

Introducing the 'Cream Cracker'

On 01 October 2023 Frederick Baker advertised his NG TC on the NG Forum, by the time I read the advert the car was under offer.



Photo from Mr Frederick Baker's original advert.

On Thursday 12 October Mark Sadler (NG Cars) posted an article with two photos; the first one showed the car on the front cover of the October 1986 Edition of 'ChangiNGear', the second showed the car in Mark's premises. It didn't take a genius to realise that Mark was the one who had bought the car.



After reading Mark's post I immediately sent him a message requesting first refusal if/when he decided to sell the car. Half an hour later after exchanging a couple of messages we had agreed a price and Margaret and myself left the next day in our campervan heading north to spend the night in one of our favourite overnight

stops (a lay-by near Beverley). Early the next morning we travelled to Filey. After spending the day there we travelled to Great Barugh (near Malton) in the late afternoon, met up with Mark (for the umpteenth time) viewed the car and within ten seconds had shaken hands on the deal. I was now the very proud owner of a TC who I quickly named 'The Cream Cracker' ('Cracker' for short) who was delivered four days later.



Covered delivery was expensive but he was snug during the journey.





Margaret talking to Martin the delivery guy.

Postscript:

Attempts to find a good MGB based TC over the last couple of years or so had proven fruitless as the only good ones I spotted for sale were the V8 engined models and Marina based versions, both good in their own way, but not for me. Although having been a bit of a boy racer in my youth (and achieving some success in motor sport) if I had been aware of it being for sale, I would have seriously considered Nick Green's own TCR V8, because of its provenance,

In September 2023 I bought the unfinished NG TD that NG Cars offered for sale on the Forum, my plan was to modify the back end to more resemble a TC. Obviously the purchase of Cracker has saved me a lot of work and was the reason I abandoned my plans to build my own NG Boat Tailed Tourer.

I consider myself very fortunate that Mark gave me the opportunity to become the new custodian of this car. For me it ticks a lot of boxes; i.e. it is based on a 'B' Series 1800cc MGB**, it is correctly registered, it has Historic Vehicle Status so is Tax Free, it was converted over thirty years ago so it is MOT Free if I want it to be. It is an original Nick Green car and the make up of the fibreglass body is superb. It has a full stainless steel exhaust system and fuel tank. The icing on the cake is that the person who originally built it knew what he was doing; the whole appearance of the car gives the impression that after a good service you could confidently drive it to the south of France (or wherever rocks your boat).

Note.

*** The engine is the five bearing '18GG' type (developed I understand for the New Zealand market) which I personally consider to be one of the better ones. Its attractions include the duplex chain timing gear and the fitment, as standard, of the SU HS4 carburettors, as opposed to what can at times be the troublesome HIF4's, which I believe were introduced to meet stricter emission regulations. It has also been fitted with an oil cooler. For me the only downsides are the timing marks are at the bottom of the timing case under the pulley and its old fashioned oil filter canister but that can be changed to the spin on style oil filter at a later date.*

Having said all the above Cracker is not concours, but is never-the less very good. There are some aspects of the build I don't like, including the electrical wiring; however he is probably too good to muck about with. "So what to do?" Although he is entitled to a Freebie MOT I wanted to put one of my cherished number plates on him, a task which requires a proper MOT; so the first job was to carry out a pre-MOT Test. This revealed that the wiring is not the best. The first problem was intermittent side and tail lights, traced to a faulty fuse box; a scratch around the terminals with some P400 grit resolved that problem, which was permanently solved a week later by the fitment of a NOS Lucas fuse box courtesy of the MGB Hive. The Cibie spot lights were

inoperative and after unsuccessfully trying to trace the path of the wires I removed them. The Raydot hand operated navigators light didn't work, not surprising as the cable from it wasn't connected and it was also removed. The final electrical problem was a temperamental main beam warning light which appeared to have a mind of its own and occasionally came on when all the lights were off. On the plus side I didn't find anything mechanically wrong and after greasing the front suspension it passed MOT first time with no advisories and is now registered 'BXZ 446'. My matching number plate ('BXZ 644') was removed from Emma the TD (since sold) the number is destined for Rufus the TA.

