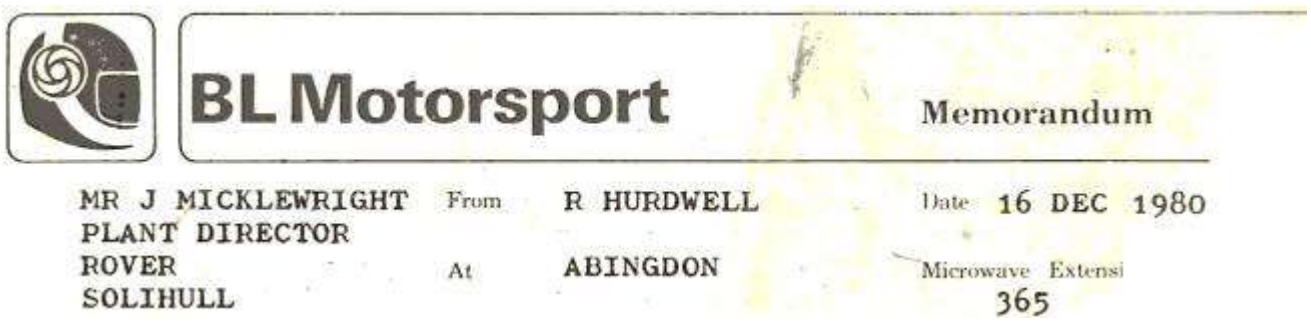
RHD HOME MARKET TR8 NWK988W – BACK ON THE MAINLAND

I've known about this RHD TR8 for about 30 years or so after an ex-manager at Solihull gave me a collection of some memos and other documentation on the car when I was originally using Connew.com and then later TR8.com as TR8 websites.

BL MOTORSPORT MEMO

Dated Dec 16th 1980 detailing some of the many changes made to the car; the majority if not all of these changes are still on the car plus a few more.



BL Motorsport Memorandum

MR J MICKLEWRIGHT
PLANT DIRECTOR
ROVER
SOLIHULL

From R HURDWELL
At ABINGDON

Date 16 DEC 1980
Microwave Extensi
365

CC: MR G OWEN

SOLIHULL

Fi: MR J DAVENPORT, MR D WOOD

TR8 MODIFICATIONS

PURPOSE

A green TR8 NWK988W from Solihull has been subject to both engine and suspension modifications at B L Motorsport, Abingdon. The purpose of this was to present alternative engine and chassis specifications for the future UK and European Sports Car Market.

ENGINE MODIFICATIONS

All following modifications were carried out on a standard TR8 V8 unit as fitted in test vehicle.

1. Compression ratio raised from 8.13:1 to 9.35:1 by fitting current SD1 V8 pistons.
2. Standard camshaft replaced by 'WL9' Motorsport camshaft and valve spring assemblies.
3. Zenith-Stromberg carburettor fitted with alternative fuel control needle to suit 'WL9' camshaft.

The engine will be tested on the rolling road in Jan when it returns to Abingdon with more running-in completed.

CHASSIS M0DIFICATIONS

The following modifications have been carried out so far and are felt to have improved the car. Final ‘tuning’ of our proposed specification will be made in Jan 1981 after initial comments from Solihull test mileage.

FRONT BRAKES

A Ventilated Brake Disc Kit was fitted using Ferodo DS11 pads this has improved the standard braking significantly and is virtually fade-free from repeated high-speed stops. The kit was developed by Brian Owen at Abingdon in conjunction with John Moore at Automotive Products (Racing) Leamington.

Automotive Products would be able to supply in quantity.

These brakes will only fit the car with Alloy wheels.

FRONT SPOILER

A rally TR7 V8 spoiler was fitted, with small modifications to fit under the bumper. This is a GRP moulding made for us by Albert Coates in John Cooper’s ‘Plastics Development’ area at Solihull.

The spoiler has proved very robust, but for extra durability a flexible polyurethane moulding was planned for the (now scrapped) 1981 rally TR8.

Wind tunnel testing at MIRA during rally car development indicated that this spoiler should reduce front lift by between 10 and 30%. This assists straight line and cross wind stability which was found to be a problem. Engine cooling should also be improved.

FRONT SPRINGS

These were as set up for the 1979 Donington Rallysprint cars i.e.TKC 3088 (blue) springs lowered 25 mm by heating one coil. Actual spring specification will be established by removal and measurement in Jan. A properly made and heat-treated pair will be made for final presentation. A further 10 mm reduction of trim height is envisaged for this final presentation.

FRONT DAMPER INSERTS

The standard car seems to suffer from under damping especially on rebound. This causes a large amount of pitch over bumps even on ‘smooth’ motorways and causes large variation of tyre/ ground contact force.

Dampers with approximately 25% more bump and 50% more rebound £force were considered but since we had already units with 25 and 100% extra these have been fitted at present. Armstrong are willing to make a set of trial units to our specification.

