

## Triumphs UNICORNS better known as the RHD TR8

This article has been compiled with help and information from a number of people including Garry Owen the manager at Canley responsible for the RHD TR8's, Richard Hurdwell suspension engineer at Abingdon who modified NWK988W, and other people closely connected to the RHD TR8 project 1980/1981, who are still with us in 2022. So, my sincere thanks to them, as well as Brian Ridley-Jones TR8 Registrar TRDC and many others who have helped along the way. Their points of view may be different to others and after 40 plus years, memories are not as agile as they once were. Stories from different departments have in some cases not always fully aligned. Where that has happened, I have tried to stay with the areas where there was agreement and or base/documented facts match. Stories along the way are just that, stories that may or may not be fully accurate. Along with supporting factory documentation and surviving cars this forms the core and basis of this article.

The RHD TR8 has always been a bit of a mystery, did they exist, or didn't they? The Short answer is yes. Exactly 22 of them built that way initially, and they were all designated as RHD HOMEMARKET pre-production, methods build and pilot production. No actual final production cars were built. Three RHD EXP cars, and around another 5 converted from USA/CAN LHD to RHD to make testing easier on UK roads gives a grand total of 30+/-.

The story starts in 1978 at Speke in Liverpool. The decision to make the RHD TR8's was made as part of the decision to move production from Speke to Canley. Unfortunately, lots of issues were going on at the time and BL was in total chaos, not to mention losing a lot of money. The press blamed the unions, and while there were problems, the main issues appear to have been with senior management at board level.

When the TR7/8 was moved to Canley there were a considerable number of modifications to be incorporated into the build. Management knew there would be serious problems with the labour force once they knew of the TR7/8 production move, so any upgrades/new versions were put on hold until after the move. The move also meant major issues with component supplies in both quality and supply. The cars built at Speke had more than their fair share of quality issues, some were down to engineering issues, others poor decision making on specification and build quality. Speke at the time had a poor reputation and certainly with Triumph, the main reason for being there, was government pressure. So, with poor sales the decision was made to close Speke and move to Canley. Early TR8's came down from Speke that had been used for testing but many were in a very poor state, so were destroyed. A handful did continue to be used as test cars and are well known now. Quite a number of the supposedly destroyed cars have turned up over the years, so somewhere along the way they slipped out of the back door. All were mostly originally LHD hard top TR8's with a few convertibles, possibly ACT early convertible hand-built versions. Parts from these cars when they were broken up did end up being reused so you may find a 1977 window being used on a later test car.

Canley in 1979 produced the first production TR7 convertibles with a limited number of LHD TR8's for the USA and Canada. It wasn't until 1980 that production got back on track and LHD TR8's started being produced in any numbers, in this case around 2000+/-.

## 1<sup>st</sup> RHD TR8 Silver MHP404V

Chassis	No	Body	Built	Colour	Trim	Reg Now	Engine
TPADV7AT	212246	BBP 202271	24-Apr- 80	PLATINUM SILVER	RAF	MHP404V	10E00609

Early 1980 on April 24th the first **PRE-PRODUCTION** RHD TR8 was built off line at Canley. A Platinum Silver car (MHP404V – TPADV7AT 212246) with unusually the grey stripe trim that was to later go into the TR7 Spider special edition. LHD carpets were used as the heel protector is on the other side. At the time it was normal to mix old and new model year components especially on pre-production cars hence the interior.



Note the lack of laurel above the 3.5 Litre. These strangely enough were made by another company, so were often missing from some cars due to supply issues. The last built LHD TR8 doesn't have one.

Someone with memories of the first RHD TR8 is Kevin Jones who in 1980 was one of the last Triumph apprentices and in later years became better known as the public face of MG Rover press and publicity. "I helped build the first RHD TR8" Jones recalls adding with crystal-clear recollection that the silver car was registration number MHP404V and was given on completion to Group Manufacturing Director Brian Fox who later drove the car with Transport manager Bob Train in the Club Triumph Round Britain Reliability Run organised by Club Triumph in October 1980.

MHP404V was essentially built off line from a RHD shell and a pile of USA TR8 parts. EGR, Emissions and other US specific parts were removed and holes blocked off with whatever came to hand. New wiring sections and various other RHD modifications were made to the car including bending the battery tray to make access easier to the rear plug. The EGR valve here looks to be partly still in place presumably to block off the hole. In NWK988W a bolt is used to block the same hole.



A lot was learned from building and driving the 1<sup>st</sup> RHD TR8. In particular the belief the car could be further improved performance and suspension wise. More so as MHP404V was running in effect a US spec engine with low compression pistons along with USA soft suspension. Richard Hurdwell asked for a standard TR8, which at that time was MHP404V, to be brought down to Abingdon for a day for him to compare what he had done to NWK988W. There was a noticeable difference in ride/handling.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> RHD TR8 Green NWK988W

Chassis	No	Body	Built	Colour	Trim	Reg Now	Engine
TPADV7AT	214004	CHP 300005	29-Jul- 80	POSEIDON GREEN	AAM	NWK988W	10E00655

So, July 29<sup>th</sup> a second **PRE-PRODUCTION** RHD TR8 was built. A Poseidon Green car (NWK988W – TPADV7AT 214004) but this time with the brand new 1981 model year square door lock trim fitted inside. On the outside it had the new 1981 model year enamel nose badge, push button boot lock along with a colour coded hood in tan. Plant management made the decision to test out what could be done with the RHD TR8 performance and handling wise, so Gary Owen Triumph RHD TR8 Manager, was tasked with getting BL Motorsport at Abingdon to see what they could do with the car.

