

TE21, GAP44C, back on the road after nearly 20 years but not as you might remember her

The story behind a TE21 saloon that ended up looking like a Series 1 TD21 DHC.

I purchased GAP44C as a part-restored rolling chassis/bodyshell from Mrs Sheena Inglis in December 2020. Sheena's late husband, Andy, had bought the car for restoration and conversion from a saloon to a convertible but died in June 2017, before the work could be completed. His vision was for a convertible T series Alvis with all the mechanical refinements of a TE21 (servo assisted four-wheel disc brakes, 5 speed gearbox, power steering, improved clutch and more) but retaining the cleaner, more visually appealing lines of the Series 1 TD21. To achieve this, he purchased GAP44C, a TE21 Saloon along with a donor DHC, of which I have few details but still have a collection of soft top roof frame parts if anyone wants them. Andy gave Classic Restorations (Scotland) Ltd, (CRSL) the work to remove any rust and rot, remove the roof panel, rebuild the bodywork to DHC specification, install a DHC windscreen frame and hood frame for the soft top, and to achieve the desired look, replace the front wings and rear panel with new ones, from Red Triangle (RT), for a Series I TD21.

Most of the work under Andy & Sheena ownership was completed by CRSL between 2007 and 2011. Where in good condition, the original panels were retained. This included the bonnet, boot lid, doors, engine bay and bulkhead. New A and B pillars, and the DHC waist rail were installed using ash parts from RT. The windscreen frame from the DHC donor was fitted. All rusty panels were replaced with new ones from RT or fabricated by CRSL. The chassis was completely rebuilt or maybe replaced? It certainly looked like new by the time I got it. A collection of photos and jobsheets is available showing this work done by CSRL.

CRSL completed removing the roof from the saloon and the full bodywork restoration along with several mechanical works including fitting new suspension and brakes throughout. However, in 2011, for reasons I have not yet been able to establish, the work by CSRL was halted. The car was then a bare metal shell on a rolling chassis but before painting or installation of a new soft top frame could be completed, the car was transferred from CRSL in Alyth to one of the outbuildings at the Inglis's home in Aberdeenshire, where it languished until I purchased it. Inevitably surface rust had affected the bare metal during its time in storage but thanks to plenty of Dinitrol having been applied when work at CSRL stopped, the damage was only superficial.

Since its arrival I have completed a full nut and bolt restoration by taking the body shell off the chassis, installing it on a rotisserie jig, rubbing it back down to clean bare metal and rebuilding the body by a succession of lead loading, filling, flattening, priming, and respraying in Alice Blue, or at least as close to Alice Blue as RT would disclose. The entire underside has been protected with several coats of stonechip paint. The original colour of GAP44C was beige. At some stage in its past, it was resprayed red and tell tales of this can be seen on the door and boot panels in my photos and those from CRSL.

My rebuild work has also included stripping down all components and either refurbishing or replacing anything not in good order. This included a full engine rebuild including hardened valves and valve seats, by Scholar Engines Ltd. Instrument refurbishment by Paul Draycott and Speedy Cables Ltd. A soft top frame from David Garret was installed. Moore's of Aylsham have completed a full re-upholstery, including rebuilding all seats with new springs and foam, new leather to all seats, door cards and interior panels, full re-upholster of boot, complete re-carpet with Wilton, new soft top and headlining. New front and rear seatbelts were fitted by Quickfit Safety Belt Services Ltd.

I have also rebuilt, upgraded, or replaced every component of the car that was not satisfactory. This included many components from Chris Prince, Red Triangle and elsewhere. The list is very long but well documented and includes among many others, full rewire with new loom from Autosparks Ltd, full re-chrome, stainless steel bumpers, dynator, electric fan, Classic Car Bluetooth DAB radio with hand free and four speakers, new light fittings with LED bulbs all round, full rebuild of brake system including new brake pipes reconditioned or new cylinders and callipers throughout, fully rebuilt servo including new cylinder, piston and all new seals, new three-part clutch, all new fuel lines, rebuilt mechanical fuel pump plus backup in-line electric fuel pump, new spare wheel tray, new fuel tank with new sender, rebuilt carburettors with ethylene proof rubber throughout, new suspension bushes and rubbers throughout, all new steering joints, rebuilt wire wheels and new tyres, stainless steel exhausts, new propshaft, new water pump, and much more.