FRONT SUSPENSION

The standard car suffers badly from nosedive under braking which is uncomfortable, reduces braking stability and causes large variations in headlight range. To reduce this an extra packing piece UKC 9883 is fitted between roll bar clamp ~ sub frame. The standard bolt is long enough to allow this. UKC 9883 does not appear in our parts

lists but seems to be £fitted on the cars. The proposed extra reduction in trim height will further reduce brake dive.

The standard car also suffers badly from compliance in the track control arm/roll bar joint. To reduce TCA movement and caster change under braking, a hard polypropylene bush is used behind the TCA. This is similar to the standard part UKC 208 but with approximately 70 shore hardness. This modification also greatly assists straight-line stability as there is considerable fore/aft motion of the wheel over bumps.

Rally experience shows that a completely revised joint giving far less compliance would provide very significant improvements in handling and braking. It is not anticipated that this would give a large increase in road noise transmitted to the body since there is already rubber in the roll bar and TCA transmission paths to the sub frame, which itself is rubber mounted to the body.

STEERING

No changes have been made in this area but bump steer checks will be carried out before final presentation. My personal impression of the steering is that it gives a very good balance between steering effort and feel which suits the car well. Steering ratio is good for road use.

Congratulations to whoever developed this.

REAR SPRINGS

The first set of springs tried were TKC 2404 lowered by approximately 25 mm. These worked well but have settled further and given problems of bottoming on the bump stops.

The springs originally fitted were then lowered by 25 mm, and subsequently by a further 12 mm. These seem to have a higher rate than the first set but the MG closure has temporarily left us without testing facilities.

As with the Front Springs a properly made and heat-treated pair of springs will be fitted for final evaluation.

REAR SHOCK ABSORBERS

The standard units seem to be about right on bump setting but, as the front, lack rebound capacity. Some adjustable units have been fitted to the rear and are set to give a good compromise between ride and handling.

The bump setting at the rear has a very great effect on ride comfort, the occupants being close to the rear axle and any large increase over standard bump makes the ride harsh.

Armstrong are willing to make a set of trial units, testing the adjustable units to arrive at the required setting.

REAR SUSPENSION

To reduce compliance (and hence steer and tramp) the ‘windowed’ lower link bush has been replaced by standard Dolomite and

TR7 Part 149827. The 4 upper link bushes have been replaced

by Motorsport tuning parts for Dolomite – Part No STR 0018.

These bushes are similar to the standard bush but with shore hardness increased from 45 to approx. 65-70.

Stiffening the bushes does not seem to give an unacceptable

increase in transmitted noise – especially in this soft top version.

The mounting in the body for the lower trailing link has been raised by 25 mm. This considerably reduces the rear end 'squat' which is very evident on acceleration in the standard car. Traction is considerably improved and the standard tendency for axle tramp is reduced.

REAR BRAKES

Alternative brake lining material (VG 95) was fitted to reduce fade. This material is readily available from Ferodo.

TYRES

The car was fitted with 185-70/13 Goodyear tyres. These do not give particularly good grip, especially in the wet. From our experience with Michelin TRX tyres these can give improved ride as well as cornering power. The ride properties of the tyre would help to counterbalance any extra harshness from stiffer suspension. The extra handling performance will enhance the car's already high cornering power and make it safer.

John Re at Canley has or will have some fabricated wheels to try TRX tyres on a TR7 but they may not fit on the ventilated brake hubs. Michelin are to provide some suitable wheels and tyres in late Jan for test purposes.

Contact at Michelin – Dave Taylor (0782 48101 Ext 241).

Richard Hurdwell Engineering Liaison

RH/AM

The Team at BL MOTORSPORT ABINGDON who worked on the car were

The engine was modified by Development Engineer Cliff Humphreys

From a standard 10E US spec engine 8.13:1, Increased compression to 9:35:1 added BL MOTORSPORT WL9 camshaft modified Stromberg's and further in line modifications to increase performance.

The suspension was modified by Development Engineer Richard Hurdwell

Rally front spoiler, Front vented disks, rear brakes improved, lowered and strengthened suspension throughout.

Both engineers were part of Tony Ponds works rally team for 1980. This is the only road going TR8 ever worked on by the works team at Abingdon. Given the further development they made on the car (right up to not long before the car was sold at Measham in September 1981- later development work because it was Richard Hurdwell's car at the time so unofficially it continued a bit) it's probably true to say the car is the most advanced for the future TR8 BL ever made..

To quote Rex Holford

"From the attached documents (BL MOTORSPORT memo) You will see that RHD TR8 NWK988W has been modified, but in such a way that it would be the forerunner of the 1982 spec cars"

ROUND BRITAIN RALLY 1980

The car was used by the factory on the Round Britain Rally in 1980 along with a Silver TR8 MHP404V. At the time it was done there had been no decision to not launch in the UK and it was still an active project. The tour was through the Triumph Club in London and it was setting off on a Friday night up to "John O'Groats" then "Lands' End" and back to London on the Sunday night. It was done with the intention

of getting some publicity for the RHD TR8 yet to be launched in the UK, and for club members to see the cars.

