

Coming of age

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JIM PATTEN

Not all youngsters are glued to their mobiles. One young technician repays E-Conic E-types' faith in him with the complete restoration of a Series 2 E-type



IT IS often said that the youth of today are not interested in anything but computer games and their phones. Yet, with the right encouragement and exposure, there can be much more to their world, including an interest in our older cars.

Even though Murray Simpson was not exposed to classic cars at an early age, he has always had a leaning towards them. There was nothing specific that drew him in, he just liked the individuality and some of the striking designs. So it was to the classic sector that his thoughts turned when he wanted a career in the motor industry. In October 2014, he signed up with Da Vinci, an engineering college in Letchworth. The coursework covered three days of the week, and he was expected to fill the remaining two days with work experience. Murray struck lucky when

Angus Moss agreed to give him a try at E-Conic – Jaguar E-types will surround his working life.

When Angus offered him an apprenticeship in February 2015, Murray repaid the confidence, keeping his head down and studying hard. He passed Level 2 Motor Vehicle Maintenance in 2017 and Level 3 the following year. Although the course had to follow the laid down guidelines, the college did tailor some sectors to Murray's work. For instance, evidential work around investigating faults on alternators (and exchanging faulty units) was changed to investigating and repairing faults on dynamos by stripping the unit and testing on the bench, such was the flexibility of the course.

Now fully qualified and with a few years of E-type restoration under his belt, there was no reason why Murray could not be assigned his own E-type. After all, help was immediately available if he needed a lifeline.



Murray Simpson has every right to be proud of this restored E-type



RESTORATION

S2 E-TYPE



It would be wrong to say that Peter Bruce walked in off the street to visit E-Conic E-types early in 2016 (buried deep in the countryside in idyllic settings there is no street to walk in from), but he did unexpectedly turn up in a friend's beautiful Aston Martin DB5. Everyone is always welcome at E-Conic and Angus listened as Peter proposed an interest in the company finding and buying an E-type for him for restoration. Peter was taken on a tour of the premises and was introduced to the technicians, discussing the various projects on hand while carefully examining the quality of the work. Popping in unannounced like this has the advantage of seeing the routine captured in the moment and Peter asked Angus there and then if E-Conic would find and restore a car for him. As luck would have it, there was one in stock, bought a year earlier. It was to be Murray Simpson's first solo restoration.

The E-type looked truly appalling, although that had more to do with the colour scheme than condition, being beige with a brown interior and topped with a black vinyl roof. Otherwise this left-hand-drive Series 2, sourced from Texas, appeared to be complete and extremely sound.

Peter wanted Gunmetal metallic paint to replace the anonymous beige and for the interior to be finished in contrasting red, with E-Conic sports seats. Mechanical necessities would involve converting from left- to right-hand drive, ditching the twin Stromberg carburettors in favour of the usual triple 2in SU carburettors and changing the rear axle ratio from 3.54:1 to the European-favoured 3.07:1.

Murray's first job was to strip the car of all components, carefully recording and storing the parts. Once the bodyshell was completely bare, it was sent away for shotblasting, a procedure that would not only remove all paint, but also any rust.



Interior is extremely well turned out

This is when any horrors are revealed as every deficiency is laid bare. Fortunately, the initial inspection held good, and the only issues revealed were a previous repair made to a floor pan and some slight accident damage at the rear. In this state, it was ready for the bodyshop. However, they still decided on new engine frames and bonnet support. The frames are made from Reynold's tubing and are vulnerable to rust, damage or – more worryingly – fatigue cracks at the suspension pick-up points; even if there was no apparent evidence, age plus wear and tear would most certainly result in cracks in the future.

While E-Conic carry out as much as possible in-house, certain elements are farmed out to specialists in their field. Murray removed all the appendages from the 4.2-litre engine and despatched the unit to Classic and Modern Engine Services, in Bracknell. With the Stromberg carburettors now redundant, Murray obtained a

complete SU conversion kit from Burlen Ltd, manufacturers of the original SU carburettor. AJS Engineering was tasked with rebuilding the differential and changing the axle ratio, after which Murray would incorporate it into the complete IRS (independent rear suspension) overhaul – a complex job for the inexperienced. The Distributor Doctor, however, took care of rebuilding the distributor: with many original parts or proven replacement components in stock, a visit to the Doctor is a wise one.

