

Our Classics

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Products
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With a fresh set of sills and a year's MoT, all that remained was for **Chris Hope** to retrieve his Toyota MR2 from Norfolk – easy enough, right?

Chris Hope
Eighties Wedge
Lover

MY CARS:

► 1989 Toyota MR2 Mk1



For my last *Our Cars* update, I'd left my Toyota MR2 over in Norfolk in the capable hands of Mark Wain, a former classic car restorer turned LPG conversion specialist. Although 'gassing' my mid-engined sports car would certainly make for an interesting little experiment, that's not what I had in mind. No, I was there to call on Mark's skills of bending and welding metal.

I've learnt to my cost that while Eighties body kits do suit cars such as my wedge, they also do a fantastic job of disguising corrosion – patches weren't going to work, which meant both sills would need replacing. In addition, it required some extensive work to fabricate new rear-end corners (as they'd completely disintegrated).

Luckily, this is just the sort of thing that Mark is good at and after a few days work my MR2 was solid once again. Mark was even kind enough to share some of his expertise, providing me with a crash course in MIG welding. You'd think that sharing the workload would make his life easier, but being a novice I seriously doubt it – I'm guessing that cleaning up all those high spots and welding splats will have taken a while, all the more reason to be grateful that Mark let me have a go at mending my own car.

ANOTHER MOT

With the rotten sills taken care of, all that remained was to put the MR2 through its first MoT test with me as its owner. Thankfully, the remaining hurdles were minor in comparison. First, the side skirts needed to go back on: as Mark had made the sills from scratch, fresh holes would need to be drilled in so that the plastic finishers could be screwed back in to place. I also needed to replace one of the front anti-roll bar links, which had developed an unwelcome level of play. TCB performance parts were able to supply the genuine Toyota item, priced £47.

My MR2 passed its MoT in early December, so all I had to do now was retrieve it from Mark's workshop in Aylsham. Easier said than done...

An initial attempt to drive over and collect my motor was met with failure due to the adverse weather conditions: within the space

of five minutes the A11 had been transformed into a winter wonderland. Being resolute, I forged ahead but found that the traffic on the A47 ringroad around Norwich had ground to a halt. It pained me to admit it, but the sensible thing was simply to turn around and head back home to Peterborough.

For the second try, I relied on public transport to deliver me safely into Norwich. Trains going down to Kings Cross were still sporadic at best, but thankfully were running to a timetable going east, where the snow had finally begun to melt. I landed in Aylsham on a cool Friday afternoon and, after not seeing my MR2 for the better part of a month, was thoroughly looking forward to the journey home.

BRINGING IT HOME

Absence certainly makes the heart grow fonder – taking the wheel for the first time in a month made me realise how much I'd missed my machine. The modern three-pot hatchback I've been driving until now simply doesn't compare. One of this car's biggest appeals is the accuracy of

its handling and the way it immediately pounces on any driver input. It's a joy to once again be behind the wheel of something that's so sharp, positive and genuinely engaging.

It was a struggle to stop myself gunning it – the MR2 is a high-revving delight and its siren-like shriek as it tips past 5000rpm (that's when the variable intake kicks in), has been sorely missed. But a lingering binding brake issue was a cause to show restraint.

The car drives fine, but on prolonged journeys the nearside rear disc gets hot and begins to squeak and squeal in protest. I can't imagine that leaving the car stood for a month has helped the situation, so I was keen to be as sympathetic as possible and allowed plenty of stops along the way to give the discs a chance to cool down.

My guess is a sticky caliper piston, but I'll be dropping the car off at my local garage this week, where they can put the MR2 up on a ramp and offer a more thorough assessment of what needs sorting. After going to the trouble of adding fresh metal to my sports car, I definitely want it fighting fit for the daily commute. **CCB**



Work in progress – here's one of the sills' rear-end corners being made up from scratch.



Driving back from Norwich to Peterborough, the MR2 needed regular stops due to a binding brake issue (which will hopefully be cured by my next instalment).



I'm very pleased with the job that Mark from WCRLPG has done in such a relatively short space of time.