Another story is that Triumph Plant Director John Micklewright really wanted to beat Group Manufacturing Director Brain Fox on the Round Britain Reliability Run October 1980 (Club Triumph). As not beating him wasn't an option for him, he sent Gary Owen Triumph RHD TR8 Manager to BL Motorsport at Abingdon with the car, to make sure they made his TR8 the faster car. That he certainly got; being first through all the check points. Plus, the car had the bonus of the brand-new W registration plate and the brand-new 1981 model year interior and exterior which he had probably intended to have as well! There was always friendly rivalry and one-upmanship between departments.

No wonder when the cars were sold off at the Measham Auctions in September 1981, Manufacturing Director Brain Fox tried to get his hands on NWK988W to use as his own car at Longbridge. Unfortunately, he was thwarted there as well!



## PURPOSE

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

Sending the TR8 to Abingdon because plant management believed the car could be further improved, proved to be right.

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 engine modifications to increase performance.

The suspension was modified by Development Engineer Richard Hurdwell

Rally front tarmac 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 was the only road going production 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 7<sup>th</sup> August 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. In effect the very last specification RHD TR8.

One of the things learned from the 1<sup>st</sup> RHD TR8 MHP404V, namely bending the battery tray to get better access to the rear plug area, was further developed on this car with it now being cut away. This feature didn't appear on future RHD TR8's which is surprising as it really does improve access.



## ROUND BRITAIN RELIABILITY RUN OCTOBER 1980

Both cars were used by the factory on the Round Britain Rally in 1980. 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 organised 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.



Rover Triumph Plant Director John Micklewright (left) and Transport Manager Bob Train (right) having a break.





Triumph Plant Director John Micklewright and Triumph Factory Manager Gary Owen in NWK988W.

#### Works Team for the Club Triumph 1980 Round Britain Run were:

Silver TR8 MHP404V driven by Group Manufacturing Director Brian Fox and Transport Manager Bob Train. Green TR8 NWK988W driven by Rover Triumph Plant Director John Micklewright and RHD TR8 Manager Garry Owen. There was along the way friendly rivalry and competition between Brian Fox and John Micklewright. It was at that time commonplace between departments, and very much so, in the work environment which often-included elaborate practical jokes as well!

On the return from the Round Britain Reliability run NWK988W went back to BL Motorsport at Abingdon because they ran out of time and requested that, if possible, they would like to do further improvements. The tarmac rally spoiler didn't appear until late January 1981.

#### Three EXP RHD TR8's

Chassis	No	Body	Built	Colour	Trim	Reg Now
EXP	X921	BBP	1980	CARNELIAN RED	RAH	KHP573V
EXP	X923	BBP	1980	PLATINUM SILVER	JAJ	KHP574V
EXP	X925	BBP	1980	SILVER LEAF	BROWN	PVC568X

The EXP RHD TR8's were exactly as their name implies, experimental, being used by the factory as follows:

X921 - Temperature testing.

X923 - Mira test car flying quarter mile 130.43 mph.

X925 - Trim/Styling evaluation car for the future.

## Two White Methods build RHD TR8's

Chassis	No	Body	Built	Colour	Trim	Reg Now	Engine
TPADV7AA	402289	CHP 300009	19-Nov- 80	PENDELICAN WHITE	AMG	D70OGJ	20E00001
TPADV3AA	402290	CHP 300010	12-Nov- 80		AMG		21E00001

Early November 1980 the go ahead was given for two **METHODS BUILD** RHD TR8's to be built ahead of planned pilot production. These cars may have also been built at Canley I was told, despite what the chassis number says. If so, the chassis number should probably say AT, instead of AA.

Pendelican White TPADV7AA 402289 and TPADV3AA 402290 an automatic RHD TR8. There was a mistamped chassis number on the automatic of TPADV7AA but it should have been as above. Also, a mistamped body number on 402289 of CJP instead of CHP. New people unfamiliar with the RHD TR8 were being trained at this time, so that is most likely the cause as the car's purposes were very well documented.

Both cars were produced with auto choke systems as per the first two and also the US style impact sensor switches again as per the first two. They were also fitted with Lucas experimental H4 headlights the same as NWK988W. Trim was the later 1981 new trim but this time with push button dashes and white fuel light whereas NWK988W has the 1980 Style dash with orange fuel light

## 1st Batch Of 9 RHD TR8's Despatched Jan 5<sup>th</sup>, 1981, To Press Fleet Canley.

Chassis	No	Body	B Card	Colour	Trim	Reg Now	Engine
TPADV7AA	402960	CHP 300437	5 Jan 81	PENDELICAN WHITE	JMN	RDU35W	20E00004
TPADV7AA	403014	CHP 300429	5 Jan 81		JMN	PVC574W	20E00008
TPADV7AA	403024	CHP 3000??	5 Jan 81		JMN	2498TR	20E00009
TPADV7AA	403034	CHP 300424	5 Jan 81	BORDEAUX RED	AMG	ZV-11581	20E00005
TPADV7AA	403044	CHP 300505	5 Jan 81	BORDEAUX RED	AMG	WPU282W	20E00003
TPADV7AA	403054	CHP 300596	5 Jan 81	BORDEAUX RED	AMG		20E00002
TPADV7AA	403062	CHP 300527	5 Jan 81	PENDELICAN WHITE	JMN	WEL480X	20E00006
TPADV7AA	403072	CHP 300493	5 Jan 81		PERSIAN AQUA	JMN	A910PKX
TPADV7AA	403082	CHP 300492	5 Jan 81	PERSIAN AQUA	JMN	A125GPH	20E00010