Personally I don't like wire wheels, or aero screens. The car has never been fitted with a windscreen wiper motor and associated mechanism. One option is to have a Brasscraft type folding screen in front of the aero-screens as, to the best of my knowledge, wipers and washers are not a legal requirement with a folding screen. After much consideration I discarded that option and the current plan is to replace the aero-screens with a standard fixed screen with side wind deflectors.

As for the wheels; measuring the axle revealed that the original donor was a steel wheeled car. In any event Cracker has the wider axle that was standard with steel wheels. Recently I sent the five 15" MGA wheels I had previously bought from NG Cars to 'Alloy Tech' (a local wheel restorer) and had them blasted and finished in RAL 9001 Cream powder coat, they are destined for Rufus the TA and they now look superb. My ultimate plan is to change Cracker's wire wheels for my favoured steel wheels from an MGA or TR6, buying new wheel rims from Rimmer Bros.



The MGA wheels fully refurbished for Rufus.

I must admit that most people would retain the wire wheels but although they are in superb condition I really don't like them. Other wheel based tasks would be to modify the spare wheel carrier and recalibrate the speedo to suit 15" wheels; anyway that's a job for the future.

One major job still in the pipeline is to change the seats. Although they were in excellent condition they are not designed for old age spread and we both found them uncomfortable. With Margaret's blessing the decision was made to make a cockpit style seat. This was simply a matter of making up the base boards and sending them to the upholsterers. The fitting of the cockpit style seats will help solve another problem, the location of the upper part of the seat belt. I have fitted captive nuts into the top of the seat backrest board and seat belt guide plates were made out of 1/4" aluminium plate which will be bolted to the captive nuts. As I write this article I am still waiting for the upholsterer to complete his side of the work.

The rear luggage area was a bit grim (not mucked about with, just left in plain bare fibreglass) so I made up a two-piece carpeted false floor. The jack, some tools and spare parts etc. are stored in the well under the rear section of floor, the front section lifts up to access the boxed in sections that are the passenger foot-wells on the TD/TF models. The luggage area is accessed by folding the seat backrest forward, the design of the seat backrest offering easy access to the luggage area and improved security.

Both front and the right hand rear mudguards have tiny splits (caused by the lack of steering lock stops on the front wheels which allowed the mudguards to contact the chassis on full lock). The damage to the rear mudguard is most likely caused by inconsiderate parking by person's unknown. The radiator cowl also has some minor damage. The damaged radiator cowl and mudguards will be repaired (or possibly replaced as I have a set of four NOS mudguards and a NOS cowl) and repainted in RAL 8017 Chocolate Brown which will better match the original Cream Cracker Livery of the 1930's.

A bespoke bracket was made to hold my redundant motorcycle Sat-Nav. The dashboard is wood but nicely finished and varnished. An unusual fitment is a cigarette lighter, not a lot of use as we are both non-smokers. The cigarette lighter element was removed and replaced with a USB connector for use with the Sat-Nav.



Originally Cracker must have had separate oil pressure and water temperature gauges as there is a newish combined oil/water gauge fitted, with an unserviceable oil pressure gauge filling the spare hole. A voltmeter gauge was purchased to replace the u/s gauge.

The only other completed tasks of note were to make and fit running boards for easier access and egress, to make a removable footrest for Margaret and to reinforce the slightly droopy bonnet with an aluminium equal angle strengthening the hinge.

Jobs still in the pipeline include, restricting the movement of the steering rack, a carburettor overhaul, tandem brake master cylinder, ignition cut-out switch, Malpassi fuel pressure regulator, screw on/off oil filter cartridge, bonnet stays, new bonnet straps in brown, modifying the spare wheel bracket to take a steel wheel, a new set of black carpets and a transmission tunnel tray.

More involved is the replacement of the MGB heater for an alternative aftermarket product which will free up space underneath the bonnet to relocate the battery, allowing a larger more accessible one to be fitted.

To summarise, if he wasn't so good (and I was a few years younger) I would have no hesitation in pulling Cracker apart and doing a concours rebuild incorporating a bespoke wiring loom; as it is I am confining my activities to small adjustments and sympathetic modifications so he better suits me.



Cracker as he is today.



Ditto.