On completion of the rebuild the car was sent for an MOT so that at least one other qualified person could give her the once over before taking to the road in earnest and thankfully all was well. There remained a couple of gremlins to resolve; a noticeable clonk from the back axle when pulling away and when changing through the lower gears, and also a persistent oil leak from the back of the gearbox. Both of these were resolved and the details of the repairs have been compiled as a short article to help other members who may encounter similar issues. It should appear in the Bulletin in due course.

As ever, the total cost of rebuild has been way more than the car is worth but she is a pleasure to drive and I have the immense satisfaction of owning the car I always wanted, albeit that the collars and cuffs don't quite match 😊. I know the purists will throw their arms up in horror at the conversion of a perfectly good, all matching numbers, TE saloon, to a DHC that doesn't even reflect the underlying model and looks largely like a Series I TD, but I am very happy with the result and at least we have another Alvis back in regular use instead of slowly fading away in perpetual storage.

One of my first big outings in the newly roadworthy car was to the AOC Alvis International weekend at Hintlesham Hall in July where I met fellow AOC member, Michael Jones, who was looking quizzically at the car and rubbing his chin in perplexion. He approached me to explain that he had owned GAP44C from 1979 to 2003. Michael passed me the following snippets from his ownership, for which I am most grateful.

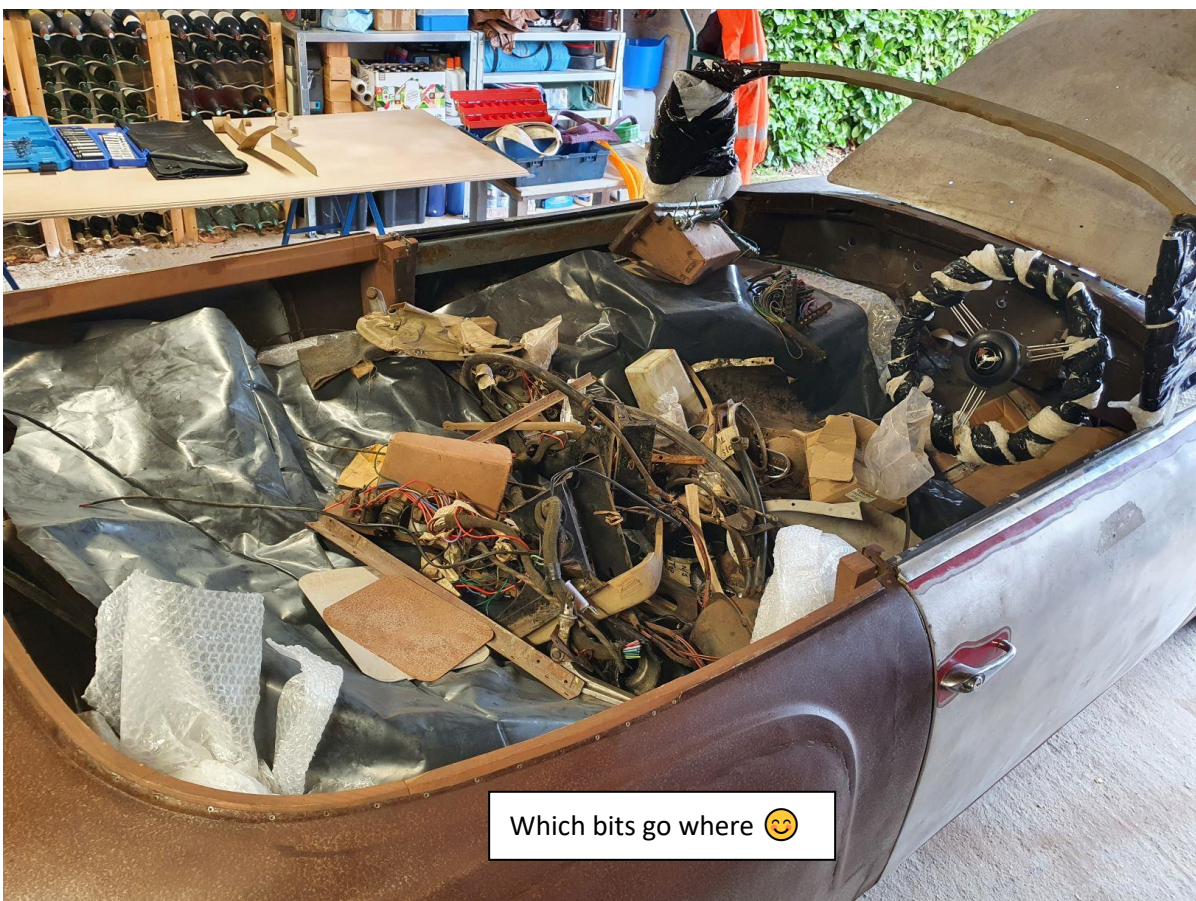
Michael purchased GAP44C for £2750, as a saloon in its original beige paintwork, from The Victoria Carriage Company in 1979, not long before the company ceased trading. It was under Michael's ownership that the paintwork was changed from the original beige to red. Michael drove the car regularly and reliably for 24 years before selling it to Malcolm Elder for £5000. Mark Elder, Malcolm's son, now runs The Motor Shed at Bicester Heritage and still sells Alvis cars. Michael recalls that Malcolm held the car in stock for several years and eventually sold it with the cryptic statement to Michael that it "had gone Up-North". I am guessing that this must have been to Andy Inglis, although it is possible there was another owner in between as there are 4 former keepers mentioned on the V5 and I only have details for three of them.