The first batch of 9 **PILOT PRODUCTION** RHD TR8's was built November to early December 1980. Despite Solihull build cards "all" saying Jan 5<sup>th</sup>. This batch was built to the same exterior 1981, interior, dash specification 1980/1981 as NWK988W. So possibly that car in effect became the

methods build model for the first batch as the two white methods build cars were being built at almost the same time, most likely for the actual first RHD TR8 build at Solihull which would be the second batch. These cars I was told by a manager there at the time, were actually built at Canley despite what the chassis number says. They were apparently later sent across to Solihull?

**BRITISH MOTOR INDUSTRY HERITAGE TRUST**

Production Record Trace Certificate Number: 95/7967

**TRIUMPH TR8 CONVERTIBLE**

We have researched the records and have the following information on this vehicle:

Car/chassis number	TPADV7AA/403034
Engine number	20E/00005
Body number	CHP/300121 (?)
Specification	RHD, Home Market
Colour, exterior	Bordeaux Red (Metallic)
trim	Tan (Velour)
hood (top)	Tan
Date(s) built	26 November - 4 December 1980
Date despatched	5 January 1981
Destination (dealer)	Press Fleet, Triumph Plant, Canley, Coventry

Color	BORDEAUX	TR8 CONV	3/3027	6670287
Trim Color	TAN	MAN GSP	3500 V8	TPADV TAN 403034
Seat Dressing	VELOUR	RHS	3.08:1	00005
Destination	HOME MKT	LHD R WHT HAW	6 IN CAST	5 JAN 1981
Speedometer	MPH	NORM HEAT	ANY MAKE	
Tire Size	135 RADIAL	NORM TREAD	HR TIRES	2451 903
Extras	RKC 1340/4T HEAD RESTS OD AS TRIM 1/2 480 RADIO SIDE 10TS CHOKE M. PLATE TURBET.	2 DR. MIRR. FLAT FULLY RETRAG. AERIAL 25% ANTIFREEZE P.A.S. RR. GUARD LAMP WHITE REVERSE LAMPS	TINT GLASS 13 IN WHEELS CONV. RH. 68 AH BATTERY FLASHER UNIT FL/S	5 JAN 1981
Specification Key				CHP 300121

There is some confusion for this batch but looking at the spec of the actual finished cars, and plant production at that time changing over between Canley and Solihull, it's very highly likely they were

indeed built at Canley. Looking at the Heritage certificate and the Solihull build card for a Red RHD TR8 it would appear to confirm something odd happened as the Jan 5<sup>th</sup> build card completion date and heritage despatch date are the same date. The 1st batch have all exactly the same Jan 5<sup>th</sup> completion date on the build card, which is also strange, given it's unlikely for them all to have been finished on exactly the same day straight after Christmas. That would seem to confirm that they were built before Christmas at Canley as per the dates on the heritage certificate and then sent across to Solihull perhaps at the end of 1980 just before the Christmas break. Solihull then rubber stamped the cars as complete and finished Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 1981 when they came back from Christmas break. But why send them to Solihull anyway if their final destination was the press fleet at Canley? So, the chassis number should probably say AT, instead of AA.

Fitted with 1980 style dash - Orange Fuel light - and older metal style door speakers exactly the same spec as per NWK988W the second pre-production RHD TR8 built.



## BL MOTORSPORT PROPOSED RHD TR8 SPECIFICATION late January/early February 1981

BL Motorsport Abingdon arranged a Final 'tuning' of NWK988W for their proposed specification to be made in late Jan/early Feb 1981. That meeting took place with Abingdon proving the performance and handling of the car as well as proving the modifications to NWK988W could be done to all RHD TR8's for little to no difference in cost. The second batch of 9 were on the production line at the time of the meeting so no time to implement the changes for them anyway.

Sadly, the senior management said no which for a car with a 0-60 of around 6 seconds and top speed of 150mph in 1980 made no apparent sense at all. Development continued at a slower pace on the car until 14<sup>th</sup> May 1981 when the announcement was made to end production.



NWK988W was fitted with the works tarmac spoiler (sometimes called the mk2) for the final tuning meeting in late January/early February 1981. This was needed to achieve the highspeed 150mph run attained by the car. Fitting the spoiler produced a 30% reduction in lift, without it, the car would have been too unstable. The engine ended up modified with high compression pistons and the works WL9 camshaft with suitable valves springs mods etc. All the BL Motorsport Abingdon modifications are still on the car today.

