

# Our cars

## For the past six months, T&CC has been following the rebuild of the MGA roadster featured on the Channel 4 programme *The Motor Show*

Simon Robinson is adamant that MGAs were never really mass-produced cars and that there were considerable differences between individual cars, so much so, he claims, that overall body lengths might vary by as much as three quarters of an inch. The implication was that, even for a man of Simon's calibre, the setting up of the A and B posts, the hanging of the doors and the setting of the door gaps was a demanding and time-consuming job requiring a lot of careful work. Time, regrettably, was what we were short of!

Remembering that this vital centre section and the front and rear assemblies had to be joined up accurately it was easy to see why the enthusiastic amateur or indeed the craftsman unfamiliar with the A, might run into difficulty over this aspect of the restoration and might castigate the supplier of pattern parts, claiming that the parts were wrong. According to Simon there is no easy way — things

have to be moved about in all three planes until the relationship is right, and this decision should not be taken until the door, dash and body rails are in place all round the cockpit.

Some of the difficulty that we encountered in this area is on film. I'm glad that *The Motor Show* has decided to record and, I suppose, to use sequences such as this, showing that even with good workshop facilities and equipment and with considerable human resources of skill and experience, restoration can prove to be both difficult and exacting.

Most of the final filming was concerned with the engine but with the current state of the body, however, Tony was featured displaying his upholstery and trim skills in the manufacture of a tonneau cover.


A nice feature of the day's work was that two students, Piers Tippet and Peter Snell, who had both been involved quite heavily with the A were interviewed in front of the camera. Piers is an MGA owner and consequently many of the difficulties which we have encountered with 8568 BT must have struck familiar chords in his experience. Peter sees his restoration project as a challenge; he has "a very rusty Spitfire" (his words) and it is a point of honour between him and his family that

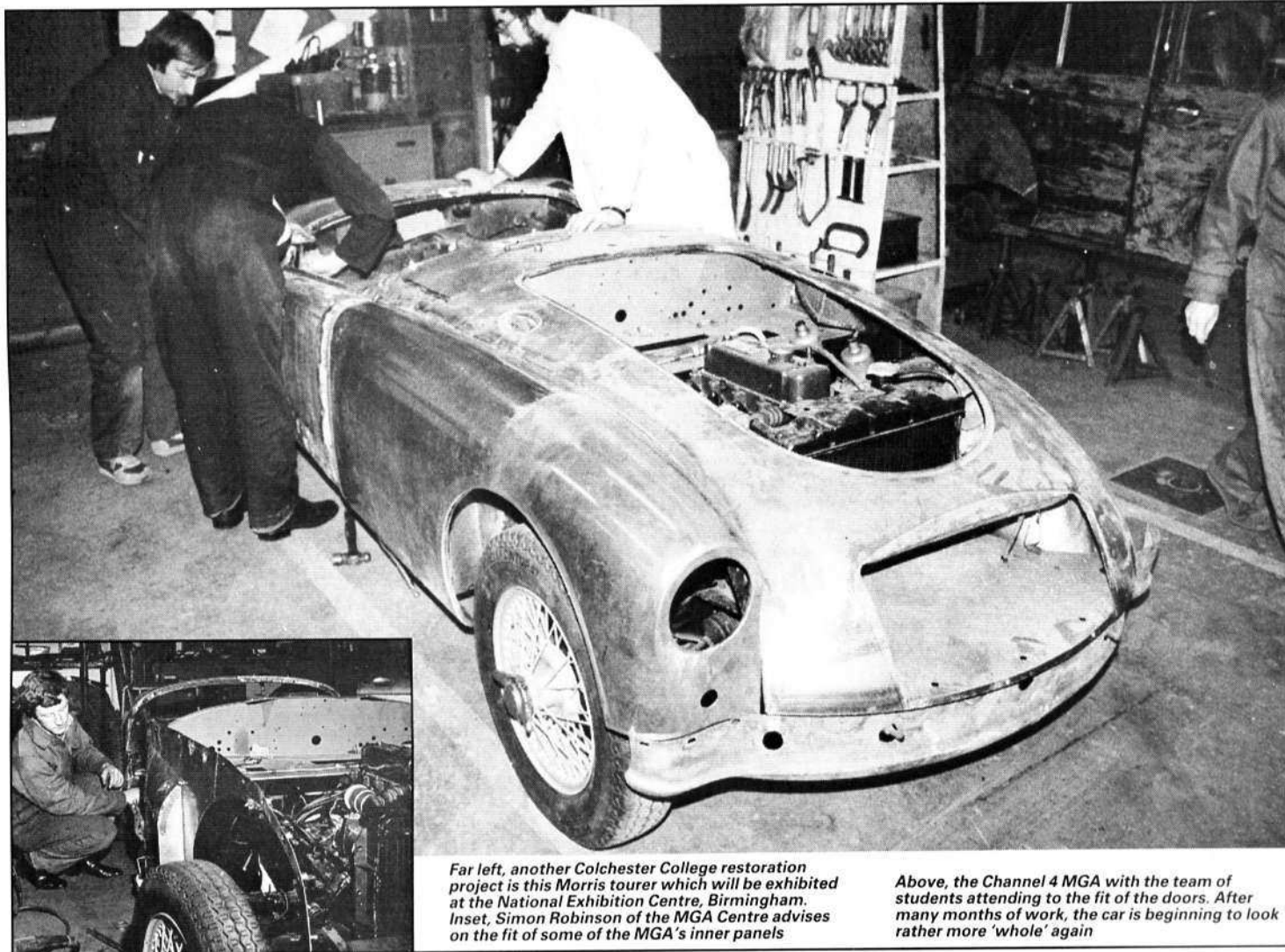
he completes it in order to rid them of an eyesore!

By the time filming was completed I felt that we who work in the school of automobile engineering had become the friends of the film crew of which we had at first stood in awe. Despite the panics and alarms it has been a good experience.

Now without the pressure of meeting filming dates, the work on the car goes on. Since filming was completed our plumbers' shop (and let's not denigrate plumbing — it's a highly skilled trade) have made up some very good-looking seat frames from electrical conduit to replace the incorrect seats which were merely sitting on the floor of the car when it first arrived here. These seats should shortly be going to Connolly to be re-upholstered.

I was very pleased to make contact over the telephone with the previous owner of the car who has quite a story to tell of it. I am looking forward to meeting him when I collect from him a MkII grille to replace the incorrect one with which the car came.

The manufacture of carpets by Tony's Monday class is now almost complete and we are moving towards the point where the welding of the body sections is done. The time for welding will be minute in relation to the setting up time. I'll keep you posted of further progress. 



Far left, another Colchester College restoration project is this Morris tourer which will be exhibited at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. Inset, Simon Robinson of the MGA Centre advises on the fit of some of the MGA's inner panels

Above, the Channel 4 MGA with the team of students attending to the fit of the doors. After many months of work, the car is beginning to look rather more 'whole' again