NWK 988W Owners and continued history

At the time I talked to the ex-manager no one was sure where it was and or went after it was sold at the Measham auctions in 1981. Richard Hurdwell told me he wanted to buy the car himself but at 12K it was sadly outside his budget at the time. NWK988W appears a short way into this video of Measham Auctions at about 0.26
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrOgDHTXoSY
It wasn't until about 10 years or so later, I found out it was on the IOM with Andy McClements (Owned for 38 years) of Colby an amateur Rally Driver, who also kept a collection of interesting sporting cars. He sadly died in 2015 and his family sent the car to the local garage to get it running again ready for sale.

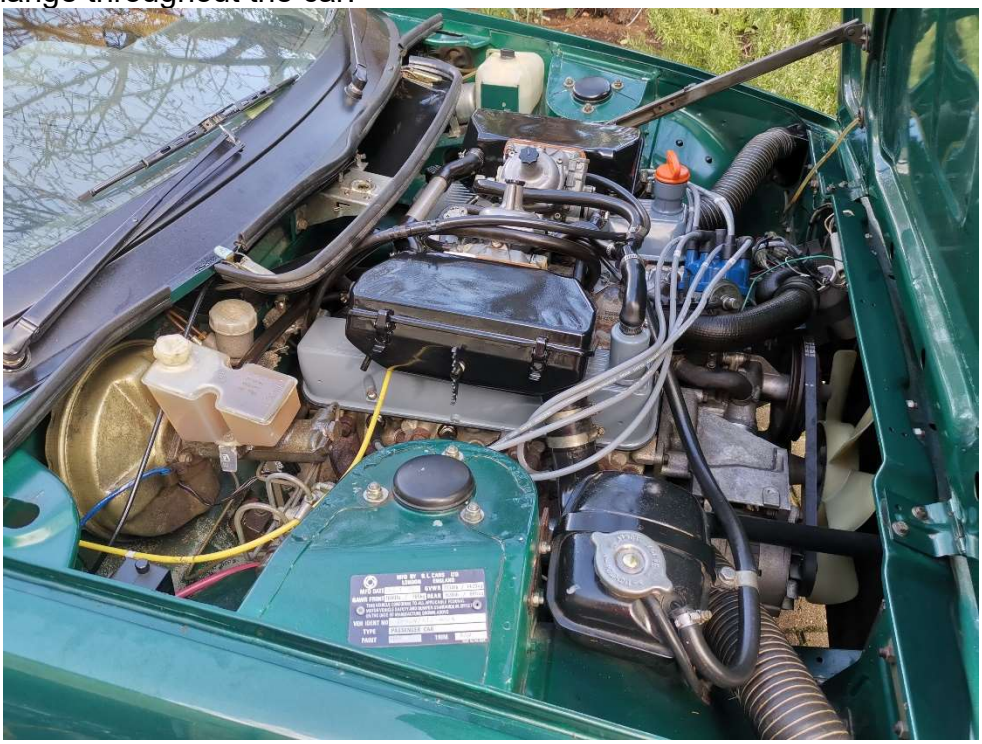
There was a period of time where I understand the family wanted Andy's car collection to go as a job lot, however that wasn't to be. The family then approached Mervyn Johnston in Co Fermanagh N.I.to ask for help in selling the car. Mervyn too was a good Rally Driver (Mostly Mini Coopers) and frequently stayed with Andy during rallies on the IOM as they were close friends. In the end Mervyn bought the car himself 28/10/19 and took the car home to Northern Ireland (Owned for 1.3 years). Sadly, he was struck down by illness not long after getting the car so it wasn't driven for another year and a bit before being sold to William John Ferguson (Billy) (Owned for 1.1 years) 12/2/21 who had been told about the car. Billy being 86 found the car difficult to get in and out of so he put the car up for sale in his local auction,

essentially a farmer's auction in a remote part of N.I. Fortunately for me as part of my interest in TR8's I run various programmes that search out TR8's for sale and this one came up in my auto feed. So, on 19/3/22 the car came into my possession.

Because I've known its history and spoke to the ex-manager at Solihull at length many years ago, I already knew quite a lot about the car. A small part of that in the memo – above - (registration number I removed on the web site) I posted on the web site I had at the time, needless to say it was "borrowed" and has appeared in a lot of places since! Richard Hurdwell who worked on the car is fortunately still alive and I've been lucky enough to be able to talk to him at length about the car. Once the car is recommissioned properly, I have arranged to go down to Oxford to let him drive the car again as it was sort of used as his company car to allow him to make running suspension improvements as he drove the car.

Currently the car is being worked through replacing as needed as it has essentially been unloved with no to any maintenance for many years, less the wheels, which were powder coated to such a thick level I had to use blocks of wood, large

hammers, and driving the car with wheel nuts loose to break the wheels free. Its now running on a set of 81 wheels that actually go on and off the car in an experimental metallic yellow/gold! Just because I sort of like the Colin Chapman look for green cars. May go back to the original wheels once they have been sorted, who knows. For now, there is a lot of work still to do “if” I intend to get it out and about this summer, and I do!
Many parts have been reconditioned already, new parts fitted where needed, full fluids change throughout the car.



A full paint job has been booked given while at a distance the paint looks great, close up it isn’t, plus it possibly has 6 different shades of GREEN currently on the car!