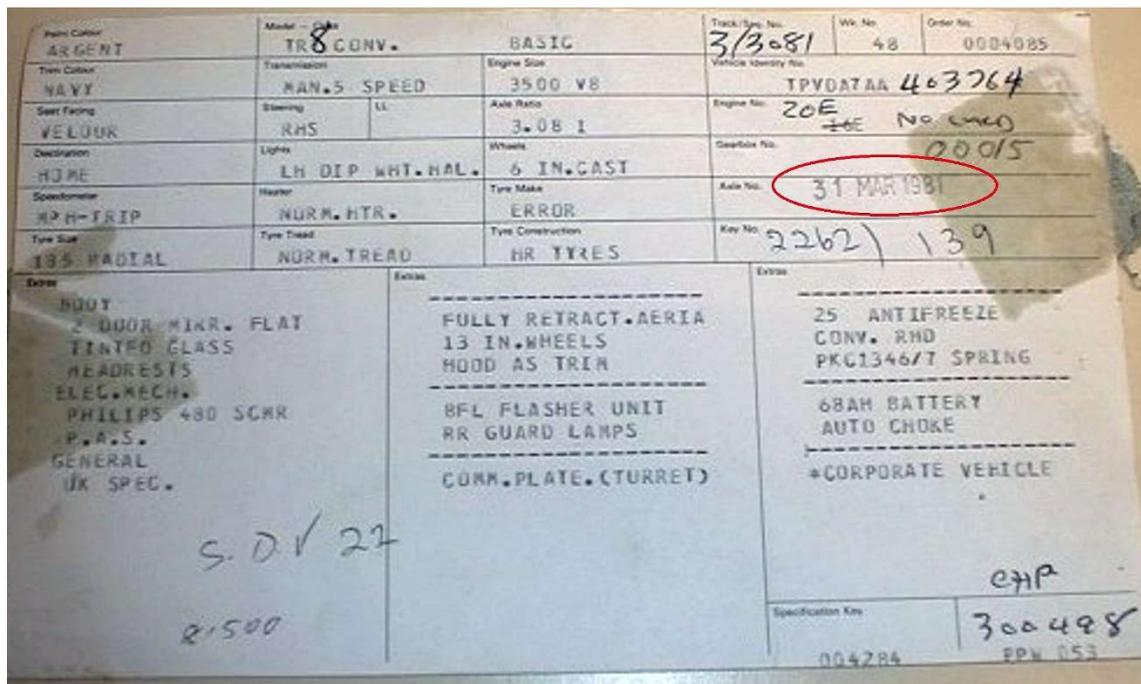
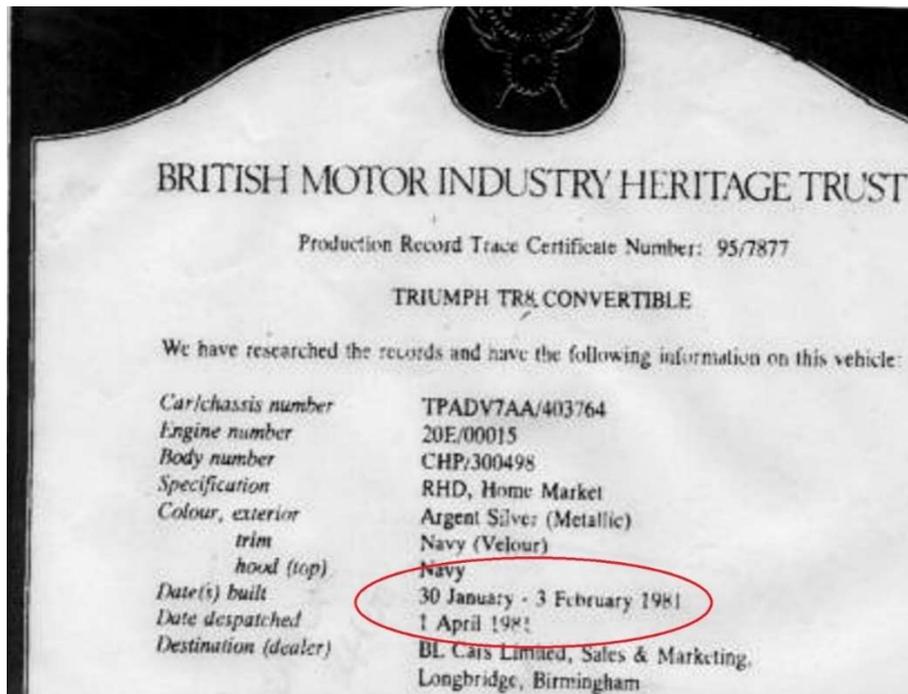
As the car was still Richard Hurdwell's company car at the time, he continued to unofficially tweak the cars suspension and handling until just before it went to the Measham auction 7<sup>th</sup> August 1981. He had hoped and planned to buy the car himself, but unfortunately it went beyond what he could afford at the time.