During the refurbishment period, Murray made sure that the chrome (such as bumpers and door surrounds) was offered for fit. Any deviation could be dealt with by the bodyshop at an early stage. There then began the big clean up, where everything is degreased, cleaned and made ready for overhaul. The gearbox was rebuilt in-house, while Murray started to assemble the parts ready to be fitted once the body returned. This involved either overhauling

RESTORATION

S2 E-TYPE



parts or ordering replacements. Being a Series 2, the brakes are already effective enough, so just a caliper rebuild, using replacement stainless steel pistons and a new master cylinder, was needed, along with new brake pipes and perishables. The suspension was routine and would be mounted with polyurethane bushes. Murray took his time to put the IRS assembly together correctly, which can be taxing for even the seasoned engineer. But Murray had done it before, of course, under supervision.

The Hutson Motor Company supplied a right-hand-drive kit, which consisted of replacement end dash sections, the correct steering rack, and all the smaller parts. The new wiring harness was to RHD specification, with a few extras dialled in. Murray embraced the challenge of wiring and gradually it all came together, incorporating a few upgrades along the way. Big units started to come back from the specialists, but before the engine and IRS were fitted a new propshaft was installed, supplied by Bailey Morris (should it be necessary to remove the original later for repair, it would involve removing either the IRS or the engine/gearbox as an assembly). Without any assistance, Murray not only completed the reassembly, but also set everything up as it should be, such as setting the steering geometry and getting the ignition timing and carburettor tune just right.

Could an E-type rebuilt by a 20-year-old measure up to one finished in more mature hands? I wanted to find out for myself.

Left alone with the E-type, looking stunning in Gunmetal with flecks of metallic paint glinting under a warm sun, I wonder if I am being more critical than normal. Possibly, although I always



ABOVE RIGHT: Professionally finished under-bonnet area. LEFT: Murray finishing off an E-type rear hub. ABOVE: Not pretty, but this Series 2 proved complete and very sound

make mention of anything that jars to my eye. First impression is of an extremely attractive car, with fabulous paintwork, the Gunmetal finish appropriately gun-barrel straight. The panel gap, too, is good. Before venturing inside, I look beneath the bonnet, and it does not disappoint.

Upgrades include a modern alternator and a Mangoletsi throttle pedal conversion, which allows full adjustment of the pedal position. The high-torque starter motor catches my eye as did the correct cam-covers. Often there is a temptation to fit earlier polished aluminium items, which are not as efficient and are prone to oil leaks. Everywhere I look, the car is finished to a very high standard, right down to getting the wiring harness to run accurately in place with the correct fasteners. Dunlop SP Sport tyres are fitted to offset competition wire wheels. One concession is the adoption of two-eared spinners in place of the later, so-called safe, earless spinners.

Inside, the work is just as well executed, the sports seats beckoning. They are every bit as comfortable as they appear. The large, three-spoke, woodrim steering wheel dominates the dash, with the switchgear in the centre instrument panel now rocking in operation, rather than the toggles of the past. A gesture to safety. Nestling in the centre console is a period-looking radio. Supplied

by Retro Sounds and featuring Bluetooth connectivity, iPod (remote slot) and a powerful amplifier, it drives speakers that have been carefully installed into the footwell side panels.

With the ignition switch relocated on the Series 2 to the steering column, there is no button to push when starting the engine. That high-torque starter motor soon has the engine spinning, the sparks firing the gas, and we have action. There's a fresh and, dare I say, modern feel about this car. The steering is light while the clutch and gear-change are easy to operate, requiring little effort. As usual, I drive the first couple of miles cautiously, just to get the feel of the car. Content that all is well, I push on. Classic and Modern Engine Services has done a good job with the engine, but it would mean nothing if the carburettors and ignition hadn't been set up correctly, and Murray has it spot on.

There is a mix of roads nearby and, with light traffic on the lanes, it is possible to hustle on through the bends. I take a fast right-hand by slotting down into third and keeping the power on, allowing the momentum to carry us through. Tighter curves require a dab of the brakes first, and when the speed is right I feed in the power to accelerate hard onto the next straight. We're lucky to find a blend of straights connected by interesting bends, although a number of potholes spoil the moment. They do not, however, upset the dynamics of the E-type, and although I avoid them where possible, I am occasionally caught out, sensing it with a slight kickback on the wheel. Beating the end-of-day traffic rush, I enjoy a brief run up to speed, where the straight-line stability is excellent.

If a leading specialist had told me that this was just another restoration I would have thought no more. But Angus Moss was keen (and I sense a little proud) to expound the virtues of his young technician. I agree. Murray has done a superb job to produce an almost flawless E-type. While we can all improve, being this good at just 20 puts a seal on his future. Of course, he would love an E-type of his own, but unless prices take a dive, ownership will have to wait. **JP**

Murray struck lucky when Angus Moss agreed to give him a try at E-Conic

Thanks to E-conic E-types (07528 811808; www.mossjaguar.com)