To the best of my knowledge, the car's ownership has been as follows.

1. Alvis Sales Order 11958 shows a car completion date of 1st June 1965 and a delivery to Brooklands of Bond Street on 6th July 1965
2. First sold by Alvis Agent, Brooklands of Bond Steet, London, to Thomas Smith & Sons Ltd, Clutha House, Storey Gate, London SW1. Unknown length of ownership.
3. Unknown possible second owner.
4. Purchased by Michael Jones of Elsing, Norfolk, from the Victoria Carriage Company in 1979.

5. Sold by Michael Jones to Malcolm Elder, classic car dealer, Bicester, in 2003. Held in stock by Malcolm from 2003 for a few years.
6. Sold by Malcolm Elder to Andy Inglis, Aberdeenshire, in the mid 2000's. Andy died in 2017 and ownership of the partly restored car passes to his wife, Sheena.
7. Purchased from Sheena Inglis by current owner, Mike Fiske, in December 2020. Restoration mostly completed and car put back on the road in March 2022 for the first time in nearly 20 years. I say restoration mostly completed because I am not sure they are ever completed, there is always something more to do, but then that is one of the pleasures of classic car ownership, there is never time to be bored.

Mike Fiske, August 2022





Body off



Chassis stripped and looking good



Lead loading welds and fitting soft top frame on rotisserie



Sanding back to bare metal

Filling and flattening with minimum use of filler



Body going back on chassis





Rebuilt rolling chassis with full engine rebuild by Scholar Engines



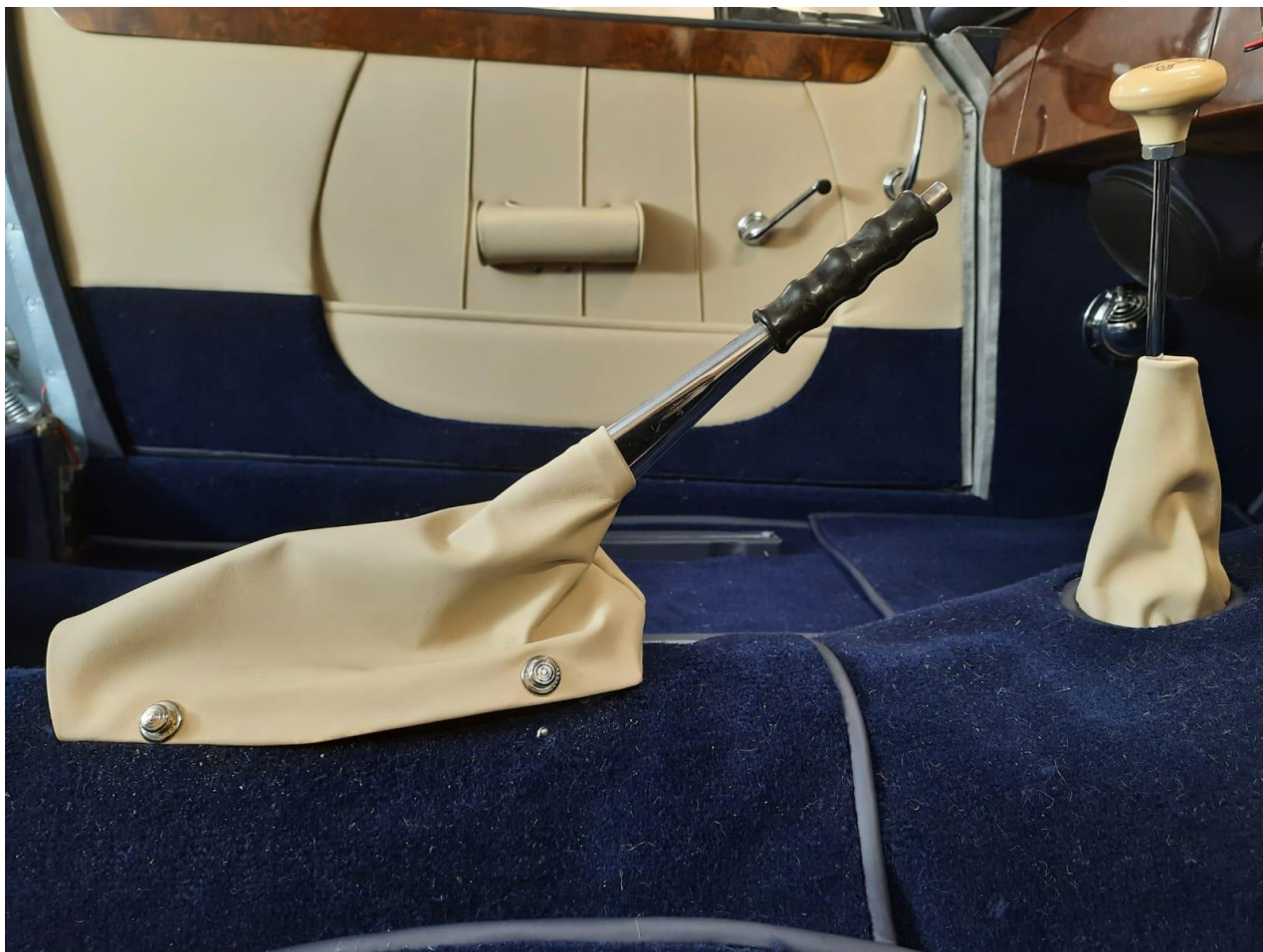
Final coats of paint



Restored dashboard back in place



New roof and headlining by Moores of Aylsham



Re-upholstered seats, new leather and Wilton carpets by Moores of Aylsham



FINISHED!