## 2nd Batch Of 9 RHD TR8's Despatched 1<sup>st</sup> April 1981 to Sales and Marketing Longbridge

Chassis	No	Body	B Card	Colour	Trim	Reg Now	Engine
TPADV7AA	403592	CHP 300525	19 Mar 81	ARAN BEIGE	AMG	A539SMJ	20E00021
TPADV7AA	403731	CHP 300708	25 Mar 81	PHARAOH GOLD	AMG	MFS302X	20E00016
TPADV7AA	403736	CHP 300704	28 Mar 81	PHARAOH GOLD	AMG		20E00013
TPADV7AA	403741	CHP 300710	27 Mar 81	PHARAOH GOLD	AMG	OOV315X	20E00025
TPADV7AA	403746	CHP 300713	28 Mar 81	TRITON GREEN	AMG		20E00024
TPADV7AA	403751	CHP 300711	24 Mar 81	TRITON GREEN	AMG	WNW2X	20E00023
TPADV7AA	403761	CHP 300727	28 Mar 81	CAVALRY BLUE	JMN	D63OGJ	20E00022

TPADV7AA	403764	CHP 300498	31 Mar 81	ARGENT SILVER	JMN	8207TR	20E00015
TPADV7AA	403767	CHP 300556	19 Mar 81	PERSIAN AQUA	JMN	OON223X	20E00029

The second batch of 9 **PILOT PRODUCTION** RHD TR8's was finished March 1981 according to the Solihull build cards from the cars, but the Heritage build records show them being built January to February 1981. These cars were built identical to the two methods build cars less the auto choke and impact sensor. Other information known is despatched to dealer, with that dealer being BL cars Sales and Marketing Longbridge. These cars were built at Solihull



Once again, we have a difference in dates, with the Solihull build card placing the Silver RHD TR8 above being built one day earlier. But this time that makes more sense allowing a day before shipping out. Also, the Solihull build cards show different dates for each of the second batch of 9 which is what we would normally expect to see.

Fitted with late 1981 style dash – push button reset stalks - White Fuel light – instrument icons - and plastic square door speakers as per the two method build cars (less the square door speakers).



### Five LHD to RHD converted at the factory TR8's

Chassis	No	Body	Built	Colour	Trim	Reg Now	Engine
EXP	X919	BAP100189		PENDELICAN WHITE	RAH	JVC824V	13E00114
TPZDV8AT	201675	BAP207721		PLATINUM SILVER	JAJ	KHP533V	15E00002
TPZDV8AT	203169	BAP207201		PENDELICAN WHITE	RAH	LVC358V	14E00002
TPVDV8AT	210006	BAP213577		PLATINUM SILVER	JAJ	TVC59W	12E
TPVDV8AT	212236	?		PENDELICAN WHITE	RAG	MVC128V	14E

There were a small handful of LHD US Spec cars that the factory converted to RHD for ease of testing in a RHD country. Point to note is the known converted left to right cars were all built before the first RHD TR8 212246 so that may very well have been the justification for them and also explain why

MVC128V doesn't have a power rack fitted. Not that they ran out as is often suggested, just simply at the beginning there were probably only a few initial build RHD rack versions available. It may also suggest cars after 212246 claiming to be factory left to right conversions are most likely not.

These are the five we know to have been converted by the factory because they were sold as RHD at Measham and or factory photos of them are at Gaydon showing them as RHD. It is of course highly likely there are others, but it is unlikely to be very many. There is one Poseidon Green 8 I have seen in particular that looks to have all the right hallmarks of a factory apprentice left to right conversion, as are two others I know about, so should really IMHO be in the list above, but with no absolute proof, for now they have been left out. There are of course quite a lot of outside the factory left to right converted TR8's as well. Easily identifiable by a USA/CAN TR8 chassis number, and not being in the above list of known factory conversions. For outside conversions, DWR568W a 1981 bordeaux red DHC converted by S&S Preparations, is one of the best ones I have seen. So much so, you would never know it had ever been a LHD TR8. Conversely Factory conversions are normally very obvious as they were often done by apprentices. Some owners have tidied them up during restorations.



Derek Pollock with MVC128V one of the factories converted LHD to RHD TR8's on the Round Britain Reliability Run 1982. Derek bought the car from COX's a dealer in Keighley who were at the Measham auctions buying one new unregistered, and two registered TR8's of which this was one.

## Other Differences between them

It has long been thought the two batches of 9 pilot production (often all thought of as press cars but actually only one batch of 9 was destined for the press fleet at Canley) in particular were identical, but this is not the case and there are many differences between the 22 Home Market cars beyond the change in early and late dashes as outlined above.

Some of the more obvious are as follows:

## Console

The black early console appeared on random cars across both groups of 9. It does not appear on the pre-production or methods build cars.

Parts availability when swapping across between plants was an issue and as these cars weren't the finished production car it was anything to finish the car. Around 5 individual cars across both groups of 9 have the black dash console fitted instead of the normal grey.



## Halogen H4 Lucas lights

Were fitted to the green second pre-production car and the two methods build cars.



## Speakers Door

The metal 1980 and earlier style speakers were fitted to the two pre-production TR8's, the two methods build TR8's and the first 9 pilot production TR8's.



