one

THE development and history of the Triumph TRs has been too well chronicled in the pages of this magazine (see TR Supplement, September 1980) for it to be necessary to recount it once again. Suffice it to say that in 1965, the live-axled TR4, which was developed from the TR2, 3 and 3A was superseded by the independently rear sprung TR4A. The independent suspension design persisted on the TR5 and TR6 until the last TR6 rolled from the production line in 1976 — to be replaced by the TR7 of totally different design. The 4A had the same basic 4-cylinder engine as the TR3 but the TR5 saw the introduction of the 6-cylinder 2500cc power unit. Those 5s and 6s sold in the UK were equipped with Lucas fuel injection but cars for export were de-toxed and had carburettors; the TR250 and TR6 Carburettor respectively. Both the TR4A and the TR5 shared the same Michelotti-styled body-shell, but the TR6 was re-styled and given a much smoother profile by Karmann. Of all the TRs, the 5 was the most powerful; the early 6s up to 1972 were only slightly less quick with 150bhp on tap, but after that the engines were de-tuned and, until their demise, the TR6 produced only some 125bhp.

The TR is a very strong and resilient car that can put up with considerable maltreatment and

neglect. Unfortunately in the past, this has been exactly the treatment meted out by many TR owners, although recently the situation has changed for the better. Often a TR will keep going when it really shouldn't and when many lesser machines have fallen by the wayside. The implications of this for the prospective TR owner are that many of the machines under consideration will be in distinctly bad condition — usually body and chassis problems rather than engine or transmission. With any TR it is the body and chassis condition that are of fundamental importance as both are time-consuming and often very expensive to repair, whereas mechanical work is usually much more straightforward. So, if you absolutely must buy a TR in imperfect condition, try hard to get one with a sound body and a suspect engine/transmission, rather than vice-versa. You will save yourself a lot of heartache and expense. When considering any car — but particularly a TR, examine it thoroughly and *then* drive it. Resist the temptation to drive it first as this is likely to blind you to the car's real faults.

The umbrella title of this article includes three TRs and there are naturally some points that apply specifically to one car; however, there are just as many areas of common ground which is not really surprising, bearing in mind the close relationship of all the models.

Body and chassis

The wings on the 4A, 5 and 6 are all rather susceptible to rust so check these areas first. Make sure before going any further that the wings are in fact steel — indeed at this point check the bonnet and boot as well as it's possible that a previous owner has fitted glass fibre

replacements due to the unavailability or expense of the real thing. The wing tops are points to watch, as are the rear edges at each door post joint. The headlight surrounds on TR6s are vulnerable and water tends to run down the wing and start more rot both at the joint between the front wing and the valance, and at the bottom corner of each wing.

The rear wings also tend to decay along the tops, and especially down each rear door post joint — often an indication that the door post itself is rotting. Luckily the front and rear wings are bolt-on and in theory are easily detachable, but this often is not the case as the bolts tend to rust solid. A soaking in penetrating oil sometimes does the trick, otherwise you will have to resort to drilling the bolts out or grinding off the heads. However, it is no real use bolting new outer wings to rusted inner wings, so check these sections too as closely as you can.

The 4A bonnet sometimes starts to decay along the front lip and around the hinges — the TR6 bonnet should also be checked in the latter respect, especially around the hinge mountings as these can be strained if the hinges themselves are inadequately lubricated. In the engine bay, some points to watch are the condition of the inner wings at the front, the battery box, and the surrounding bulkhead.

Doors and roof

On all models, the doors can rot at the rear edge and along the top, adjacent to the weather strip. Blockage of the drain holes inside each door can lead to decay along the base, tending to concentrate at the rear corner. TR6s often seem to go around the keyhole which is located separately from the handle, but this is not the case on cars with the integral keyhole and handle.

Next, note the condition of the sills, especially the rearward sections, and then move inside the car and lift the carpets so that the inner sills and floorpan can be examined. The condition of the door posts should be suspected if the wings are poor; with the doors half open, examine each rear post, particularly the bottom corner, and then check the front post around the hinges and doorstop. In this position, you can also examine the leading edge of each door.

At the rear of the 4A and 5, note the condition of the boot lip — a common place for rust, especially around the handle. Inside the boot, on all models, check the spare wheel well, the inner wings and the wheel arches.

This really only leaves the windscreen and roof; check the screen surround for rust, particularly behind the weather seals. Although screens and surrounds can be had fairly easily, more than anything they are a pain to remove and fit so it's worth avoiding problems. At this stage, wind both windows up and down a few times to make sure that the mechanism is satisfactory and that the joint between each window and screen pillar is at least reasonable. The pillarless windows of the 4A, 5 and 6 were never particularly stable, but if you find one that rocks by an excessive amount when fully raised, it probably indicates a rotted window carrier.

The type of roof fitted to a TR depends on the model. The 4A and 5 were available with either a full soft-top or with the excellent "Surrey Top". A few TR6s are around with owner-fitted Surreys but somehow they don't look quite right. The TR6 was made with either a full hard-top or a soft-top. All models may at sometime have been fitted with a proprietary glass fibre lid. It is a matter of personal preference but on the 4A and 5, the Surrey has much to recommend it because in reasonable weather (or depending on your hardiness!) the detachable panel can quickly be