The square plastic 1981 style speakers were only fitted to the second batch of 9 pilot production cars



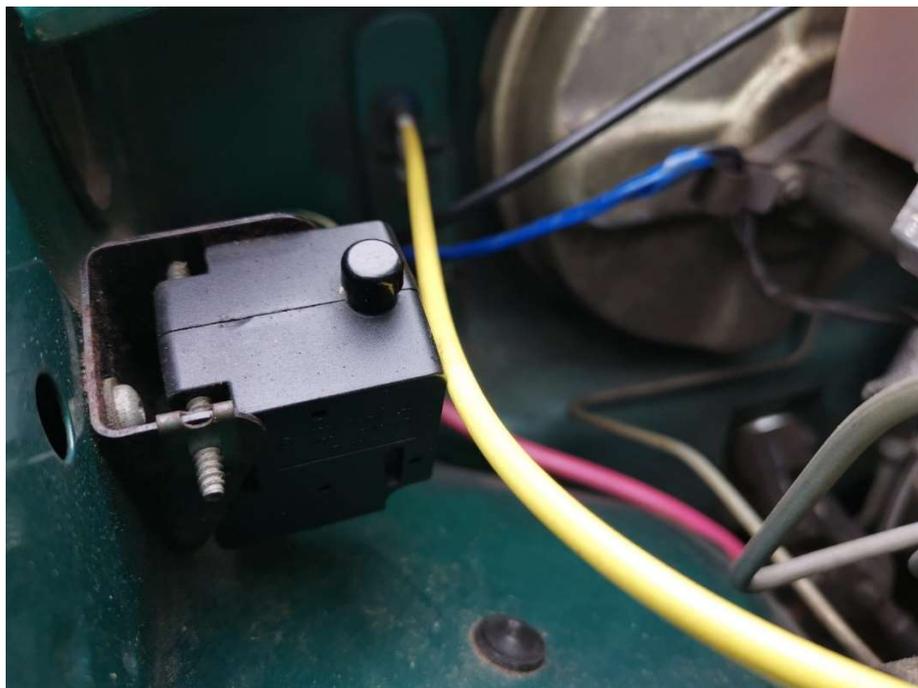
## Auto Choke

The auto chokes were fitted to the two pre-production cars and the two methods build cars. The other 18 have auto choke on their build cards but they were never fitted. This appears to have been down to these cars weren't the finished production car, so it was anything to finish the car, in this case manual chokes.



## Impact sensor Switch

This appears to have been a left over from starting with US parts for the first one as it only appears on the two pre-production cars and the two methods build cars. The idea is in an impact it immediately shuts power off to the fuel pump. All USA TR8's had it fitted.



## Air Filter

The two pre-production RHD TR8's have an air filter on the rocker instead of routing the vent across to the air box on the other side. This feature first appeared on Californian USA spec Efi cars in 1980 and then in 1981 when all USA/CAN cars were Efi, on all of them. The plastic cover, sponge insert and metal adaptor on the rocker would have been more expensive than a bit of rubber pipe going across to the air box, so I'm guessing price prevented it from appearing on the other RHD8's.



## Built from parts cars - “unofficial” phase of “RHD TR8's”

Towards the end of production there were quite a number of originally “TR7” rolling shells sold off by BL that had once had O series engines fitted originally. BL felt it needed to remove them, as the engines were still as such experimental and not proved. Perhaps unsurprisingly many of the rolling shells from these cars ended up with employees and or anyone else in the know. Miraculously they nearly all seemed to acquire V8 engines from somewhere, with some even managing to swap from LHD to RHD with no evidence of ever being LHD. Parts and body shells at the end of production were everywhere, so many “other TR8's” built by engineers and apprentices on their “coffee breaks behind the canteen etc” also appeared. These cars are parts cars not officially built by Triumph. Having said that, they nearly all contain all the correct parts for a factory RHD TR8. They say there were more parts leaving the factory gates at night than going on actual cars towards the end of production, and that seems highly likely given the shortages on the line at that time. These cars frequently surface for sale with owners and auction houses, totally convinced they are genuine built by the factory RHD cars. So far always with TR7 chassis numbers or made-up incomplete ones as the

only way to get them registered with DVLA. I have yet to see one that actually was an approved factory-built car, or one with a genuine RHD TR8 chassis number. They are however very much an important part of the continuing RHD TR8 history none the less. Very much in line with the TR8's built from factory parts and a bare shell by Del Lines who also put his own DL chassis number on them until the factory put an end to it. Soon after came the very popular conversions of TR7's to V8 power built by S&S Preparations most of which used SD1 V8's. We also had Mark Grinnall with some very radical body panels and engine conversion changes using SD1 engines and also components such as rear lights, braking, steering etc to make the car, look and perform completely differently. There were others but these were the main companies. Then Rimmer Bros and others quickly started producing TR7 to TR8 conversion parts, in do it yourself at home kits. A tiny handful of exceptional concours standard home built "TR8's" were built from the ground up and or from TR7's, using all original factory RHD TR8 parts which takes us back to where this second "unofficial" phase of "RHD TR8's" started with the parts cars at the end of production. Three such cars that stand out are a red FHC by Paul Towle FTV66V, red DHC by Tony Butler LVC255V and a blue DHC by Brian Harber originally YKR284X now ATR835L. These are just a few, of the more well-known companies and individuals that very quickly appeared to fill the RHD TR8 void left by the factory building so few.

## Registration of Factory RHD TR8's

There are all sorts of RHD TR8 stories put about; generally, by people trying to convince others their converted TR7/Parts car is a genuine RHD TR8. One such story is that RHD TR8's didn't exist at that time on the DVLA database so the factory registered the cars as TR7's. In a word "RUBBISH". The factory simply registered the five they actually registered as nothing for model, only putting the make of Triumph down. For the remaining cars all sold unregistered, (14 sold at Measham and 3 others directly to those in the know) some do have TR8 on their V5's because their new owners registered them as such, less the three of them that are currently still unregistered in 2022.

V5 for NWK988W the second pre-production RHD TR8. This was common practice for pre-production, methods build and pilot production cars etc. Only once the cars were in full production did they get the model added.

**6 New keeper slip – must be given to the new keeper**
V5C-0720

Do not send this slip to DVLA on its own – you won't get a V5C.

**You, the new keeper, must ensure the vehicle is taxed before you drive it.**

You will be fined if our records show that the vehicle is not taxed, insured or no Statutory Off Road Notification (SORN) has been made.

It's quick and simple to tax online at: [gov.uk/vehicle-tax](http://gov.uk/vehicle-tax) or tax at a Post Office\* using this slip.

Declare the vehicle off road online at: [gov.uk/make-a-sorn](http://gov.uk/make-a-sorn)

You should receive your new V5C within 4 weeks of the registered keeper giving us your details.

**If you do not receive your V5C, you'll need to fill in a V62 form to apply for a new one. Send it, with this slip, to DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1DD. Make sure the date of sale/transfer box is filled in.**

For more details on this vehicle go to: [gov.uk/get-vehicle-information-from-dvla](http://gov.uk/get-vehicle-information-from-dvla)

For data protection information go to: [gov.uk/dvla/privacy-policy](http://gov.uk/dvla/privacy-policy)

Registration number **NWK 988W** D

Document reference number [REDACTED]  
(use this to tax online)

Date of sale / transfer: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Make **TRIUMPH**

Model

Colour **GREEN**

Engine size **3528 CC**

Suspension type

Tax class **HISTORIC VEHICLE**

No. of seats

Official use only. Do not write in this space.

V5 for the White Lynx WUY952R – Note no reference to it being a Lynx, only the EXP number tells us what it is. That was fairly common for EXP cars.

## Measham Auctions August 7th/September 4th 1981

Normally EXP, test cars, pre-production, pilot production, etc would all have been destroyed with most manufacturers, and that generally is still the stance today. But BL was in such a really bad way financially, the unusual decision was taken to sell all the RHD TR8 and project cars off at auction instead. On the plus side we get to see and drive, what could have been, where normally there would have been no trace left.

Lou O’Toole collected up all of the RHD TR8’s and LHD TR8 test, exp and development cars for them to be sold off at a dealer only auction at Measham over a few Fridays in August/September 1981. Less a few cars that needed to be kept for insurance purposes for the USA and Canadian TR8’s. There were 14 unregistered RHD TR8’s of the 22, so in effect new, and as such; these cars sold for more than the registered ones, highest being £13,200. Dealers were offering brand new unregistered RHD TR8’s for a number of years afterwards. Actual production of the TR7/8 finished October 5<sup>th</sup> 1981.

## Dealers that bought RHD TR8’s

Dealer	Location	New unregistered	Factory Registered
Allen Brothers	London	2	1
Appleyard’s	Harrogate	1	
Auto Mechanics Ltd	Manchester		1
Bolebridge Garage	Tamworth		2
Borough Garage Ltd	Oldham	1	5
Carmichael Motor Group	Edinburgh	2	
Cox of Keighley	Keighley	1	2
Crouch Engineering	Burnham- on-Crouch		1
E Eames	Chesham		2
Glanfield Lawrence	London		1
Henley’s	London		1

Heron Motor Group	Stockport	1	
John Bryant and son	Redditch		1
Wadham's	Loughborough		2
Patrick Motor Group	Birmingham	2	
Wadham Stringer	Chichester	1	1
Service Motors	Derby	1	
Trinity Motors Hinkley	Coventry	1	
University Motors Ltd	London	1	
W Goddard and Co	Salisbury		2

They bought collectively 14 new unregistered cars and 22 previously registered and used by the factory.

There was one White RHD TR8 RDU35W from the pilot production, and the two RHD pre-production TR8's, Silver MHP404V and Green NWK988W which were all factory registered and sold at the auction.

That leaves five more registered/unregistered cars missing from the 22. All appear to have been sold off later for some reason. If you were in the know, because for example you owned a big dealership chain, then you could just buy one, and that is how the remaining five were sold off.

RHD TR8's that were registered by the factory and not in this auction have been added for a more complete view as have the few known left to right conversions that were also in the auction.

Note X923 was sold off by Heritage much later in 2003 at a different auction so has been added with the date in red.

## How much for the RHD TR8's?

DATE - Friday	LOT	Colour	Designation	No	Body No	No Plate Now	Price
28/08/1981	290	PENDELICAN WHITE	Pilot Production	403062	CHP 300429	WEL480X	£11,200.00
14/08/1981	A271	ARAN BEIGE	Pilot Production	403592	CHP 300525	A539SMJ	£13,200.00
14/08/1981	A272	PERSIAN AQUA	Pilot Production	403072	CHP 300493	A910 PKX	£11,900.00
28/08/1981	291	PERSIAN AQUA	Pilot Production	403767	CHP 300556	OON 233X	£11,750.00
28/08/1981	282	PHARAOH GOLD	Pilot Production	403741	CHP 300710	OOV 315X	£11,400.00
21/08/1981	B264	TRITON GREEN	Pilot Production	403751	CHP 300713	WNW2X	£11,000.00
21/08/1981	B265	PERSIAN AQUA	Pilot Production	403082	CHP 300492	A125GPG	£11,000.00
04/09/1981	315	CAVALRY BLUE	Pilot Production	403761	CHP 300727	D63OGJ	£11,000.00
04/09/1981	317	BORDEAUX RED	Pilot Production	403034	CHP 300424	ZV-11581	£11,000.00

07/08/1981	278	PHARAOH GOLD	Pilot Production	403736	CHP 300704	Not Registered	£10,400.00
07/08/1981	277	ARGENT SILVER	Pilot Production	403764	CHP 300498	8202TR	£10,350.00
04/09/1981	316	BORDEAUX RED	Pilot Production	403054	CHP 300596	DESTROYED	£10,100.00
07/08/1981	279	PENDELICAN WHITE	Pilot M/Build	402289	CJP 300009	D70 OGJ	£11,000.00
21/08/1981	B263	PENDELICAN WHITE	Pilot M/Build	402290	CHP 300010	Not Registered	£10,800.00
07/08/1981	276	POSEIDON GREEN	Pre Production	214004	CHP 300005	NWK988W	£7,000.00
04/09/1981	314	PLATINUM SILVER	Pre Production	212246	BBP 202271	MHP404V	£5,550.00
14/08/1981	A270	PENDELICAN WHITE	Pilot Production	402960	CHP 300437	RDU35W	£8,000.00
Car exists but not in Auction		TRITON GREEN	Pilot Production	403746	CHP 300713	Not Registered	
Car exists but not in Auction		PENDELICAN WHITE	Pilot Production	403024	CHP 300527	2498TR	
Car exists but not in Auction		BORDEAUX RED	Pilot Production	403044	CHP 300505	WPU281W	
Car exists but not in Auction		PENDELICAN WHITE	Pilot Production	403014	CHP 300429	PVC574W	
Car exists but not in Auction		PHARAOH GOLD	Pilot Production	403731	CHP 300708	MFS302X	
28/08/1981	286	PENDELICAN WHITE	EXP Trim Styling	X925	BBP	PVC568W	£6,550.00
28/08/1981	287	CARNELIAN RED	EXP Temp Testing	X921	BBP	KHP573V	£5,600.00
03/06/2003	30	PLATINUM SILVER	EXP Speed Testing	X923	BBP	KHP574V	£9,600.00
07/08/1981	274	PENDELICAN WHITE	EXP Efi Test	203169	BAP207201	LVC358V	£4,550.00
21/08/1981	B261	PENDELICAN WHITE	Efi Test	X919	BAP100189	JVC824V	£4,300.00

Story along the way - Group Manufacturing Director Brian Fox on hearing the RHD TR8's were to be sold off was away ill at the time, so left strict instructions for NWK988W not to be sold off as he wanted it for his own use at Longbridge. When he returned it was to find not only had his instructions not been acted on, but that NWK988W had already been sold at the Auction. He was as you can imagine less than impressed. The fact NWK988W was sold on the very first day of the auction Friday 7<sup>th</sup> August in an early lot, is certainly intriguing. A final elaborate practical joke between departments on the RHD TR8 project perhaps?

## Data Integrity

What happened when and by whom is often very questionable, more so after 40 years plus, so this article can't be 100% perfect much as I wish it could be, but it is as close as can be reasonably expected after so long. The auction records were difficult to sort out as exact, given 14 cars were unregistered and others registered and unregistered not actually in the auction. So no easy way of identifying them other than colour, which for most, there was more than one TR8 of each colour! I did initially start to use a resource the late Rex Holford very helpfully put together identifying the cars at auction to confirm the data. Unfortunately, I realised you can't have W reg cars (1<sup>st</sup> Aug 80 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 81) for sale as unregistered with the first auction date of August 7<sup>th</sup> 1981 which means they would need to be at least X when registered. So, I had to do some rethinking around that, to what I think should be correct for a few of the cars. The left to right cars converted by the factory is a minefield, and as such I only put down the cars myself and Brian Ridley-Jones TR8 Registrar TRDC, could confirm were factory conversions. There will be others, but none we could prove at present, and of course we are human, so may have made mistakes with the ones we selected, but I hasten to add, we don't believe so.

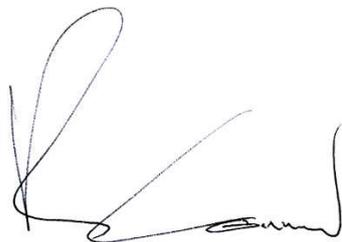
The fact the factory built exactly 22 RHD Home Market TR8's is 100%. The three EXP RHD TR8's is also 100%.

## Today 2022

The majority of the Factory home market RHD TR8's survive to this day, probably because of their rarity which ensured they were on the whole well looked after, and because many were added to private and public collections etc. The British School of Motoring (BSM) wrecked/destroyed one of the Bordeaux Red cars; but on the whole the rest survive and their whereabouts is generally known.

## Tomorrow

If you think you have information we haven't included and or have information wrong, please do get in touch and we will amend an online version accordingly, assuming your data/proof stack up correctly. You will be able to find the online continually updated version and more information about the RHD TR8's individually here <https://tr7tr8.com/rhd-tr8-home-market-uk/> as well as contact details.



Richard Connew TR8 Enthusiast